

There are many ways in which you can help to maintain the village churches.

If you feel you would like to offer help with any aspects of our church life, please talk to one of the PCC members or the Chairmen of the various committees.

All volunteers are welcomed and valued!



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**Parish of St. Bartholomew's
Wickham Bishops with
St. Nicholas Little Braxted**

**ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH
MEETING**

**Sunday 23rd March 2025
at 12 pm**

**In St. Bartholomew's
Church Hall**



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

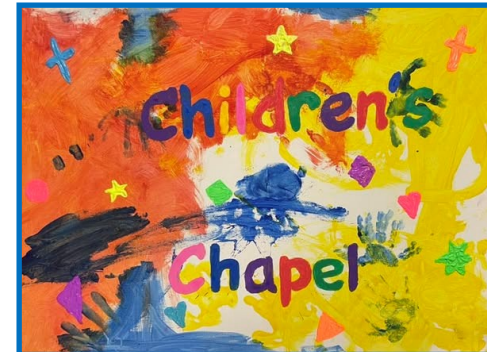
Welcome to the Annual Report for the year 2024

The agenda for the meeting, together with last year's minutes are available as separate documents, along with the Accounts and nominations for the election of PCC members and Churchwardens. Our thanks go to all who have contributed to this report.

Thanks too to those who have given so generously of their time and skills in supporting the work of our two churches during a challenging year.



*A Special mention to
our
fabulous flower ladies
who decorate the
church and enhance
our worship each
week.*



EDWARD BEAR CLUB

Edward Bear meet every Monday morning during term time for fun and faith with friends. Our congregation is made up of children aged 0-5 and their special grownups. Stella Scrivener runs the group with help from Leanne Goddard. Christine Bealer provides pastoral support and leads us in prayer each week.

The group focus on core Christian values of love and acceptance. We spend time in the church as well as the hall helping the children become familiar in that space and thus able to treat it as their own.

During warmer weeks we play outside and year round the children are helping support local wildlife at home and in the church yard. The children enjoy crafts, stories and songs together. They help to choose songs and participate with the story each week, helping them gain confidence and become more articulate.

We have two parties a year and are grateful for the church support with these. There is one for Christmas where each child receives an illustrated Christmas Story which is based on the nativity. In the summer we have an end of term party and children leaving for school receive their own Edward Bear to commemorate their time at the club. The group also have annual self funded trips. On previous years, we have visited Abberton Nature Reserve, a local soft play facility and later on this year will be going to a local beach.

Stella Scrivener

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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

The Parish of St Bartholomew Wickham Bishops with St Nicholas Little Braxted is situated in the Witham Deanery, part of the Diocese of Chelmsford. It has responsibility for two principal places of worship -

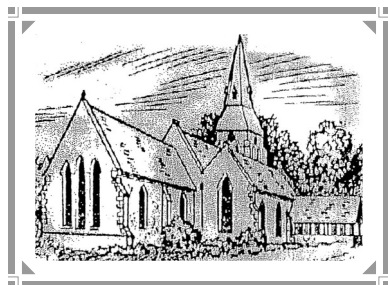
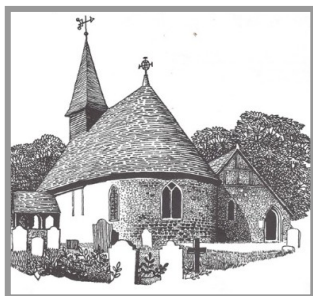
St Bartholomew's Church, the Parish Church, which is situated in Church Road, Wickham Bishops and St Nicholas Little Braxted now a Chapel of Ease, but licensed for weddings. St Nicholas is situated in Witham Road, Little Braxted.

Information about the churches in Wickham Bishops and Little Braxted is also available at -

www.churchinwickhambishops.org.uk.

The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Wickham Bishops with Little Braxted is a Registered Charity No. 1159874.

The Parish has been in interregnum since April 2024. Plans are currently in place for a re-organisation of the wider Benefice. This Parish will become a 'cluster' with Great Totham, Little Totham and Goldhanger.



Summer Fayre, Christmas and the ever popular cake stall !



Guardians of the Village Churches

Regrettably, in the absence of an incumbent, the Guardians committee is currently dormant. It is hoped that when the time is right the committee will be reactivated.

Graham Spearman

Fund Raising & Social

From a social/outreach point of view we organised four events. The first was Rev. Hilary's Farewell in May, where we coordinated the finger buffet lunch following her final service. This was a lovely occasion, with a wonderful selection of food that was much appreciated by the substantial number of attendees. Secondly, we arranged a Bring and Share Lunch to celebrate Harvest at the beginning of October which was well supported and a very relaxed social occasion. The third event was the decoration of the Christmas Tree by the uniformed groups at the beginning of December, which was a successful evening despite fewer attendees than usual. Finally, after the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols just before Christmas, we provided seasonal refreshments which were enjoyed by a good number.

We hope for another rewarding and enjoyable year in 2025.

Kath Adkins - Chair Fund Raising and Social

PCC MEMBERS

Officers as at January 2025

Priest in Charge	Vacant
Priest with Permission to Officiate	

Rev. Derek Clark

Churchwardens: Vacant Position x 2

Elected Representatives (max 12)

Until 2025

Graham Spearman
Spencer Churchill
Lester Firkins
Francine Cope

Until 2026

Kate Dawson
John Baker
Rick Smith (resigned Jan.2025)

Until 2027

Maggie Drewett
Elizabeth Joslin
Dorothy Kerr
Graham Wingrove
Barry Cousins

Ex-Officio: Geraldine Spearman, Secretary

Deanery Synod Reps

John Gilbert
Christine Bealer

Other Officers

Treasurer: Graham Spearman
Pastoral Assistant: Christine Bealer

Officers continued ...

PCC Vice-Chair:	John Gilbert
Safeguarding Officer:	Norma Hayward
Safeguarding Training:	Francine Cope
Electoral Roll Officer:	Mary Brown
Deputy Churchwarden:	Graham Wingrove

Sidespersons:

Kath Adkins	Norma Hayward	Kate Dawson
Lester Firkins	Dorothy Kerr	Stuart Parish
Wendy Firkins	John Kerr	John Wratten
Richard Latham	Francine Cope	Denise Yelland
Geraldine Spearman	Vivienne Lodge	Dick Yelland
Chris Baker	Allan Baker	

If you're interested in becoming a Sidesperson or reading one of the lessons at the services, please speak to Dorothy Kerr.

We have also previously looked at the book of Nehemiah. We are open to looking at relevant issues and topics that help us in our Christian lives and understanding of the Bible.

Recently we had a session led by one of group looking at the current situation with the occupied West Bank area of Palestine. This was very helpful in helping all to understand the current issues in that region and how this relates to the biblical context in passages in Mark's Gospel.

The group is very welcoming, relaxed, friendly and open to hear everyone's views and sharing of experiences of God's goodness and our daily walk with Him.

Elizabeth Joslin and Steve Carter

Women's Christian Fellowship

The Fellowship has had a good year with membership at 30 and an average attendance of 20 and at some meetings we have welcomed several gentlemen when the subjects have interested them.

We had talks on "Living with Facial Disfigurement" Climate Change" and "Memories of a Magistrate in the East End" among others and presentations from Perrywoods and Colchester Zoo. In March we had what has become an annual event, the Daffodil Walk at Oliver's Nursery. Added to this an afternoon tea and Christmas Lunch, bringing lots of fun and friendship.

Our meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month in the Church Hall at 2.30pm and are open to everyone.

Denise Yelland

DISCIPLESHIP

Bible Groups

Monday afternoon

We continue our Bible studies on the 1st and 3rd Monday afternoons in the month with 13 regular attendees. Our aim is to keep it relevant for today and encourage everyone, who wants to, time to say what they feel. Sometimes this leads us way off the course material but gives us an interesting opportunity to explore avenues that we perhaps hadn't thought about and we always end up back on track!

Over the last year we have covered books that showed us who the 'Bad Boys of the Bible' were; 'Forgiveness'; 'Thoughts of God'; 'O Come O Come Emanuel' and we are currently studying 'Journeying Through Lent'.

We aim to choose varied studies so as not to stagnate but to challenge positively, concluding with group prayer.

Do come and join us, we start at 2pm.

Gillian Wingrove and Maggie Drewett

Tuesday evening

The group meets twice a month and currently 10 people attend (although more are welcome if we can fit everyone in to our homes!). We meet in a different home each time and take it in turns to facilitate the evening.

We focus on a book of the bible (at present we are working through the Gospel of Mark).

ELECTORAL ROLL

Every six years The Church Electoral Roll is completely renewed in line with the Church of England regulations. Forms were sent to all parishioners on 2024 Electoral Roll inviting them to renew their application and Data Protection details.

In total there are now 97 people on the 2025 Church Electoral Roll; of these 74 live in the Parish, and 23 are non-resident.

There are 7 new members, but I also report that 5 members requested removal from the Electoral Roll and 1 member is moving away from the village. Sadly 2 members have died during the last year. Also 8 previous members will be removed from the 2025 Electoral Roll either because there has been no contact from them or they are not eligible.

Thank you to everyone for your co-operation in preparing The Roll for 2025, and we extend a warm welcome to our 7 new members.

Mary Brown, Electoral Roll Officer
wblbelr@gmail.com



Chairman's report

A living and growing body or a presentation set of Ferrero Rocher – choose your analogy!

Well, that was an interesting year!

Hilary's introduction for last year's APCM booklet started with "Surviving to thriving" as a theme from the Diocesan Well-being Day. We are nearly a year into the vacancy (interregnum in the old days, but that rather depends on whether you think clergy rule...) and a lot has happened. Thanks to the dedication of so many people within and without the congregation it has seemed pretty much like business as usual – where business as usual includes growth and change.

We have a newly redecorated and reordered church building, giving us a more welcoming and inclusive space.

No more flaking paintwork, brighter lighting, open spaces at the front of the main body of the church and a dedicated space for wheelchair users in the body of the congregation, not shoved off into a side aisle. Thank you to everyone in the church, in the village and donors beyond who have been so committed over the years to raise the money for the transformation.

Not only has the space been made to look more welcoming, we have made use of the new space to make our services more welcoming and inclusive. As reported elsewhere, we have changed how some of our services operate to make things a whole body of Christ together experience. But physical change is only a part – it is an outward expression of

COMMUNITY

FOODBANK

We continue to support the work of the Trussell Trust Foodbank with a permanent collection box in St. Bartholomew's and also working in conjunction with the village One Stop Shop.

Once again the Harvest Collection of food delivered to the church and the shop was well supported. The children of Wickham Bishops Nursery made a special visit to the church with their Harvest gifts all presented in prettily hand painted paper bags. They took part in a special prayer and were told how some people needed extra help to provide food for their families.

One Stop generously used their Community Fund to donate bags of food items at Easter and Christmas. We're grateful for their continued commitment.

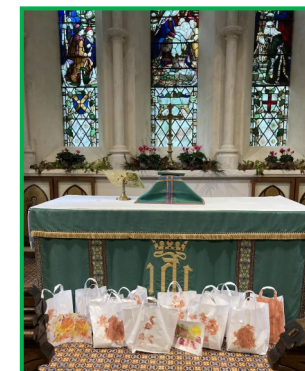
The local Warehouse covers the Witham area as well as Braintree and Halstead. People can collect food parcels at the Witham Methodist Church in Guithavon Street.

Vouchers are provided by GPs or Social Care providers.

Geraldine Spearman



*The Nursery Harvest
food bags at the
Altar*



UKRAINIAN FRIENDS

During 2024, our friends, the Smolynet family moved away from the village and were re-housed in accommodation in Ipswich.

We welcomed them in to our congregation when they came to the UK at the beginning of the war in 2022. It was a joy to embrace them as part of the church family and encourage them to take part in our activities, including Edward Bear. We were sad to see them leave.

Through funds that were raised whilst they were in Wickham Bishops, we were able to buy them a much needed washing machine for their new home

They are always welcome back at St. Bartholomew's and we wish them luck for their future and continue to hold them in our prayers.

Geraldine Spearman

BOWLS CLUB

Another good year for the St. Bart's Outreach Bowls Club.

As members are becoming a little older, the lifting of the mat is often an issue and we are looking at ways to rectify this.

The club enables people to meet and socialise, whilst learning to play bowls. There is always a break for tea, cake and chat! All are welcome. Contact Cindy or Gillian if you would like to come along and give it a try.

Hopefully we can still continue in 2025.

Cindy Baker

what is happening inside. As Hilary said in previous years, people come to the service, but stay because of the fellowship. Church doesn't just happen in the body of the building in a service, church happens with the coffee and the crock pot lunches afterwards. Ministry doesn't just happen on a Sunday, it happens at the bible study groups, at the Drop-in, at the WCF, at the house groups. Importantly, all of these ministries depend not on the presence of a priest, but the presence of the Spirit in an obedient and caring congregation. Everything that everybody does matters and makes a difference. It is not only those that organise things (and goodness knows they do an outstanding job), but the people who come and make the events what they are.

If this vacancy has shown anything, it has shown what a lively, thriving and committed body of Christ this church community is – and that makes it attractive. It's the day to day caring and concern for one another and those with whom we come into contact. It's the smile and the welcome for anyone coming into our church. God lives here amongst us and each of us plays our part.

That rubs off on the physical space, so that people feel able to come and just sit and be in a quiet and welcoming safe space – a space that has been prayed in and worshipped in and made attractive.

We have so many things and people to be grateful for, not least the support we have had from ordained priests that has enabled us to carry on with our pattern of services. Bishop Roger has been a strong support, not just in the background producing visiting clergy seemingly out of a hat, but also stepping in himself and with his wife Sally, enabling us to have a full set of Christmas services. Here a special mention needs to go to Rev Derek Clark who, despite being "retired" has given us unstinting support and commitment, while also building up the church body in Ulting. We wish Derek well with his recovery.

As we look forward to this year, it is with both interest and expectation as a deanery reorganisation will hopefully lead to the recruitment of a priest to serve the group of parishes around Beacon Hill of which we will be part. Whatever happens on that front, we know that God has His hand on us and will not fail us.

I cannot close without a special mention for Geraldine as PCC Secretary and Elizabeth Joslin, keeper of the “burner phone” to field calls from outside the church. With grace, quiet commitment, efficiency and caring concern, they have been absolutely amazing in handling the immense volume of stuff that comes from outside the church, which we never see. Thank you.

John Gilbert

John, Rev. Derek and Rev. Hilary at her retirement party in April .



Bishop of Colchester, Rev. Roger Morris presiding at the Thanksgiving Service following the re-decoration n July.



Drop-in Sessions

Drop In sessions are on the second Monday of each month. The Parish Magazine has details.

Drop In provides refreshments, friendship, fun and a sympathetic ear if you need to talk to someone in confidence. If possible, transport is arranged for those who otherwise could not get to Drop In. Attendance in 2024 varied between 12 and 25 people at the 12 sessions. Everyone is welcome. The Christmas party in December is always well attended with Christmas snacks, crackers, carol singing, secret Santa presents and much more.

There is a dedicated and hardworking team who have Safeguarding qualifications. 2 people lead the session each month, the team is Christine, Geraldine, Jayne, Kate, Kath, Maggie D, Maggie G and Sue.

Sue Clements



Cakes and Carols at Drop-in



PASTORAL

The committee supports the pastoral care in the church and local community. This includes visiting the sick, lonely and bereaved; Drop In sessions, Welcome Packs, Parish Magazine, Edward Bear, Services at Little Oaks and Home Communion.

The Parish magazine has continued to be delivered to every household during the year. We were delighted to welcome Elaine as the new editor after Peter's retirement at the end of 10 years remarkable service. We are very grateful to the willing band of helpers who make this possible and are always looking out for new people to join the ranks. Welcome packs have also been delivered to newcomers to the village by our Welcome visitors.

We held a coffee morning in September to say thank you to our volunteers and it was much enjoyed by all who attended.

We once again organised the delivery of cyclamen plants to the sick and bereaved at Harvest time and these were much appreciated. We also assisted with the planning of the Service at All Souls and provided refreshments.

We continue to visit Little Oaks once a month for a short service and chat with the residents. Christine and I have been joined this year by Kate and we are delighted to have her support.

We also, with members of our church family, try to lend support where we can to the bereaved, the elderly and those not so well.

Jayne Jennings
Chair - Pastoral Committee

PCC REPORT

The PCC members are Charity Trustees and have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the church is solvent and well run. Our Electoral Roll membership entitles our Parish to 12 laity PCC members plus 2 Deanery Synod Reps. Rev. Derek Clark and Secretary Geraldine are both ex-officio members. Rev. Hilary retired in April.

The PCC has met 6 times this year. John Gilbert stepped in as Vice-Chair, in the absence of a Priest in Charge. Our Agendas have very much focused on the interregnum and the challenges that we face.

Following Rev. Hilary's retirement, the PCC met during the year with the Bishop of Colchester, the Archdeacon and the Area Dean to discuss future plans for our Parish and the proposed re-organisation of the Deanery.

Safeguarding and Finances are standard agenda items for discussion and consideration was given to new ideas for the prayer list, use of the common cup, Parish Magazine production, maintenance of the Rectory and the new sound system. Proposals are put forward with sometimes lively debate!

A 'burner' phone was introduced to take General Enquiries and bookings for baptisms, weddings and funerals. Members stepped up to take on additional tasks ensuring that services and other activities could continue without too much disruption to our church life.

The PCC are to be thanked for their increased workloads and commitment during this time. Thank you to members for their support and patience during 2024.

Geraldine Spearman - PCC Secretary

SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding checks

These checks, also known as the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for the Church of England continue to be carried out and run by the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) generally known as 31:8. with the Diocese of Chelmsford providing help and support.

There are two types of checks available to Parishes:

Enhanced: limited to certain roles such as those working with children and vulnerable adults, lay readers, churchwardens and PCC members. It is recommended that at least 3 PCC members are checked.

Basic: For those who do not qualify for an Enhanced check, for example:

Authorised Local Preachers, Eucharistic Assistants, Servers, Musical directors of adult choirs etc. These checks are **not a requirement** for people holding these roles but can be advised to applicants as best practice. Two have been carried out in the Parish in the last 12 months.

Checks have to be repeated every 3 years.

The Parish safeguarding officer is now notified by 31:8 of checks that are due for renewal.

DBS checks for ordained clergy are carried out by the Diocese.

I am very grateful for the work organising Safeguarding Training undertaken by Francine Cope, a very important part of the process. Please contact Francine for further information on Safeguarding training courses. francinecope@hotmail.co.uk

Norma Hayward - Parish Safeguarding Officer.

jhaywa@globalnet.co.uk

01621 852010

The church is opened daily courtesy of our neighbours and as can be witnessed by the Visitor Book there is a regular flow of visitors both locally, nationally and indeed globally.

Especial thanks are due to the many volunteer Priests who have attended and enabled us to maintain services during the continuing Interregnum.

Barry Cousins

The new Corona at St Nicholas, dedicated in memory of Roy Tracey



ST. NICHOLAS

Regular Services have continued throughout the year on the 3rd Sunday of each month with additional services on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. There are a small number of regulars at these congregations supplemented by occasional visitors, although rarely any from the village residents.

In place of the usual St Nicholas' Day Service on the Sunday nearest 6th December we held a joint Advent, St Nicholas Day and Carol Service sponsored by our neighbours Mr and Mrs Speakman especially for workers on the farm and in the offices complex. Held on a Wednesday evening in December the church was packed with over 40 in the congregation.

The Service also included the dedication and blessing of the replacement Lighting Corona in memory of long serving Church Warden Roy Tracey. The Corona of *led* lights, chosen by Marion, Roy's widow, and funded from Roy's legacy, replaced the 'condemned' Corona of candles erected in the 1970s. We are grateful for the work making this all possible by Rev Hilary, Marion and the Parish Fabric Committee.

The usual Christmas Candlelit Midnight Mass, supplemented by the dimmed down Corona was attended by more than the usual small congregation with children helping the Rev Sally Morris [wife of our Area Bishop], filling in while the Parish remains in a Vacancy. Especial thanks are due to Elsie and Donald in providing extra candles and 'fairy' lights for the occasion, and also for providing fresh flowers before each monthly service.

DEANERY SYNOD

The word "synod" comes from a Greek word meaning "assembly" or "meeting".

A Deanery Synod consists of all the clergy licensed to a Benefice/parish within the Deanery and elected lay members - each parish is allocated a number of lay places on the Deanery Synod, based on the size of their electoral roll. Deanery Synod members are elected at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting to serve a three-year term. A deanery is part of the governance structure of the Church of England, linking to the Diocesan Synod and to General Synod through elected representatives. Meetings are chaired by the Area Dean, in our case Rev. Simon Garwood and a Lay Chair, Simon May. Synod meetings are held up to four times a year and regular business includes updates on the Deanery's Parish Share payments, events and activities in the Parishes and perhaps a session on a matter of interest. A report of the latest meeting of the General Synod can also be circulated.

What does a Deanery Synod do?

The Deanery Synod makes decisions at a deanery level. It acts as an intermediary between the parochial church councils of each parish and the synod of the diocese as a whole. Deaneries also have the power to bring proposals and motions to Diocesan Synod for debate.

October 2024:

Parish Nurse in the Blackwater Benefice
Net Zero Carbon Goal & Eco-Church Update
The role of the Diocesan Rural Ministry Adviser and
Agricultural Chaplain
Safeguarding

What do Deanery Synod lay members do?

Deanery Synod members are invited to attend four Deanery Synod meetings per year. These are held at various locations in the Deanery, and are generally approximately two hours long. The agenda and papers about matters to be discussed are circulated to members in advance. Some decisions are put to the vote. Deanery Synod members are also automatically members of their parish's Parochial Church Council (PCC), and so attend those meetings as well.

During the last year, presentations at our Deanery meetings were as follows:

Feb 2024:

Being a Parish Nurse in four parishes

Lay Funeral Ministers

Living in Love and Faith, where are we now?

June 2024:

Presentation on Diocesan Finances and the Parish Share.

Deanery Plan: where is it at the present time?

Living in Love and Faith, the way forward.

Eco-church plans

Christine Bealer

Deanery Synod Rep



Sadly, sacred music at Parish level is somewhat in decline and I am very pleased that at St Bartholomew's we have, so far, been able to maintain the tradition which is a major part of our culture. It is an ongoing challenge to find musicians to play and additional singers for the services at major festivals. So, if any one would like to sing or play or knows people in the village who sing and or play please contact me.

Graham Spearman - 07721 505296



St. Bartholomew's Choir singing at the re-opening Thanksgiving service and below at Rev. Hilary's last service.



CHOIR

The purpose of the Choir is to lead the congregation in Worship. That may be either leading the hymns and Eucharist settings or performing a piece of music to lift the congregation.

2024 saw the retirement of Reverend Hilary. This event was the week after Easter, known as Low Sunday. I suppose it was low for us as a church community as we said farewell to our Priest in Charge. It was pleasing that we were able to sing an Anthem for Hilary's last service having sung an Introit and Anthem at the Easter Sunday Eucharist service the week before.

An Anthem was also sung when Bishop Roger presided at the Service of Thanksgiving in July.

At Christmas we were able to offer a service of 9 Lessons and Carols which was, as ever, well supported by the village with a congregation of about 120. This was only achieved with the help of visiting singers to augment the regular choir and visiting musicians to play and conduct.

I am extremely grateful to all those who have given their support during the year. Particular thanks must go to Steven Rumsey who took numerous practices, particularly for the Christmas music.

The choir is affiliated to the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) and we try to participate in their Music Sunday event. This year was singing the top 10 Hymns as voted for by Affiliated Choirs. We had a good attendance for this event and raised funds for the RSCM and our own music event. I am thinking that for this year we could have an event singing our congregations top 10 favourite hymns.

FABRIC

It has been something of a fragmented year for the Fabric Committee with two meetings being held.

During the year two significant bequests were received which were attributed to the respective Fabric Funds. It was one of these which enabled us to instruct Baker's to commence the redecoration project.

St Bartholomew's

The major project was the internal redecoration and lighting upgrade of the Nave. This was undertaken by Baker's of Danbury and was completed on time and on budget. Our Architect Hilary Brightman was most helpful during this project and kept the contractors to the contract specification. The lighting upgrade has made a huge difference. We now have spotlights as well as uplighters and these can be used separately or together. This gives flexibility on the level of lighting depending on the nature of the service.

Also during the year Sigma Electrical completed all the work required under the five yearly Electrical Inspection report some of which was able to be completed whilst Bakers had the scaffolding in place.

The sound system in the church was also upgraded and funded as part of the restoration project. Although the ideal was to install screens and a projector the cost of this upgrade was beyond our means.



Scaffolding towers during the re-decoration in 2024



The Lady Chapel ceiling - repainted and a lot brighter!



We continue to develop our worship services to make our church welcoming to all. With that inclusivity in mind, we changed the logistics for the 10:30 service, to take advantage of the extra space at the front of the church post-re-decoration. First, we made the nave altar a standard part of our services. Those with mobility challenges, whether wheelchair users or with other aids, no longer have to negotiate 2 sets of steps, or have to wait to the end for pew service to partake of the sacrament. Second, we changed the order of distribution of the elements, so that those who are immune-suppressed or otherwise medically vulnerable receive the wine first or from specific individual chalices (while maintaining the common cup) to keep them safe. Through these small changes, members of our community have been able to partake of the full sacrament and, importantly, both to feel and be seen to be completely included in our services. In one instance over Christmas, one longstanding member of our church said it was the first time that they had been able to take full communion in St Bartholomew's for years.

As usual, behind the appearance of the well-oiled machine, there is a lot of furious activity going on. Special thanks are due to Barry who has devoted many hours seeking out and chasing down priests to cover the Eucharist services – we would have been lost without him. He is even emailing from his hospital bed in Broomfield! Graham Spearman has, amongst his many other duties, been tireless in acquiring organist support – special thanks to Richard Overill and Gillian Ward-Russell, for their consistent support. Lester and Ben have stepped forward to bring some new life and approaches into the Morning Praise services – including Ben ministering through preaching as well as music.

So we continue to develop all our services and ministry as a lively and maturing church community – “while the cat's away...!”

John Gilbert

WORSHIP

In normal times, the primary purpose of the Worship Committee is to assist the minister in their role in deciding on and leading the services across the year, in both church buildings and in public services where the church has a leading role in organisation.

However, as we have not been in normal times, the Worship Committee members have taken the lead in arranging the service schedule and content for the church, with more frequent meetings and very active email trails! We changed the name to Service Planning Group, since it gives a better description of what we actually do. The members of the Group are:

Authorised Local Preachers: Christine Bealer, Barry Cousins,
John Gilbert, Elizabeth Joslin.

Choir and Music lead for “Big Church” services:

Graham Spearman

Morning Praise Lead: Lester Firkins

Deputy Churchwarden and purveyor of common sense:

Graham Wingrove.

In the vacancy, we set ourselves the goal of keeping a consistent pattern of Eucharistic and Non-Eucharistic services (8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. at St Bartholomew’s and 9:00 a.m. third Sundays at St Nicholas’). We also wanted a consistent small set of people leading the services to minimise “who and what is happening this week” syndrome. This supports continued church development (particularly for the 10:30 a.m. services), and ensures that our small, but faithful, 8 a.m. community is served each week.

Fabric continued

Other issues dealt with during the year were the waste disposal pump. This will need to receive further attention during this year. It is also necessary for a contract to be set up to clean the drain gullies and downpipes. These tend to get blocked and overflow and then dampness penetrates the walls.

Our church yard has continued to be kept in good order thanks to Dick Yelland organising his band of merry men. We have also benefitted from visits by the Community Payback team. A young man has been working hard cleaning some of the grave-stones as part of his Duke of Edinburgh Award. He’s doing a great job! Two churchyard clear-ups have taken place during the year and thanks to those willing volunteers.

The new hall chairs arrived during the early part of the year and I hope have been well received.

Installation of Solar Panels has not progressed for the simple reason that it is very difficult to get an appropriate meter installed. This is because our electricity supply is three phase and so standard Smart Meters are not appropriate. There is currently a request with our energy supplier for the installation of a suitable meter but I am not holding my breath!

Thanks must go to Maggie Grice who acts as Secretary and to all those who undertake practical tasks to keep both the building and the churchyard in order.



The Church has Re-opened!



Thank you display to the Village for their support and generous donations

St. Nicholas

The second bequest was from a former resident of Little Braxted. The Quinquennial report at St Nicholas is due this year. The Architect who has previously undertaken this has retired.

Hilary Brightman has agreed to take this on and seems to be delighted to be dealing with this historic church.

Fortunately due to the Bequest received last year there should be sufficient funds to cover the costs that may arise.

In the St. Nicholas report by Barry Cousins further on in this booklet, there is reference to the installation of the new Corona. This is a gift made from the bequest of Roy Tracey. This installation has overcome the Health and Safety concerns arising from the old corona.

Graham Spearman

TREASURER

For the detail please see my report in the published Accounts.

The most significant point to note is that for the first time during my tenure as Treasurer we did not pay the Parish Share in full. Also, for the second year in succession we have been unable to pay contributions to International, National and Local Charities. We have however made donations from our Christmas services to The Children's Society and Crisis for Christmas. Sadly, I cannot see this situation changing as energy costs continue to be high and the Diocese are for ever requesting higher amounts of Parish Share. I would just comment that despite the pressure placed on us Parish Share is a voluntary payment.

So, at the year end the financial situation of our General Fund was maintained at roughly the same level as we started with.

You will note that the Ukrainian Restricted Fund has reduced as we purchased domestic appliances for two Ukrainian families.

In respect of the Fabric Funds the St. Bartholomew's fund has a low balance following the redecoration project and improvements made to the sound system. I am sure that the Gardens Festival Committee, to whom I am very grateful, will see the fund significantly increase. The St Nicholas Fabric Fund is in a very healthy situation having benefitted from a significant bequest. This should stand us in a good position with regard to the Quinquennial Report which was undertaken on 18th March.

Looking at the current year I must again emphasise that we need to keep a very close watch on our expenditure.

Graham Spearman—Treasurer

Wickham Bishops & Little Braxted PCC

Registered Charity 1159874

End of Year Financial Statements

Year ending 31st December 2024

**WICKHAM BISHOPS AND LITTLE BRAXTED
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/12/2024 which are set out on pages 3 to 7.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

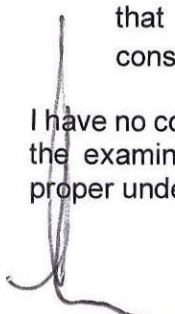
I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records or
- the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view' which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



John Barnes FCA
Independent Examiner
30 Coombe Rise
Broomfield
Chelmsford
CM1 7DG

18 February 2025

Treasurer's Report

What a year 2024 turned out to be! Reverend Hilary retired and the redecoration of the Nave was completed.

In respect of our General Funds, notated as Unrestricted funds, which cover day to day running costs we continue to have to watch our expenditure very closely. The Diocese continue to request what I consider to be an excessive sum by way of Parish Share particularly when we compare our figure against similar parishes. The PCC agreed to pay Parish Share in full for 2023 in the hope that would stand us in good stead for recruitment of a new incumbent. Sadly, that decision does not appear to have had any impact. As a result in 2023 there was a reduction to our General Fund of some £9,300. So this year, your PCC agreed to withhold any payment of Parish Share for 2024 until the financial year end when we could ascertain what we could afford. In the event a payment of £46,000 was made in early January which was 86% of the amount requested. This has meant that we have been able to maintain the balance of our General Funds at around £50,000. Why you may ask do we need to maintain such a balance. As Trustees of our own Charity we are expected to make responsible financial decisions and hold sufficient funds to cover 6 months of expenditure. With annual expenditure approaching £90,000 we can demonstrate that we are meeting that requirement.

Turning to Restricted funds we did receive two bequests during the year. One was of £18,105.11 for St Bartholomew's fabric fund which enabled us to undertake the redecoration project. The other of £20,000 was for St Nicholas Fabric fund which stands us in a good position for the quinquennial report which is due in 2025.

The St Bartholomew's Fabric fund has reduced significantly primarily due to the costs of the redecoration of the Nave which amounted to some £80,000 net including fees and ancillary costs. Fortunately, we were able to recover the VAT which amounted to £13,443 and as we held sufficient funds we were able to cover this amount from our General Fund. The scheme for repayment of VAT has been running since 2001. Unfortunately the current Government has only extended the scheme until March 2026 and has also limited the amount that any one church can reclaim to £25,000 a year. Hopefully that will not impact us immediately but I am concerned as to what the position may be after March 2026. Clearly this will have a major impact in our Cathedrals and Great Churches which many of us like to visit. The current situation is that St Bartholomew's now has only limited monies in it's Fabric fund and we must hope that no major fabric issues arise. That said later this year on 8th June we have another Gardens Festival with concerts in September. Please encourage relatives and friends to attend. I am extremely grateful to Stewart Adkins and his committee for all their hard work that they have put into the event already and will continue to do so.

While saying thank you, a particular thanks to John Baker for his continuing work as Gift Aid Secretary. John's efforts have resulted in an additional £9,900 of income. John, as my predecessor in this role, has also continued to be of great support and guidance as a Mentor.

To close thank you all for your giving but please keep the amount you contribute under review. If anyone would like to join the Parish Giving Scheme please come and talk to me.

Graham Spearman 26/01/2025

Statement of Financial Activities

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Prior year total funds
Receipts					
Planned giving	36,554.84	—	—	36,554.84	36,815.55
Collections and other giving	3,303.26	—	—	3,303.26	3,040.95
Other voluntary receipts	5,054.63	38,160.11	—	43,214.74	7,410.02
Gift Aid recovered	23,974.60	—	—	23,974.60	9,715.19
Other receipts	1,077.19	22.06	—	1,099.25	3,702.79
Youth Club	—	—	—	—	141.68
Activities for generating funds	12,340.52	66.16	—	12,406.68	34,209.99
Investment Income	2,061.31	2,799.06	—	4,860.37	3,085.07
Receipts from church activities	2,067.16	—	—	2,067.16	5,421.61
Total income	86,433.51	41,047.39	—	127,480.90	103,542.85
Payments					
Cost of generating funds	210.30	—	—	210.30	2,392.92
Missionary and Charitable Giving	785.88	944.00	—	1,729.88	4,139.40
Parish Share	46,000.00	—	—	46,000.00	51,049.00
Clergy and Staffing costs	3,558.16	—	—	3,558.16	5,726.77
Church Running Expenses	22,818.64	4,395.13	—	27,213.77	30,489.32
Youth Club	—	—	—	—	—
Hall Running Costs	1,916.91	—	—	1,916.91	2,109.60
Church Repairs & Maintenance	13,940.70	86,773.96	—	100,714.66	2,676.95
Hall Repairs & Maintenance	—	—	—	—	—
Governance Costs	120.00	—	—	120.00	120.00
Total expenditure	89,350.59	92,113.09	—	181,463.68	98,703.96
Gains / losses on investment assets	7,882.84	—	—	7,882.84	—
Net income / (expenditure) resources before transfer	4,965.76	(51,065.70)	—	(46,099.94)	4,838.89
Transfers					
Gross transfers between funds - in	16,046.82	53,321.76	—	69,368.58	4,424.77
Gross transfers between funds - out	(21,524.52)	(47,844.06)	—	(69,368.58)	(4,424.77)
Other recognised gains / losses					
Gains on revaluation, fixed assets, charity's own use	—	—	—	—	—
Net movement in funds	(511.94)	(45,588.00)	—	(46,099.94)	4,838.89
Total funds brought forward	50,675.33	90,501.75	—	141,177.08	136,338.19
Total funds carried forward	50,163.39	44,913.75	—	95,077.14	141,177.08
Represented by					
Unrestricted					
General fund	50,163.39	—	—	50,163.39	50,675.33
Restricted					
General Fund re Bowls Club	—	843.14	—	843.14	843.14
Guardians Restricted Funds	—	1,338.36	—	1,338.36	27,952.20
Little Braxted Fabric Fund CB3022306	—	36,018.96	—	36,018.96	17,653.46
Ukrainian Refugees Restricted Fund	—	506.48	—	506.48	1,428.42
Wickham Bishops Fabric Fund CB3022305	—	6,206.81	—	6,206.81	42,624.53

Balance sheet

	Total funds	Prior year funds
Current assets		
Cash at bank and in hand	95,077.14	141,177.08
	95,077.14	141,177.08
Net current assets less current liabilities	95,077.14	141,177.08
Total assets less current liabilities	95,077.14	141,177.08
Total net assets less liabilities	95,077.14	141,177.08
Represented by		
Unrestricted		
General fund	50,163.39	50,675.33
Restricted		
General Fund re Bowls Club	843.14	843.14
Guardians Restricted Funds	1,338.36	27,952.20
Ukrainian Refugees Restricted Fund	506.48	1,428.42
Wickham Bishops Fabric Fund CB3022305	6,206.81	42,624.53
Little Braxted Fabric Fund CB3022306	36,018.96	17,653.46
	95,077.14	141,177.08
Funds of the church	95,077.14	141,177.08

Analysis of income and expenditure

	Unrestricted	Designated	Restricted	Endowment	Total This year	Last year
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INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS

Planned giving

Envelopes	90.00	—	—	—	90.00	875.00
planned giving	36,464.84	—	—	—	36,464.84	35,940.55
Total	36,554.84	—	—	—	36,554.84	36,815.55

Collections and other giving

collections	3,188.26	—	—	—	3,188.26	2,872.95
Gift Aid Envelopes	115.00	—	—	—	115.00	168.00
Total	3,303.26	—	—	—	3,303.26	3,040.95

Other voluntary receipts

Charity Collections	641.88	—	—	—	641.88	1,081.51
Other Giving	360.00	—	—	—	360.00	476.73
Donations	3,971.25	—	—	—	3,971.25	3,510.78
Gemma Fraser	—	—	—	—	—	—
Flower Fund	—	—	—	—	—	20.00
Music Fund	81.50	—	—	—	81.50	27.75
Legacies/Grants	—	—	38,105.11	—	38,105.11	1,000.00
Recurring grants	—	—	—	—	—	—
Non-recurring one-off grants	—	—	—	—	—	—
Roof Repair Appeal	—	—	—	—	—	—
Guardians	—	—	55.00	—	55.00	1,272.91
Alpha Donations	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ukrainian Refugee Donations	—	—	—	—	—	20.34
Total	5,054.63	—	38,160.11	—	43,214.74	7,410.02

Gift Aid recovered

Tax recoverable on Gift Aid	9,876.60	—	—	—	9,876.60	9,715.19
Tax Refund - Church Restoration Fund WB	14,098.00	—	—	—	14,098.00	—
Tax refund - LB Fabric	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tax Relief Guardians	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	23,974.60	—	—	—	23,974.60	9,715.19

Other receipts

Resources from Diocese	—	—	—	—	—	1,520.00
Other funds generated	100.00	—	—	—	100.00	141.59
Braxted Gazebo Hire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Interest Ukranian Refugee Fund	—	—	22.06	—	22.06	20.72
Insurance claims	—	—	—	—	—	—
Surplus - sales of fixed assets	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bowls Club	—	—	—	—	—	843.14
Little Braxted General Transfer In/Out	977.19	—	—	—	977.19	1,177.34
Total	1,077.19	—	22.06	—	1,099.25	3,702.79

Other receipts - Youth Club

Youth Club Income	—	—	—	—	—	141.68
Total	—	—	—	—	—	141.68

Activities for generating funds

Fund Raising - Open Gardens Flower Festi	—	—	—	—	—	16,343.83
Fund Raising	4,227.06	—	—	—	4,227.06	2,820.75
Braxted Fete Income	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fund Raising - Golf Day	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fund Raising - May Ball	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trading Income	22.30	—	—	—	22.30	15.25
Friends of Little Braxted	—	—	66.16	—	66.16	65.45
Fees to Diocese	428.66	—	—	—	428.66	2,052.33
Church hall lettings	4,082.50	—	—	—	4,082.50	5,164.38
Magazine income - advertising	3,580.00	—	—	—	3,580.00	7,748.00
Little Braxted Fabric	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	12,340.52	—	66.16	—	12,406.68	34,209.99

Investment Income

Interest - General Fund	2,061.31	—	—	—	2,061.31	1,207.40
Interest WB Church Restoration Fund	—	—	1,420.04	—	1,420.04	1,323.65
Interest LB Fabric Fund	—	—	1,103.52	—	1,103.52	554.02
Interest/Dividends	—	—	—	—	—	—
Interest on Guardians Account	—	—	275.50	—	275.50	—
Total	2,061.31	—	2,799.06	—	4,860.37	3,085.07

Receipts from church activities

Parochial Fees for weddings and funerals	1,699.02	—	—	—	1,699.02	4,303.00
Gravespoil	—	—	—	—	—	210.00
Memorial Book Income	10.00	—	—	—	10.00	50.00
Greeting Cards sales	68.15	—	—	—	68.15	155.47
Tea/Coffee	260.69	—	—	—	260.69	338.42
Drop In Donations	29.30	—	—	—	29.30	364.72
Total	2,067.16	—	—	—	2,067.16	5,421.61
INCOME TOTAL	86,433.51	—	41,047.39	—	127,480.90	103,542.85

EXPENDITURE

Cost of generating funds

Braxted Gazebo Expenses	—	—	—	—	—	—
Costs of Fundraising	163.10	—	—	—	163.10	20.00
Cost of Fundraising - May Ball	—	—	—	—	—	—
Cost of Fundraising - Braxted Fete	—	—	—	—	—	—
Costs of Fundraising- Open Gardens	—	—	—	—	—	2,233.83
Guardians expenses	—	—	—	—	—	84.89
Greetings Cards costs	47.20	—	—	—	47.20	54.20
Trading Goods	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	210.30	—	—	—	210.30	2,392.92

Missionary and Charitable Giving

Charity Donations	785.88	—	—	—	785.88	1,175.46
Ukrainian Refugee Expenditure	—	—	944.00	—	944.00	2,963.94
Total	785.88	—	944.00	—	1,729.88	4,139.40

Parish Share

Parish Share	46,000.00	—	—	—	46,000.00	51,049.00
Total	46,000.00	—	—	—	46,000.00	51,049.00

Clergy and Staffing costs

Fees to Diocese	428.00	—	—	—	428.00	1,886.00
Locum Costs for re-imbursement	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other Clergy Expenses	496.63	—	—	—	496.63	247.35
Gemma Fraser payments	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wages Honoraria & Support	2,480.00	—	—	—	2,480.00	2,340.00
Clergy expenses of incumbent	—	—	—	—	—	498.42
Rectory expenses	153.53	—	—	—	153.53	755.00
Total	3,558.16	—	—	—	3,558.16	5,726.77

Church Running Expenses

Resources from Diocesan Grant	—	—	—	—	—	—
Insurance - Wickham Bishops	2,572.27	—	—	—	2,572.27	2,476.47
Insurance - Little Braxted	1,208.84	—	—	—	1,208.84	1,158.23
Church maintenance WB	673.35	—	4,028.35	—	4,701.70	3,131.65
Church Maintenance - LB	—	—	276.78	—	276.78	241.80
Pastoral Care	169.88	—	—	—	169.88	191.84
Children & Youth Work	194.00	—	—	—	194.00	158.25
General Costs	2,276.51	—	—	—	2,276.51	3,530.79
Flowers for Church	239.04	—	—	—	239.04	526.08
Upkeep	—	—	—	—	—	30.00
Music Fund	108.94	—	—	—	108.94	32.61
Upkeep of churchyard WB	1,750.35	—	—	—	1,750.35	1,107.50
Upkeep of Churchyard LB	420.00	—	90.00	—	510.00	540.00
Administration	639.46	—	—	—	639.46	339.73
Church running - Utilities WB	6,300.44	—	—	—	6,300.44	8,143.53
Church running - Utilities LB	535.30	—	—	—	535.30	350.50
Magazine expenses	4,864.93	—	—	—	4,864.93	7,070.76
Tea/Coffee Costs	256.33	—	—	—	256.33	246.50
Alpha Expenses	—	—	—	—	—	—
Journal Write Off	—	—	—	—	—	(175.32)
In/Out	609.00	—	—	—	609.00	1,388.40
Total	22,818.64	—	4,395.13	—	27,213.77	30,489.32

Church Running Expenses - Youth Club

Youth Club		—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		—	—	—	—	—	—

Hall Running Costs

Hall running costs		1,916.91	—	—	—	1,916.91	2,109.60
Total		1,916.91	—	—	—	1,916.91	2,109.60

Church Repairs & Maintenance

Church major repairs - structure		—	—	2,020.80	—	2,020.80	2,280.00
Church Major Repairs - Structure St Nich		—	—	2,816.28	—	2,816.28	—
Guardians Costs		—	—	9.59	—	9.59	—
Church major repairs - installation		—	—	1,852.80	—	1,852.80	—
Capital Expenditure		499.00	—	—	—	499.00	396.95
Church interior and exterior decorating		13,441.70	—	80,074.49	—	93,516.19	—
Total		13,940.70	—	86,773.96	—	100,714.66	2,676.95

Hall Repairs & Maintenance

Hall + major repairs - structure		—	—	—	—	—	—
Hall + major repairs - installation		—	—	—	—	—	—
Hall + interior and exterior decorating		—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		—	—	—	—	—	—

Governance Costs

Governance costs examination/audit fee		120.00	—	—	—	120.00	120.00
Total		120.00	—	—	—	120.00	120.00

EXPENDITURE TOTAL		89,350.59	—	92,113.09	—	181,463.68	98,703.96
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GRAND TOTAL		(2,917.08)	—	(51,065.70)	—	(53,982.78)	4,838.89
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WICKHAM BISHOPS & LITTLE BRAXTED P.C.C. ASSETS

ASSETS

General Fund:

CAF Bank:	£10,765.66	
Barclays:	Account closed	
CCLA:	£39,264.44	
Petty Cash:	£ 133.29	£50.163.39
General Fund re Bowls Club		£ 843.14
Guardians Restricted Funds		£ 1,338.36
Ukrainian Refugees Restricted Fund		£ 506.48
Wickham Bishops Church Restoration		£ 6,206.81
Little Braxted Fabric Fund		£36,018.96

Bookstall Stock £ 600

Estimated Values

Church Hall £ 500,000
Tables & Chairs £ 3,000
Kitchen Equipment, Storage Boxes, Urn, Cutlery, Microwave Etc. £ 1,500
Crockery & Glasses £ 500
Step Ladder £ 109
Vacuum Cleaners £ 200
Video/Television, Sound System/Heaters £ 1,600
Choir Robes £ 1,500
Lawnmowers £ 2,000
Strimmer £ 150
Hedge Trimmer £ 150
Piano x 2 £ 2,700
Shed x 2 £ 1,500
Projector £ 430
Floristry equipment £ 2,000
Dishwasher £ 1,500
Photocopier £ 2,500
Mevo Camera £ 350
WiFi Router £ 90

**WICKHAM BISHOPS AND LITTLE BRAXTED
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL
INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31/12/2024 which are set out on pages 3 to 7.

Responsibilities and basis of report

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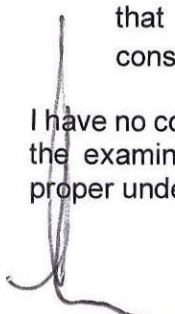
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I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



John Barnes FCA
Independent Examiner
30 Coombe Rise
Broomfield
Chelmsford
CM1 7DG

18 February 2025

