

ANNUAL REPORT SEVEN TOWERS JOINT COUNCIL 2024

Seven Towers Joint Council Trustees' Report 2024

Administrative information

Following approval by The Diocese of Gloucester Bishop's Council in September 2023, Seven Towers Joint Council became effective on 1 January 2024. At that time the PCCs of the parishes of St Mary's Norton, St Mary & Corpus Christi, Down Hatherley, St Lawrence, Sandhurst, St Catherine, Staverton with St Mary Magdalene Boddington and St Catherine The Leigh & Evington went into abeyance.

The Seven Towers Joint Council (also known as Seven Towers Benefice) is part of the Diocese of Gloucester within the Church of England. The correspondence address is c/o Sandhurst Church, Sandhurst, Gloucester, GL2 9NP. The Joint Council (JC) is a charity (number 1205403) registered with the Charity Commission.

JC members who have served from January 2024 until the 8th May 2025 are as below.

Name	Post	Dates if part year
Revd Joe Knight	Priest in Charge	
Simon Trapnell	Benefice (& Norton) Church Warden, Lay Vice Chairman	
Carolyn Wright	Benefice (& Sandhurst) Church Warden, Secretary	
Ellie Stevenson	Down Hatherley Church Warden*	
Janine Smith	SwB Church Warden*	
Jean Smith	Norton Church Warden*	
Phil Cotton	The Leigh Church Warden* & Deanery Synod Representative	
Adrian Hawkins	Sandhurst Church Warden*	
Derek Wright	Elected Member, Treasurer & Deanery Synod Representative	
Hazel Cotton	Elected Member	
Tony Crawshaw	Elected Member	
Graeme Hunter	Elected Member	Until September 2024
Andrew Wilkins	Elected Member	
Graham Limbrick	Elected Member & Deanery Synod Rep.	

Note * also referred to as the Parish Representative

In addition Lynda Chan (representing the Prayer Team), Alison Moseley (representing the Worship Team), Gareth Moseley (representing the Pastoral Team) and, until June 2024, Jordan Murrison

(representing the Children & Young People's Team) attend meetings of the JC. Rev Philippa Donald also attends the JC as does the Safeguarding office – post currently vacant.

Structure, governance and management

The method of appointment of JC (PCC) members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. All Church attendees are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll of one of the former PCCs and stand for election to the JC. Seven Towers Joint Council became responsible for governance and management on 1st January 2024, taking over from the PCCs. However, the parish electoral roll is still required and will continue to be updated annually.

Each elected member is elected for a 3-year term and will then retire by rotation and is eligible to stand for re-election. For the first 3 years it was agreed that two members (Derek Wright & Graeme Hunter) would retire after 1 year, two members (Graham Limbrick & Tony Crawshaw) would retire after 2 years and the other two members (Hazel Cotton & Andrew Wilkins) would retire after 3 years.

Objectives and Activities

The JC has the responsibility of co-operating with the incumbent in promoting in the ecclesiastical parishes the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical. Each parish comprising the benefice has been encouraged to establish a team under the direction of the local parish representative to maintain the local church and churchyard and organise local events.

Financial Review

Total receipts for the General Fund which meets the day to day costs of the benefice were £111,200 and are detailed in the Financial Statements. Total payments from the General Fund in the year were £112,417. The largest items of expenditure were Parish Share of £75,204, which is a payment to the Gloucester Diocesan Board of Finance to enable it to provide the benefice with clergy and support services.

The net result for the year was a deficit of £1,217. Adding cash, bank and deposit balances brought forward at the beginning of the year, the balance of the general fund carried forward at year-end 2024 totaled £94,408.

Reserves policy

It is JC policy to maintain a balance on general funds (if possible), which equates to between 3 and 6 months' general fund payments, to cover emergency situations that may arise from time to time. At year-end, the figure was outside (greater than) the reserve's guideline but is expected to fall back into the range during 2025.

It is our policy to invest our fund balances with the CBF Church of England Deposit Fund.

SEVEN TOWERS JOINT COUNCIL

Annual Accounts to 31 December 2024

Notes	General Fund	Designated Funds	Restricted Funds	Total 2024	Total 2023	
Income						
	Collections	4,921	2,532	670	8,123	7,962
	Regular Giving	45,796	3,048	-	48,844	52,479
	Ad hoc Donations	9,411	5,542	5,279	20,232	28,980
4	Charity collections	6,230	-	-	6,230	3,600
5	Grants	-	50,819	-	50,819	846
	Legacies	-	10,000	-	10,000	1,505
	Gift Aid reclaim	11,811	4,011	-	15,822	15,717
	VAT reclaim	-	16,384	136	16,520	533
	Magazine - Subscriptions	3,059	-	-	3,059	3,137
	Magazine - Adverts	1,268	-	-	1,268	1,598
6	Fund raising	1,945	7,970	382	10,297	4,229
	Bank interest	3,337	8,128	-	11,465	5,846
7	Investment Income	1,996	-	3,227	5,223	4,693
	Fees - Funeral	13,310	819	-	14,129	12,404
	Fees - Monuments	1,338	-	-	1,338	1,484
	Fees - Weddings	6,778	-	-	6,778	5,339
	Book sales	-	196	-	196	217
	Total Income	111,200	109,449	9,694	230,343	150,569
Expenditure						
8	Parish Share	75,204	-	-	75,204	71,700
	Water	398	-	-	398	258
	Electricity	3,609	846	-	4,455	5,696
	Oil	409	-	-	409	437
	Insurance	7,762	-	-	7,762	7,448
9	Running Expenses	360	811	992	2,163	2,309
	Gifts	-	575	-	575	-
	Magazine printing	2,837	-	-	2,837	3,431
	Statutory fees	4,262	-	-	4,262	6,336
10	Organist fees	2,296	-	-	2,296	480
11	Building works	-	7,937	475	8,412	12,467
	Clergy expenses	3,000	-	-	3,000	3,307
4	Charity donations	8,048	-	-	8,048	8,892
6	Cost of fund raising	383	1,200	-	1,583	927
	Worship Requisites	304	-	-	304	466
	Friendly Friday costs	324	-	-	324	315
14	Churchyard Maintenance	-	3,426	400	3,826	3,318
13	Mission Teams	379	-	-	379	619
12	Bell costs	720	108,736	-	109,456	-
	Outreach	868	-	-	868	735
	Other	1,254	-	-	1,254	6,628
	Total outgoing	112,417	123,531	1,867	237,815	135,769
	Excess / (deficit)	(1,217)	(14,082)	7,827	(7,472)	14,800

Assets as at 31 December 2024

	31-Dec-24	31-Dec-23	Change
Current accounts	15,945	121,867	(105,922)
Deposit accounts	46,813	67,931	(21,118)
CCLA	240,267	125,322	114,945
SJP	54,691	50,068	4,623.
Total	357,716	365,188	(7,472)

Assets by Funds

	31-Dec-24	31-Dec-23	Change
General	94,408	95,625	(1,217)
Restricted			
Sandhurst Bells	3,000	3,000	0
Youth Mission	2,430	2,430	0
Mission	2,000	0	2,000
The Leigh Fabric	50,815	46,550	4,265
Down Hatherley Roof	1,562	0	1,562
SwB Organ	23,515	23,515	0
Total Restricted	83,322	75,495	7,827
Designated Funds			
Sandhurst Fabric	22,718	16,427	6,291
Down Hatherley Fabric	73,658	64,500	9,158
SwB Fabric	47,403	44,002	3,401
Norton Fabric	9,073	9,063	10
Norton Bells	1,690	37,026	(35,336)
Norton Toilets	12,556	10,870	1,686
Hardship	900	900	0
Twigworth Churchyard	11,988	11,280	708
Total Designated	179,986	194,068	(14,082)
Total Funds	357,716	365,188	(7,472)

Notes to the Financial Statements for the year to 31 December 2024

1. Presentation of financial information

These financial statements have been prepared on the receipts and payments basis and in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006. Seven Towers Joint Council ("JC") only became effective on 1 January 2024 at which time the 5 original PCCs (Down Hatherley, Norton, Sandhurst, Staverton with Boddington and The Leigh & Evington) went into abeyance. The comparable 2023 figures have been prepared on a proforma basis combining the individual PCC and Benefice accounts for the 12 months to 31 December 2023.

2. Accounting Policies

These financial statements include monetary transactions, assets and liabilities for which the Benefice Council can be held responsible. They do not include the accounts, if any, of any other benefice-wide groups that owe an affiliation to any other body.

Receipts are included as received and expenditure when irrevocably paid.

3. Types of funds

In these accounts funds are described as General, Designated and Restricted. **'Restricted funds'** are sums held on trust for particular purposes and can only be spent on those purposes. **'Unrestricted funds' (General Funds)** are simply the ordinary property of the JC and can be spent on any of the JC's general purposes. **'Designated funds'** are sums earmarked by the JC for specific purposes.

In these accounts Restricted Funds are the Staverton with Boddington ("SwB") Organ Fund, Sandhurst Bell Fund, The Leigh Fabric Fund, the Down Hatherley Roof Fund, the Mission Fund and the Youth Mission fund. These funds were set up as a result of specific donations for that purpose only.

Designated Funds include the Fabric Funds of each of the previous PCCs, the Norton Bell Fund, the Norton Toilet Fund, the Hardship Fund, and the Twigworth Churchyard Fund

4. Charity Collections and Donations

Since April 2020, we have been collecting fortnightly for Gloucester Foodbank from church porches, Nature in Art and the Co-op at Twigworth Green. During 2024 we collected 1,119.4 kg of food which was the equivalent of providing 2,665 meals to local people. In addition to the cash amounts shown below CAF cheques from individuals were sent as part of the Benefice donations.

The money collected at the Ladies and Men's breakfasts and at the monthly community lunches in excess of costs plus 50% of the collections at our Christmas Carol services were also sent to Gloucester Foodbank.

Apart from September, money donated at the monthly Friendly Friday less the cost of hall rental was sent to Sue Ryder in memory of Jane Jones. The September donations were sent to MacMillan.

Collections at funeral services were sent to the charities nominated by the families of the deceased.

Where appropriate gift aid is added to donations and passed on to the various charities. The Joint Council "funds" the gift aid until such time as it is claimed back from HMRC.

Charitable gifts included £1,500 to Gloucester Foodbank, £510 to Macmillan Nurses from the September coffee morning and £4,446 to various charities in memory of those whose funerals were held in our churches.

5. Grants

Grants of £48,719 were made by various bodies towards the repair of Norton Bells (see note 12) and £2,100 was granted towards the cost of internal glazing at Sandhurst.

6. Fund raising

Various fund raising activities were held across the Benefice, some for the benefice general fund and others for local projects.

	Income	Costs	Net
Benefice	1,946	383	1,563
Norton Bells	1,439	649	790
Norton Toilets	370	-	370
Sandhurst	2,957	551	2,406
DH Roof appeal	382	-	382
SwB	3,203	-	3,203
Total	10,297	1,583	8,714

7. Investment Income

Investment income includes £600 rental income from a piece of land in Boddington and gains on an investment with St James's Place resulting from the sale of the village hall in The Leigh. In line with past practice, dividends and interest arising on the St James's Place investment (£1,396 in 2024) are credited to the general fund and growth (£3,227 in 2024) to The Leigh Fabric Fund.

8. Parish Share

Parish Share is money requested from and paid to the Gloucester Diocesan Board of Finance to cover costs including those of the clergy remuneration and related costs including housing and central services incurred by the Diocese.

The 2024 allocation from Severn Vale Deanery to the Benefice was £75,204 (£71,700 in 2023).

9. Running Expenses The running costs by parish were as follows:

Down Hatherley	239
Norton	256
Sandhurst	170
SwB	146
The Leigh	992
Electrical (PAT) testing	360
Total	2,163

"PAT" testing was paid for from the General Fund. Other costs charged to local fabric funds were the Fire Extinguisher testing for all church buildings except Norton, Organ service & repairs (Norton & The Leigh), cleaning materials (Sandhurst) and the cost of opening the safe (Staverton).

10. Organist fees

£1,376 was paid to organists in respect of Funerals and Weddings and £920 for playing at various worship gatherings.

11. Building Works

Building works include minor repairs and comprise:

Down Hatherley	3,085	includes bat survey and tile replacement
Norton	350	
Sandhurst	1,761	includes drawing for glazing project
SwB	3,101	architect fees
The Leigh	115	
Total	8,412	

12. Bell Costs

During the year a major project was undertaken to repair and replace the bells at Norton Church funded by reserves brought forward, grants received and various donations. The JC would like to thank all of those involved in the project which was successfully delivered on time in late summer / early autumn.

13. Mission Teams

	2024	2023
<i>Children & Young People</i>		
Christmas party	59	279
Hall Rental	135	150
Materials	25	190
	219	619
<i>Prayer team</i>	160	
Total	379	619

14. Churchyard

Churchyard costs by parish were as follows:

	Fuel	Mower servicing	Other	Total
Down Hatherley	15	102	-	117
Norton	67	534	55	656
Sandhurst	73	46	368	487
SwB	-	135	1,920	2,055
The Leigh	400	-	-	400
Twigworth	-	-	111	111
Total	555	817	2,454	3,826

Other costs primarily comprise tree maintenance and installation of the new shed in Sandhurst.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Members of the Seven Towers Benefice Joint Council ("the Trust")

I report on the accompanying accounts of the Seven Towers Benefice Joint Council for the year ended 31 December 2024, which have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis as the Trust's gross income for the year was below £250,000.

The figures for the year ended 31 December 2023 have been prepared on a pro forma basis and for comparative purposes only; my report does not cover these figures.

Respective Responsibilities and Basis of Report

As charity trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the annual accounts of the Trust in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011, the relevant sections of the Statement of Recommended Practice for Accounting and Reporting by Charities, and the appropriate Church of England Accounting Guidelines. My responsibility is to perform an independent examination of the accounts in accordance with the general directions given by the Charity Commission.

Independent Examiner's Statement

An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Trust and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a true and fair view.

In connection with my examination, no matters have come to my attention which give me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect:

- (i) accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act 2011, or
- (ii) the accounts do not accord with those records.

In addition I have come across no other matters to which in my opinion attention should be drawn to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Steven Riddick FCA
Woodview
Pirton Lane
Churchdown
Gloucester

April 2025