**Poor’s Piece & Clockland Charity**

**Report for the North Marston Parish Council AGM May 2023**

The report for Poor’s Piece & Clockland Charity for 2022

I would like to begin this report by thanking and paying tribute to Alison Finnemore who had been a Trustee for 15 years and as you all know sadly passed away at the end of last year. She will be sorely missed

The remaining Trustees are:

Cynthia Hall, John Martin, Michael Morton, Rob Symonds and Neil Tuckett with the Rev Petra Elsmore as ECC representative and Chairman.

The aim of Poor’s Piece & Clockland Charity is to provide financial support to those who are in need and living in the parish, to contribute towards the repairs of the church and to oversee the maintenance of the land as set out in the Charity Scheme. Our efforts of the previous year have been overshadowed by the serious allegations and libellous criticism raised at the beginning of this year. These implied that the conduct of Trustees and the management of funds was in question and that the Charity has not been supporting the poor in the village. We have reported this matter to the Charity Commission as Serious Incident as we felt the reputation of our Charity was at risk. The Charity Commission considered all relevant communication and our reports and felt that the Trustees have dealt with the situation well and no further investigation was needed.

We as Trustees of this Charity have always carried out our duties to the best of our knowledge with the sole aim of fulfilling the Charities objectives whilst looking after the Charities only asset, namely 27 acres of land situated along Granborough Road.

When the present Trustees took over as Trustees at the request of the Parish Council in 2007, meetings had not been held, no rent had been paid and the land had been sub-let by the tenant and was in a very poor state. Expenditure exceeded income.

Through the ensuing years with the present Trustees expertise, an excellent tenant was sourced, namely Andrew North. This was achieved through advertising by Webb Paton our Land Agents, who then negotiated the rent on our behalf and an FBT was completed.

The land since has been looked after very well by our tenant with it improving over the years resulting in the sight you can now see when travelling down Granborough Road, it is now in good heart and condition. The Trustees, however, as the landlord, are still responsible for some of the costs in regard to the maintenance of the land (for example hedges, ditches and fencing).

Since the present Trustees took over, a total of £16,559.92 has been paid to St Marys Church Restoration Fund (this is part of the 36% requirement stipulated by the Scheme) and £9,762.91 has been paid to Village Parishioners and to North Marston village projects. All requests for grants are always carefully considered and we aim to respond and support those in need in accordance with the objectives of the Charity Scheme.

The charity has also been criticised for the lack of publicity and it was felt that the general population of the village is unaware that financial grants are available to those in need. In the past, requests for help have been brought to the Trustees awareness via the clergy, the village school and the network of neighbours. As Trustees, we have always acted accordingly and appropriately, and no one has ever been refused help in any way. It is important to stress that it is often a very sensitive situation for those who find themselves facing difficulties and financial hardship and therefore needs to be dealt with, with consideration and discretion. On occasion our offer of help has been refused.

We of course welcome any constructive criticism and suggestions. To that end we have prepared New Grant Making Policy that will be published in very near future. We are presently working on a leaflet about our Charity which would be posted on the Parish Council website in due course. Together with the Charity Commission we will be reviewing the Charity Scheme. We hope that these steps will raise awareness within our village community about the purpose of our Charity and will make it easier for the residents to seek support if needed.

Facing the allegations mentioned above has caused the Trustees great stress, however we hope to move forward and to continue to serve our village community and to support those who need our help.

May 2023

Rev Petra Elsmore (Chair)

Cynthia Hall (Secretary)