

## Annual Parishes Meeting 2021

### Sir Robert Hitcham Almshouses

I am pleased to report that all four Almshouses in Levington are currently occupied, but that one will become vacant in May this year. The Trustees are always pleased to hear from anyone who might be interested in becoming a beneficiary of the Trust and living in an Almshouse: further information about the forthcoming vacancy will be placed on parish noticeboards and relevant websites shortly.

The Almshouses are in a sound state of repair at the moment and in line with best practice, the Trustees are committed to ensuring that they remain so for the benefit of current and future residents. In line with Almshouse Association guidelines, part of the Weekly Maintenance Contribution paid by residents is invested into an Extraordinary Repair Fund for any very large scale and extraordinary work and part is held in a Cyclical Maintenance Fund account, which funds other work. The Trust's policy is to continue to build these reserves for future requirements.

One major improvement which the Trustees hope to make this year is to replace the mixture of old and failing wooden windows in the Almshouses with new, double glazed units, which will be easier to clean for the residents, more efficient and cheaper to maintain for the Trust. This is currently going through Council planning procedures and has been funded from the Trust's Cyclical Maintenance Fund. In order to alleviate issues with damp, a specialist brickwork firm has been replacing much of the old concrete render and pointing with the correct lime mix for this type of building.

The Trust is a registered charity with the Charity Commission and the annual return made by the Trust to this body can be found on the Charity Commission website. In 2019, the Trustees decided to review two important aspects of the Trust. The first was to confirm title to the land occupied by the Almshouses as the Trust had no title deeds or anything else to prove ownership and I am pleased to report that the Land Registry has now registered title of the land with The Official Custodian for Charities on behalf of the Trustees. The second aspect was to review the current governing instrument determining how the Charity should be administered, in particular to clarify whether we should only consider applications from women of reduced income from the villages of Nacton and Levington, as set out in the governing instrument. The Charity Commission asked us to survey local opinion and this we did through consultation of trustees, residents, parish councils, the WI, parish noticeboards and websites amongst others. Following this survey of local opinion, we are asking the Charity Commission to amend the *purpose* of the charity by extending the geographical scope to the County of Suffolk, whilst favouring more local candidates or those with local connections, but not to extend eligibility to men.

The Trustees are currently six volunteers from the parishes of Nacton and Levington, chaired by the Rev. Ian Wilson. Our next AGM will be in the autumn of this year.