THE OCTAGON PARISH

Westbourne Deanery

Diocese of Chichester

Comprising the Parish Churches:
St Mary, Compton;
St Peter, East Marden;
Christ Church, Forestside
St Peter, Racton
St Mary, Stoughton

the Chapels of Ease of:
St Mary, North Marden
St Michael, Up Marden

ANNUAL REPORT
AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT
of the
PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

For the year ended 31st December 2025

INCUMBENT
The Revd Christopher Hancock
The Vicarage, Compton, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 9HD

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER
Mr Charles Lawton

BANK
NatWest Bank

WEBSITE
http://www.theoctagonparish.org.uk

Charity Registration No. 1156866

The Octagon Parish – Open for All

"Showing God's love and caring for our community and churches in the beautiful South Downs National Park"

A community of hope bound together by faith and love

Administrative Information

The Parish is a Charity Registered with the Charity Commission under the name of **The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of the Octagon**, with the Registered Charity Number of 1156866.

During the year 2025 the following served as members of the Parochial Church Council (PCC):
(year of election/re-election)

Incumbent: Reverend Christopher M.J. Hancock

Churchwardens:

- Mrs Carol Stamper (2022)
- Mrs Sarah Lawton (until APCM 2024)

Deanery Synod Reps:

- Mr Edward Cottrell (2024)
- Mrs Jennie Dolman (2024)
- Mrs Annabelle Hancock (2023)
- Dr Richard Hancock (Until APCM 2024)

Elected members:

- Mrs Annie Barnes (Until APCM 2024)
- Mrs Audrey Hamilton (2023)
- Mrs Fiona Mullett (2025)
- Ms Michelle Wooding (2025)
- Mrs Sally Ablewhite (2025)
- Mrs Sarah Lawton (2025)
- Mrs Ros Veltom (2025)
- Mr Richard Barnes (Until APCM 2024)
- Mr Tom Maier (2025)
- Mrs Yvonne Haggard (2025)

OFFICERS

Treasurer: Mr Edward Cottrell (until APCM 2024)
Ms Michelle Wooding (from APCM 2024)

Safeguarding Officer: Mrs Fiona Mullett (2022)

Data Protection and Compliance Officer: Mrs Carol Stamper (2024)

Secretary: Mrs Jennie Dolman (Until APCM 2024)
Mrs Yvonne Haggard (from APCM 2024)

Electoral Roll Officer: Mr Peter Taylor (2024 until APCM 2024)
Mrs Yvonne Haggard (from APCM 2024)

Standing Committee: Rector, Church Wardens, Treasurer

**Lay readers are ex officio members unless requesting not to be on the PCC*

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STRUCTURE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

PCC Membership
The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of the Octagon (hereafter referred to as "the PCC") is a corporate body established by the Church of England. It operates under the Parochial Church Council Power's Measure. The PCC is a registered charity – Reg. No. 1156866. The method of appointment of PCC members is set out in the Church Representation Rules. For 2025, the membership of the PCC of the Octagon Parish is detailed on page 1.

Parish Local Committees
Each of the historic Parishes of the Octagon Parish is administered by a Parish Local Committee (PLC) representing members of its regular congregation. Each PLC is represented on the Octagon PCC by one of their members or by a Churchwarden.

Standing Committee
The Standing Committee comprised the Rector, the two Parish Churchwardens: Mrs Sarah Lawton (until May) and Mrs Carol Stamper and the Treasurer of the Octagon Parish Ms Michelle Wooding.

Members of Parish Local Committees (PLCs) in 2025

Compton and Up Marden	East and North Marden	Forestside	Stoughton	Racton
Sally Ablewhite*	Edward Cottrell *	Jennie Dolman *	Ali Avery	Anna Blencowe
Barlie Adams	Annie Judd	Sarah Hutchinson	Steve Barrett	Ros Gordon-Cumming
Fiona Baker	John Robinson	David Parker	Rosy Bell	Audrey Hamilton *
Annabel Keville	Valerie Robinson		Didi Burden	Gilian King Smith
Amanda Jackson	Jeremy Thompson		Pamela Harry	Richard Hancock
Tom Maier *	Christopher Tite		Di Hughes	
Steph Newell	Penny Walder		Sarah Lawton *	
Robert Sawers			Oliva Pemberton	
Valerie Seddon			Kelly Sidihakis	
			Mano Sindihakis	
			Caroline Taylor	
			Ros Veltom*	

*Elected member of PCC

Octagon Voluntary Roles (not PCC) in 2025

Octagon Bell Ringing
Tim Wright and Joanna Woodcock

Octagon Magazine Editor
Caroline Taylor

Octagon Magazine Advertising
Marilyn Clark

Octagon Music Licensing
Richard Barnes

Octagon Choir Lead
Martin Phillips

Ministry Team

Reverend Christopher M.J. Hancock MA FCA (instituted 29th January 2024)

Mr Ian Coleshill – Authorised Lay Minister (from May 2025)

Mr David Parker – Authorised Lay Minister (from January 2022)

Ms Michelle Wooding – Authorised Lay Minister (from May 2025)

Sidespersons for Local churches 2025

Compton	**East Marden**	**North Marden**	**Forestside**	**Racton**	**Stoughton**	**Up Marden**
Barlie Adams	Penny Walder	Carol Stamper	Jennie Dolman	Audrey Hamilton	Annette Barnsdale	Michael Ablewhite
Fiona Baker	Annie Judd		Roy Fulker	Gill King- Smith	Mike Cochrane	Sally Ablewhite
Amanda Jackson			Linda Fulker		Barney Gowar	Valerie Seddon
Annabel Keville			Paul Holmes		Fiona Gowar	
Tom Maier			Nonie Holmes		Pam Harry	
Jessica Maier			Helen Honeyman		Di Hughes	
Thomas Newell			Sarah Hutchinson		Charles Lawton	
Steph Newell			David Parker		Sarah Lawton	
Robert Sawers					Chris Veltom	
					Ros Veltom	

TRUSTEES ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL 2025

Our Aims and Purposes as a Charity

The Octagon Parochial Church Council has the responsibility of cooperating with the incumbent (the Rector), in the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

The PCC is specifically responsible for the maintenance of the five historic Parish churches of St Mary Compton, St Mary Stoughton, St Peter Racton, St Peter East Marden, Christ Church Forestside together with two chapels of ease St Mary North Marden and St Michael Up Marden. These came together to form the Octagon Parish in 2012. Responsibility for the upkeep of the Chapel of St Paul at Stansted Park has been transferred to the Stansted Park Foundation though the Parish remains responsible for the services which take place there. The PCC is also responsible for supporting the Rector in:

- The promotion of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England;
- Promoting in the Parish the whole mission of the church, pastoral, social, evangelistic and ecumenical;
- Enabling our churches to be accessible to all regardless of their age, colour, sexual orientation, physical ability or economic status;
- Pastoral support and care for people in the Parish, from the eldest to the youngest; and
- Providing financial support to those in need.

What We Planned to do In Order to Achieve our Charitable Objectives

When planning our activities for the year, the PCC considered the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and, in particular, the specific guidance on 'charities for the advancement of religion'.

The PCC has complied with the duty under section 5 of the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016, fully recognizing its duty to have due regard to the House of Bishops' guidance on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

For 2025 we discussed and planned the following objectives and activities to build on the successes of 2024 and fulfil our overall objectives. These included:

- Enabling as many people as possible to worship in our churches and to become part of our Parish community
- Teaching, baptising and nurturing new and existing believers
- Putting faith into action through community engagement
- Offering a range of services with participation opportunities for worship in prayer and scripture, music and sacrament
- Supporting our elderly and other vulnerable people through the establishment of a pastoral team and a lunch club for those living alone.
- Working to make our churches more welcoming and accessible to the people that live in the Parish and to visitors

- Reaching out to the community through provision of village events, festival services, support of the Octagon Choir, the Stoughton Bell Ringers, the Octagon Magazine, the Octagon Parish Website, the weekly bulletin and the Facebook Group
- Maintaining the fabric of the church buildings as historic centres and focuses of community life in our villages
- Ensuring the provision of pastoral care to people living in the Parish
- Providing assistance to the poor and needy of the Parish.

What We Achieved and How We Affected Beneficiaries' Lives

In his first year as Rector, Revd Christopher Hancock focused on getting to know the Parish - the needs and aspirations of its people, communities, and churches. In 2025 the focus has been on revitalising the PLCs, expanding the reach of the ministry team beyond the regular church attendees and daring those on the periphery of church to get closer to the centre.

From an administrative perspective, many roles have been distributed through the leadership team of the Rector, Churchwardens and Treasurer with the key function of advertising and communications being taken on by Michelle Wooding and the role of secretary being taken on by Jennie Dolman and latterly Yvonne Haggard.

This team operated alongside committed local teams in our seven churches to ensure that we were able to keep running for our beneficiaries. Indeed, the Parish is dependent on over 70 people who give their time to support the work of our Parish.

Provision and Attendance at Worship

Weekly worship is focussed on Holy Communion which is celebrated every Sunday rotating through the five historic parishes on a monthly cycle with evensong held at Racton unless there are five Sundays in the month. Average Sunday attendance has risen to 31. Use is also made of the smaller churches: evensong is celebrated once a month during the summer months at Up Marden; special services are held at North Marden on Good Friday, on Ascension Day and on Sea Sunday and midday prayer is said once a month at St Paul's Chapel, Stansted Park. In addition, we look to celebrate each church by keeping its Patronal Festival and by holding additional services in Holy Week and Christmas. We resumed our Tuesday morning online Morning Prayer services during Lent and Advent and in 2025 have commenced a mid-week communion once a month at noon in Compton.

To cater for children and families, a successful and growing family service is held once a month at Compton overseen by our Authorised Lay Minister, David Parker, and led by Mrs Fiona Mullett. They make a very effective team and attendance is around 30 each month.

We continue to support Compton and Up Marden Church of England school, by providing opportunities for prayer and worship through assemblies in the School each week and by hosting end of term services in church.

We are grateful for our band of Octagon organists who accompany our worship under the leadership of Richard Barnes. His fellow organist, Martin Phillips, directs the Octagon Choir which continues to grow and to enhance the worship at festivals and other important services. The bell ringing group have been very active not only in Stoughton but in visiting other churches and hosting visiting bell ringing groups. The choir and the bell ringing group attract several people who are not regular church goers.

In total we held 207 services in 2025 (154 in 2024) with an aggregate attendance of 5,747 (5,158 in 2024) people.

There was an increase of 11% in average weekly church attendance with an increase in attendance of 15% at Easter (no early communion was held on Easter Day) and an increase of 31% at Christmas. We saw 535 people over Christmas at our services in a Parish of just 1,267 souls.

Recent Attendance Across the Octagon:

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Easter	-	120	154	178	163	178
Christmas Eve and Christmas Day	20	285	292	316	410	535
Usual Sunday	-	-	18	25	28	31

(Data taken from CofE Statistics for Mission)

As a sign of the wider engagement of the community and commitment to the Christian life, the electoral roll continues to grow. At the last APCM it stood at 174. Since then, three parishioners have died, and 18 have been added taking the total to 189. (The medium-term target set in 2024 was 200).

The evolution of the numbers on electoral roll in recent years has been as follows:

2019	139
2020	138
2021	134
2022	127
2023	125
2024	119
2025	174
2026	189

We are delighted that two parishioners, Michelle Wooding and Ian Coleshill completed their training as Authorised Lay Ministers and were duly authorised in summer 2025. They have joined our existing ALM, David Parker, in assisting in worship, especially at family services. Our Churchwarden, Carol Stamper, has somehow found time to undertake training as a catechist under the ALM programme. She will be authorised later this year and has already assisted in baptism preparation.

MISSION AND OUTREACH

Social

In a parish where there are limited venues and social services, the church people and buildings provide and important focus for community and care.

Our extremely successful Parish magazine, *The Octagon*, has a circulation of approximately 280 and provides an important service to our dispersed rural community. Caroline Taylor and Malcolm Lamb jointly edit the magazine, and Marilyn Clark looks after advertising revenue. We are very grateful to all of them and to those who generously give their time to distributing the magazine each month.

During the year Michelle Wooding took on the Sisyphean task of producing the weekly Octagon Bulletin. Distributed by email to 276 people, the Bulletin provides up to date information on services and parish events. The Octagon Parish website also provides a valuable communication medium. It enables the distribution of material within the Parish, and (together with our entries on A Church Near You) provides information about the Parish to the wider world and enables those outside the Parish to contact us.

Monthly coffee mornings are held in Compton and in Forestside and our monthly pub lunch has recently returned to the reopened Barley Mow in Walderton. Such community events are an important resource in reducing rural isolation and loneliness, especially amongst the elderly in winter.

Hospitality before and after our services provides an opportunity to get to know new people attending and strengthen our relationships one with the other. Coffee and pastries are served before each family service. Coffee is served after each Octagon Eucharist with the exception of East Marden where sherry is provided. We celebrate the churches' festivals with prosecco.

Many non-liturgical events were held during the year which brought people together to enjoy fun, food and to fund raise. These included a Daffodil Day at Stoughton, Racton Fete, Christmas Fair in Compton and Stoughton and the usual Lent lunches which in 2025 raised money in support of the Sage House Dementia Support based in Tangmere.

Evangelistic

The task of forming and nurturing parishioners in their faith is paramount if the life of the church is to be sustained into the next generation. Although there was just one baptism in 2025 (below our target of at least four a year) we had five confirmations (all adults) and are on track for more in 2026.

During Lent we held a series of talks following the Diocesan theme on the Nicene Creed which celebrated its 1700 year in 2025.

Greek Club meets every Saturday morning to read the Gospel text in its original language, and we are continuing to explore the idea of a mid-week homegroup or bible study to enable people to explore and expand their faith in a less formal setting.

The seven places of worship for which the PCC are responsible remained open for private prayer and exploration every day of the year. The offering of our church buildings for prayer and peace and quiet is an important part of our mission and outreach and we are grateful to all those across our villages who help to clean and maintain our churches as well as those who arrange flowers in them.

In 2025, over 800 people signed our visitor books, some were walking groups or groups interested in historic churches. Our churches may well have been visited by over 1,000 people this year. They include walkers and cyclists. These buildings are havens in this frantic world and offer a place to "be still and know that I am God".

Pastoral

To the extent it can, the PCC looks to make provision for the pastoral care of the population of the Parish. The church has a particular role to play around the significant moments in peoples' lives: at marriage, in childbearing, in sickness and in death. In our community, even those who are not regular attenders at services will look to the church at such times and we welcome them.

We held a well-attended All Souls Service parishioners and families of former parishioners to remember loved ones inviting especially the friends and families of those who had died recently. The PCC plan to provide more special services designed to meet particular needs.

Summary of Birth, Marriage and Funeral Services Across the Parish:

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Marriage Services	9	0	9	8	3	4	6
Marriage Blessings	2	0	3	1	0	1	0
Baptisms	9	3	6	10	6	6	1
Confirmations	4	0	1	0	0	7	5
Burials in our Churchyards	6	2	6	5	2	2	6
Interments of Ashes	6	4	2	5	7	7	10
Funeral Services only	3	5	5	4	6	1	2

In 2024, the PCC began to organise provision of pastoral care beyond the occasional offices: to make an offer for the long-term sick and those who care for them, for the bereaved and those who live alone. Carol Stamper established a pastoral team of those who offer to call on those who find themselves in such situations and a day of training has been held to offer a structured approach to visiting and listening. A series of 'networking' lunches has continued for those who find themselves alone.

A number of donations were made from the Rector's Discretionary Fund to those in need across the Parish at Christmas and throughout the year.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Below are the Consolidated Accounts for the Octagon PCC for the year ending 31st December 2024 based on the five constituent PLC annual statements and the Octagon central account.

The statements have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis by the following:

	Treasurer	**Independent Examiner**
Compton and Up Marden PLC	Robert Sawers	Sarah Hutchinson
East and North Marden PLC	Christopher Tite	Edward Cottrell
Stoughton PLC	Steve Barrett	Ken Symons
Forestside PLC	Sarah Hutchinson	Robert Sawers
Racton PLC	Philip Cooper (died September 2025) Richard Hancock	Ken Symons
Octagon Central Account	Michelle Wooding	Charles Lawton

Copies of the separate annual statements are available on request.

2025 saw continued momentum in giving with donations from parishioners up 35% to £78k (including Gift aid) and, importantly, planned giving up by 49%, in part as a result of the success of the Parish Giving Scheme. The immediate target is to get this regular income to cover the costs of ministry. As a result of savings made in administration, these have reduced to £80k per annum so this target is well within reach. The Diocese has done its part in limiting increases in Parish Share and in 2026 we will actually have a small decrease.

This leaves fundraising and other donations to cover the ongoing cost of repairs to our wonderful buildings. In 2025, some work was conducted at all of our churches with particular attention being paid to the persistently troublesome roofs of East Marden and Forestside. To offset these costs, fundraising events were held around the Octagon with particular highlights being the Racton Fete and the Auction of Promises at East Marden which together raised £22k.

The generosity of parishioners and constant downward pressure on costs enabled us to record a healthy surplus for the year of £42,626.

This has been added to reserves and has helped offset some of the erosion of value in our investments caused first by the inflation of recent years and latterly by the poor performance of our investment manager, CCLA. After years of good returns, our investments lost £13,560 (2.9% of their value) in a year when most managers were delivering double-digit positive returns. The PCC is not complacent and its Investment Committee guided by Tom Maier is investigating alternative managers.

I am very grateful to the Investment Committee and to the band of PLC treasurers and their independent examiners who share in the task of collecting donations, making payments and overseeing our investments. I am particularly grateful to my predecessor Edward Cottrell for his assistance to me as I took on the role.

Trustee payments and expenses

The PCC provides a contribution towards the heat, light and maintenance for the Vicarage and pays its council tax.
Many thanks to everyone who has donated or helped to raise money for our small parish and thank you to all the treasurers and examiners for the individual churches and the overall parish accounts.

Michelle Wooding, Octagon Treasurer

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2025

	£	£
	2025	**2024**
STATEMENT OF TOTAL ASSETS		
Cash at Bank/In Hand	122,894	75,269
Cash Deposits	116,167	117,084
Restricted funds	6,334	6,334
Investments	445,196	462,838
Balance as at 31st December	**690,591**	**661,525**
STATEMENT OF MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		
Brought forward 1st January	661,525	664,994
Net income/expenditure	42,626	(17,764)
Change in value of investments	(13,560)	14,295
Carried forward 31st December	**690,591**	**661,525**

The Accounts were approved by the Parochial Church Council on 22 April 2026 and were signed on its behalf by:

Christopher Hancock
Rector, The Octagon Parish

THE OCTAGON PARISH
Compton & Up Marden, East & North Marden,
Forestside & Stansted, Stoughton, Racton

Independent Report by the appointed Inspector of Accounts

The Consolidated Accounts for the Octagon PCC for the year ending 31st December 2025 are based on the five constituent PLC annual statements and the Octagon Central Account.
Separate statements have been prepared on a receipts and payments basis as follows;

	Treasurer	*Independent Inspector*
Compton & Up Marden PLC	Robert Sawers	Sarah Hutchinson
East & North Marden PLC	Christopher Tite	Edward Cottrell
Stoughton PLC	Steve Barrett	Ken Symons
Forestside PLC	Sarah Hutchinson	Robert Sawers
Racton PLC	Richard Hancock	Ken Symons
Octagon Central Account	Michelle Wooding	Charles Lawton

As the appointed Independent Examiner of Accounts for the PCC, I have seen all of the separate accounts and copies of the reports by the six independent inspectors listed above. I have also checked that the published consolidated accounts of the Parish, as prepared by the Treasurer Michelle Wooding, are an accurate statement of the facts presented to me.

A copy of the inspected Consolidated Accounts 2025 is part of the annual report of the parochial church council.

Signed CHLawton
Date 28th April 2026

Inspector of Accounts
Mr Charles Lawton
Walderton House
Walderton
PO18 9ED

Signed MWooding
Date 28/04/2026

Octagon PCC Treasurer
Ms Michelle Wooding
33 Tournerbury Lane
Hayling Island
PO11 9DJ

Receipts & Payments Account Year Ended 31st December	2025	2024 (Restated)
	£	£
INCOME		
Income Resources from Donors		
Planned Giving	46,995	31,436
Collections (inc wall safes)	13,541	16,023
Income Tax Recovery	17,276	10,200
	77,812	**57,659**
Other Voluntary Incoming Resources		
Fundraising (net)	25,908	9,473
Donations & Miscellaneous	23,348	67,769
Incoming Resources from Operating Activities		
Fees Received	6,575	6,047
Investment Income	12,847	14,451
TOTAL RECEIPTS	**146,490**	**155,399**
EXPENDITURE		
Grants and Charitable giving	473	810
Church Activities		
Parish Contribution to Diocese & Deanery	56,051	52,844
Church Running Expenses (inc administration)	14,508	32,281
Octagon Central Costs (inc Clergy expenses)	10,208	21,265
Church Repairs & Maintenance (burglary costs)	22,625	65,963
TOTAL PAYMENTS	**103,865**	**173,163**
SURPLUS/DEFICIT OR RECEIPTS OVER EXPENDITURE	**42,626**	**(17,764)**

THE OCTAGON PARISH PCC INVESTMENT POLICY

Adopted by the PCC, November 2017, reviewed May 2025

Introduction

The Parochial Church Council (PCC), as trustees of Parish funds, are responsible for investment policy. The purpose of financial investment is to yield the best financial return within the level of risk considered to be acceptable - this return can then be spent on the charity's aims. It is recommended that PCC members read what the Charity Commission says on the matter: http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/detailed-guidance/money-and-accounts/charities-and-investment-matters-a-guide-for-trustees-cc14/

In order to act within the law, the PCC must:

- know, and act within, their charity's powers to invest
- exercise care and skill when making investment decisions
- select investments that are right for their charity
- take advice from someone experienced in investment matters unless they have good reason for not doing so
- review investments on a regular basis
- explain their investment policy in the annual report.

The PCC manages an 'unincorporated charity' and as such the trustees are personally liable for their actions. However, if trustees can demonstrate that they have considered the relevant issues, taken advice where appropriate and reached a reasonable decision, they are unlikely to be criticised for their decisions, or for adopting a particular policy.

Parish Funds and Investment Policy

Parish funds are currently managed in six separate 'pots': the five main churches (Compton, Stoughton, East Marden, Racton and Forestside) and a central fund. It is proposed, until otherwise instructed by the PCC, to continue to manage the six 'pots' separately but to set an investment policy based on the combined financial aims and needs of the Parish. As such, the investment policy will allocate to a combination of suitable investments, taking into account the particular needs of a church and the Parish's needs as a whole. All funds will be either deposited in recognised UK bank accounts or collective investment schemes managed by an authorised investment manager, approved by the trustees.

Investment Objective

The combined investment objective is to protect the capital value of the funds in real terms and to provide sufficient income for any shortfall in cash flow raised annually by the Parish. To this end, the PCC with the advice of the PLC committees will determine from time to time the appropriate investment vehicle given the financial needs of the Parish specifically:

- immediate cash needs (e.g. deposits)
- funds that can be invested for the short term (up to 2 years- e.g. fixed income)
- funds that are not required for the foreseeable future (longer term investments – e.g. balanced funds of equities, bonds and property)
- funding for unforeseen circumstances

Risk Policy

In order to meet the investment objective, some risks need to be taken. These risks will be continually assessed considering the Parish's financial needs. The PCC may also give guidance on capital, market, valuation, liquidity, regulatory, counterparty and governance risks. Above all, the investment policy is to be diversified across asset classes and sectors.

Delegation of Investment Powers

The PCC is responsible for all investment decisions and risk assessments. It may take investment opinions from their appointed Finance Committee, and it will delegate the day-to-day management of funds to the same committee. The PCC may also seek a third-party opinion. The day-to-day management will be performed by the Treasurer with the guidance of the Finance Committee and based on the investment policy and risk profile the PCC determines from time to time given the expected financing needs of the Parish.

Investment Performance

The PCC will review investment performance as a regular item on the PCC agenda.

THE OCTAGON PARISH RESERVES POLICY

Adopted by The Octagon PCC November 2017, reviewed March 2025

The Octagon Parochial Church Council (PCC) is responsible for the upkeep and administration of seven churches (the upkeep of St Paul's, Stansted is the responsibility of the Stansted Estate) and for the pastoral care of its Parishioners. The churches are old, some dating back to Saxon times, and require constant upkeep and repair. Their collective insured value is over £16 million.

The PCC has determined to accrue for known expenses relating to the annual running repairs based on previous years' experience but has also set aside reserves of £75,000 per building, for unforeseen repairs identified by the rota of quinquennial inspection reports.

The PCC has also determined to reserve an additional sum of £70,000 to administer the Octagon Parish in case of emergency.

The PCC has designated the responsibility of investing the reserves to the PCC Finance Committee, chaired by the Treasurer. The committee consists of the PCC treasurer, the local church treasurers, and a churchwarden. All investment decisions will pass through the committee. The committee meets at least once per year. Decisions between meetings, if they are necessary, are made by email.

The reserves are generally to be allocated and invested in recognised and agreed funds of differing risk profiles, managed by UK-regulated Fund Managers, or a bank deposit account. The asset allocation mix of the reserves takes into account the risk profile of each fund and an assessment of the date at which the reserves may be required.

The PCC, together with the Finance Committee, regularly reviews the policy and investments throughout the year based on a continual assessment of expense risks.

MATERIAL STATE OF THE CHURCHES OF THE OCTAGON PARISH

Over the past year, there have been post Quinquennial Inspection (QI) works within the parish and our churches are mostly in good order.

All church external notice boards have been updated or replaced as necessary and routine maintenance work has continued throughout the year.

This year thefts have occurred in two of our churches as detailed below.

The PCC is grateful to all the local church committees and their volunteers who continue to look after our precious churches.

Christ Church, Forestside
Application was made for Heritage Listing, as yet no decision.
The inspecting architect was asked to advise on evident damp in the walls of the church, of particular concern at present being the west gable wall. Additionally, moisture has caused an area of loose plaster at high level on the chancel arch (from which a large piece has recently broken away) and there are also signs of damp in the east wall
The architect has advised that, in his opinion, the re-roofing of the entire building should be budgeted for and plans made for the work to take place within a defined period. It is likely that the roof tiles to the Nave have been in place since 1852.
In July, the pulpit brass lectern and some organ pipes were stolen. The organ and the pulpit lectern have been replaced. They were both obtained from redundant churches. An insurance claim and a generous donation covered the cost.

St Mary, Compton
The DAC visited the church in May 2025 at our request and subsequently advised on roof repairs, redecoration of the south aisle, minor repairs to windows, heating, LED lighting, possible enclosure of organ pipes and consideration to adapting east end pews of south aisle. The PLC subsequently formed a fabric committee and obtained permission to undertake internal decoration of the south aisle which is planned for 2026.

St Mary, North Marden
A quinquennial inspection was undertaken in September. The building is well maintained, watertight and structurally sound. Overall, the church is in a satisfactory condition.

St Mary, Stoughton
A water butt which was causing damp within the church was removed and repairs affecting the fabric of a historic building as listed in the quinquennial were undertaken.
The PCC will be approached to give permission for a feasibility study into the design and installation of a WC and associated facilities at St Mary's Church. The study will be funded from a generous donation about to be made to church funds for the purpose of providing such a facility.

St Michael, Up Marden
The quinquennial inspection had determined that the bell tower required major repairs.
A bat assessment was undertaken in February which determined that emergence surveys were required before starting any works to the tower.

The architect is going to be asked to draw up a works specification for repairs to the tower. These are particularly to the upper stage constructed in timber and lower down to some of the masonry and pointing.
During the summer, bat emergence surveys were carried out and, as a result of the findings, a Natural England development licence is required within three months of starting any works.
DAC permission was granted for a new memorial bench in the churchyard donated by the Hampshire Southeast Ramblers group in recognition of a founder member. This is now in situ.

St Peter, East Marden
The damaged chimney stack was repaired which stopped the water ingress and subsequent remedial work was undertaken to the frost damaged render of the chimney stack at no cost to the parish.
The church path was re-surfaced with Romsey Gravel.
In early autumn, plaster fell from the porch ceiling. Permission has been granted for repairs in 2026

St Peter, Racton
In late December a thief stole the candelabra from the pulpit, the candle snuffer and the electric lamp by the harmonium. An insurance claim has not been made yet as replacement costs may be under the excess of £1000. Th churchwarden is seeking a replacement for the candelabra. The pulpit has been repaired.
The security of the church is to be reviewed.

St Paul, Stansted
The Stansted Trust is responsible for the fabric and upkeep of the chapel.

An appeal has been launched for the repair of the organ which will improve the accompaniment of the parish services which are still held there.

SAFEGUARDING IN THE OCTAGON PARISH

Fundamentally, safeguarding is about the use and misuse of power and the exploitation or protection of the vulnerable. The safeguarding agenda remains an on-going focus within the Octagon Parish.

The aim, in The Octagon Parish, is to maintain a strong safeguarding culture, following sound practice. This is guided by the Diocese safeguarding team, which provides training and support.

Fiona Mullett became the Parish safeguarding officer in 2022 and, having adopted the Safeguarding Dashboard has worked (in collaboration with the PCC) to ensure that the parish:

- Has up-to-date safeguarding policies and procedures
- Is compliant so all officers (and relevant personnel) are trained and have checks (appropriate to their roles),
- Has reviewed our safeguarding culture

There were few referrals made to the Diocese in 2025. Guidance was duly followed and there is no outstanding action to be made by the Parish.

Safeguarding policies (in addition to our Health and Safety Policies) for the Parish are published and are prominent on our website, which is currently being updated.
We continue to prioritise those who might be vulnerable within the community.

All relevant staff and volunteers are up to date with their DBS checks.

DEANERY SYNOD REPORT

The Westbourne Deanery has been led this year by the Rev Tom Robson, Vicar of St John's Southbourne while the Rural Dean, Mother Jessica Reid has been on maternity leave. Jane Wilkinson has continued as Lay Chair. Speakers informed synod about the work of Stone Pillow and Children on the Edge and the Rev Canon Tim Schofield led a challenging discussion entitled "What the Church is for". Matters including Safeguarding and Finance have been regularly discussed. The synod invited members of the parishes to submit their thoughts concerning the appointment of the next Bishop of Chichester following the retirement of Rt Rev Dr Martin Warner.

The Parish has been involved in Deanery activities. Evensong this year was celebrated at Thorney Island. At the Rector's initiative the Parish organised a Deanery Pilgrimage to Chichester Cathedral starting at Stoughton on 31st May 2025. Deanery Prayer Gatherings have continued each month – that on 4th November 2025 was hosted by St Mary's Stoughton.

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Forestside & Stansted
Stoughton, Racton
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Tel: 023 9263 1252

Annual Meeting of Parishioners to be held at
Compton and Up Marden CE School Hall at 7:00pm on
Wednesday 6th May 2026
AGENDA

The meeting will be chaired by Revd Christopher Hancock, Rector of The Ecclesiastical Parish of The Octagon

Only those whose names are entered on the Octagon Parish Electoral Roll or the Local Government Electoral Roll may attend and vote.

1. To approve the minutes of the meeting dated 14th May, 2025
2. To re-elect Mrs Carol Stamper as Churchwarden of the Octagon Parish.

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THE ANNUAL MEETING OF PARISHIONERS

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 14th May 2025
at Compton and Up Marden CE School and Community Hall at 7pm

Present: 29 people whose names are on Electoral Roll of The Octagon Parish or the Local Government Electoral Roll.

Chairman The Rev Christopher MJ Hancock. MA, FCA, Rector of The Octagon Parish

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd May 2024 were agreed.

2. Election of Churchwarden of the Octagon Parish

Mrs Carol Stamper was re-elected and at present will be the sole churchwarden, there being no other nominations. Proposer: Sarah Lawton Seconder: Sarah Williams

Mrs Sarah Lawton's term of office has ended as church warden. She was thanked for her contribution to the parish and for agreeing to continue caring for the church buildings as Fabric Officer.

The meeting closed at 7:10pm

Approved by: _____ Date:

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Octagon Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2025 to be held at Compton and Up Marden CE School Hall on Wednesday 6 May 2026 at 7:10pm
AGENDA

Only those whose names are entered on the Church electoral roll may attend and vote.

The meeting will be chaired by The Revd Christopher Hancock, Rector of The Octagon Parish

1. Opening prayer
2. Apologies for absence
3. To approve the minutes of The Octagon Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting 2024 held on 14th May, 2025
4. Reports -
   a) Annual report on the proceedings of the PCC and the activities of the Parish
   b) Changes to the electoral roll since the last annual meeting
   c) The independently examined financial statements of the PCC for the year ending 31st December 2025
   d) A report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the churches of The Parish
   e) A report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod
   f) Safeguarding report
5. To adopt the 2025 Annual Report
6. Elections of parochial representatives of the laity to the Deanery
7. To appoint the independent examiner of accounts for next year
8. Notices
9. Closing prayer

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ANNUAL MEETING OF THE OCTAGON PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of meeting held on 14th May 2025
held at Compton and Up Marden CE School and Community Hall at 7:11pm

Chairman The Rev Christopher MJ Hancock, MA, FCA, Rector of The Octagon Parish

Present 29 people whose names are on the Electoral Roll of The Octagon Parish or the Local Government Electoral Roll.

1. The Chair opened the meeting with prayer

2. Apologies for absence
   David Parker

3. The minutes of the Octagon Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting 2024 and the Annual Meeting of Parishioners 2024 were approved unanimously.

Tributes were paid to Peter Blencowe and Donald Fowler-Watt, who had died and to Edward Mynors who had retired as a Lay Reader;
Michelle Wooding and Ian Coleshill have been authorized as Lay Ministers.

4. Reports
a) Annual Report on the proceedings of the PCC and the activities of the Parish was received. There has been an increase in church attendance, especially of the Family service. A pastoral group has been established.

b) The new electoral roll has been completed. It increased from 119 to 174, a significant increase to a level not seen for nearly 20 yrs. It is estimated that there may be about 200 regular church attenders.
A vote of thanks was given to Peter Taylor, Electoral Roll Officer.

c) The independently examined financial statements of the PCC for the year ending the 31st December 2024 was received.

As a result of necessary maintenance expenditure on our wonderful church buildings, the Parish recorded a deficit in its accounts of £28,593 (before returns from investments). This will need to be recovered from fundraising in future years.

Many thanks to Friends at Stoughton for finance raising and Charles Lawton, Chair of the Friends. However, it was noted that investments have not performed well under the management of CCLA. Tom Maier volunteered to review the options. It is proposed that a review of the performance of the

investments be included in the annual report for 2025.
A vote of thanks was given to Charles Lawton for inspecting the accounts and to the amazing team of local treasurers.
Richard Hancock was thanked for his work on recruiting people to the new Parish Giving Scheme
Edward Cottrell is standing down and was thanked for his tremendous contribution as Parish Treasurer.
Michelle Wooding will be taking over.

The accounts were approved
Proposed by Fiona Mullet, seconded by Sally Ablewhite

d) The report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the churches of the Parish was received.

Sarah Lawton, the Fabric Officer, reported that the repairs to Stoughton and East Marden were completed. However, since then plaster had fallen from the ceiling in the porch at East Marden. It is scheduled to be repaired in the Spring. Works identified in their Quinquennial Inspections will be completed next year at Compton and Up Marden. All notice boards are now up to date.
It was agreed that our churches are very special. They exist because earlier generations cared for them. We must keep them all as places of prayer,

e) A report on the proceedings of the Deanery Synod was received.

A deanery Confirmation and choral evensong was held. The quarterly meetings continued. The Rector led a deanery pilgrimage to Chichester Cathedral in May.

f) Safeguarding report was received.

Fiona Mullett reported that all bellringers and most members of the PLCs have undertaken basic safeguarding training. PCC members are up to date. She commented that we needed to increase awareness of good safeguarding practices.

4. The Annual Report for 2024 was adopted unanimously.

5. Elections of parochial representatives of the laity to the PCC

Annie and Richard Barnes have stood down.

The following were elected unanimously:
Edward Cottrell
Ros Veltom
Sally Ablewhite
Sarah Lawton
Tom Maier
Yvonne Haggard
Fiona Mullett
Michelle Wooding

6. Jennie Dolman was re-elected as parochial representative of the laity to the deanery
Richard Hancock stood down.

7. Charles Lawton was appointed as the independent examiner of accounts for year to 31 December 2025.

8. Notices

A vote of thanks was given to Richard and Annie Barnes retiring from the PCC. They will still organise the rota of organists, manage organ maintenance, and the section of hymns/music etc.

The Rector thanked the 70 or more volunteers who look after our churches and fulfil various roles during services. He reported that Easter attendance showed an increasing level of engagement. He noted that the entry criteria for Bishop Luffa school have increased to church attendance at least 3 times a month. It is very competitive, especially with the increase in new housing in Chichester. As a result, we are welcoming more young people to our more traditional services.
Service planning meetings every quarter are proving effective.

9. The meeting closed at 20.50 with the Grace.

Signed: ……

Date: ……

The Octagon Parish – Open for All

