

Statement for front page of the website

St Patrick's Church under threat of closure

At the recent Parish Council meeting on 27th September, Council received a delegation of fourteen residents, themselves representing around seventy residents who attended an initial meeting the previous Friday. All of the residents were very concerned at the Church's apparent haste to make such a 'life-changing' decision, and the lack of opportunity for both church and secular users to present their views and opinions; a concern shared by the Council.

Attendees representing those on the Church's electoral roll explained their concerns that the internal documents which have been received by PCC members contain a number of inaccuracies and misconceptions, and that this is misleading when considering such an important decision. The most significant inaccuracies raised are that the pool of regular church-goers is significantly larger than suggested, and also that local groups can be accommodated elsewhere. Charvil Village Hall (the suggested alternative to St. Patrick's) regularly operates near to its practical capacity; and East Park Farm (which was designed as a 'sports hall') is an unsuitable venue for 'non-sport' activities from several perspectives, including its availability, its lack of storage space, various health and safety issues and child protection.

The representatives of the Pre-School who attended a recent meeting were doubly concerned because of the possible disruption to the important Foundation Level educational stage they provide for the twenty-six children attending presently. Most, if not all of the other Pre-Schools in the local area are full and operating waiting lists and it would be very difficult for families to find suitable alternative accommodation.

The Guides and the Pre-school will have great difficulty finding another home in Charvil; there is also no mention of the possible loss of local jobs if the pre-school were to close, and that it would mean the loss of the only community focal point in the northern part of Charvil.

In addition, once the accounts had been scrutinised, it would appear from a distance, that the financial position for the Ecclesiastical Parish is healthy, and that St. Patrick's Church is not a drain on its resources.

Council members had been given a copy of both the sermon announcing the possible closure of St. Patrick's Church, and the letter given to parishioners beforehand, so that all were fully briefed on matters beforehand. After hearing all the concerns and having read all these documents, the Parish Council unanimously approved a motion as follows:

“Charvil Parish Council opposes any change of use to the current role of St. Patrick's Church Hall and actively supports the Congregation, Community Groups and other residents who use it.”

We believe that closure of the Hall will alienate its congregation, displace or force the closure of many of the community groups and clubs that use it and, taken together, have a very damaging impact on an entire community. We also believe that the Hall should be the focal

point of the Church's stated desire to widen its congregation, as it is a perfect platform to embrace the 150 children, their parents and other users of the Hall.

An interest group called "Friends of St Pats" has just launched a website and on-line petition to provide further information and gather support for a public campaign to counter the threat of closure – the petition is particularly revealing as it allows petitioners to add comments explaining the consequence of closure or suggesting an alternative course of action - please see <http://fostpat.webs.com>

We are very concerned that the current proposal appears to lack rigorous analysis; alternatives may not have been methodically explored; and that an open and considered consultation process has not taken place.

We believe that the closure of St Patrick's Church Hall will have an enormously detrimental impact on the religious, educational and social provisions within Charvil and seriously damage our community.