

## Henley Municipal Charities

### Annual Report – 2023/2024

Henley Municipal Charities have been operating Henley's almshouses for centuries. The almshouses occupy three sites – Church Avenue (in the churchyard of St Mary's Church), Vicarage Road and Western Close, Henley. The Charities also own a number of commercial properties in Henley which enables the funding of maintenance of its almshouses and the provision of charitable grants to local projects and individuals.

There are a total of six homes in Western Close, four in Vicarage Road and 13 at the Grade II listed Church Avenue site. Everyone gets together at the Christmas lunch and an annual summer event which is usually a trip on the river.

Under the terms of the constitution, these will remain almshouses in perpetuity and will never be sold.

Henley Municipal Charities is special – residents, many of whom are elderly or vulnerable, are visited by trustees on a monthly basis. Trustees check on residents' wellbeing and look to identify any maintenance issues. The Charity has a long track record of supporting its residents and sensitively maintaining its historic almshouses. Residents are charged a maintenance contribution which is around 50% of market rent with the balance funded by the charities.

Residents do not have a tenancy agreement, they have a license to occupy. They must be local people from Henley, Bix or Greys, be "in need" and of good character. Before selection, they are interviewed by a panel of trustees. If they are offered an almshouse, they must be able to live independently and cooperate with neighbours and trustees within the agreed terms of the license to occupy.

We encourage residency for life. The longest serving resident, who recently passed away at the age of 94, had been a resident for 30 years.

The trustees are comprised of local residents, town and district councillors, the Mayor of Henley and the Vicar of St Mary's. We are supported by our wonderful clerk, Wendy Bowsher.

Currently there are 27 residents occupying the 23 almshouses. As almshouses become vacant, they are advertised locally and always generate more demand than can be satisfied with our current stock.

This year has seen the Charities relaunch a project from 2002 – the construction of up to six new almshouses at the rear of its site at Western Close. The charities are currently seeking pre-planning advice and, should full planning permission be granted, hope to apply for funding from South Oxfordshire District Council to support the delivery of these new houses.

We will be sure to advertise any vacancies in your parish so that local residents who might qualify for an almshouse can apply. Many people do not know about the Henley Municipal Charities and the almshouses – they are a wonderful part of the history of our local area.