

## Henley Municipal Charities

### Annual Report – 2024/2025

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.

In addition to the Almshouse Charity, the Municipal Charities comprise a number of charities which provide grants to residents in need. These include the Education Grant to support people at school or in higher education as well as to educational institutions, the Bridge Trust and Relief in Need. Residents are warmly encouraged to contact the clerk, Wendy Bowsher, if they would like to find out more about making an application.

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.

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 and are very ably chaired by a resident of Rotherfield Greys, Tristan Stubbs.

As almshouses become vacant, they are advertised locally and always generate more demand than can be satisfied with our current stock.

The trustees have been working hard this year on complex projects involving the Charities' commercial premises, in addition to the ongoing work of maintaining the historic almshouses.

Planning for the construction of new almshouses to meet the growing demand for this type of accommodation, is ongoing.

We will be sure to advertise any vacancies in Rotherfield Greys, 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 and provide essential housing to the most vulnerable members of our community.