**WATLINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ADVISORY BOARD**

**Meeting with the Rector and Churchwarden of St Leonard’s Church on Tuesday 30th October 2018 at 8.00p.m.**

Present:

Advisory Board: Gill Bindoff, Keith Jackson, Terry Jackson, Matt Reid, Peter Richardson

St Leonard’s Church: Rev Daniel Thompson (Rector), Nigel Paterson (Churchwarden)

The meeting was held to share updates on the Watlington NDP and building works at the Church.

1. Watlington Neighbourhood Development Plan (WNDP):

* The WNDP is now a ‘made’ Plan and adopted by SODC. The aim of the Parish Council is to implement it and ensure that the facilities and services needed by a growing population are provided as far as possible.
* Planning applications on sites allocated in the WNDP for development are being made. There may be up to 1000 new residents of the parish over the next few years. The main area for development is on the Church side of the town to the north and west.
* As new homes are built, the parish will receive funds raised from the Community Infrastructure Levy which will be spent on schemes prioritised by the Parish Council in consultation with the community. These funds could be used to provide new facilities for community use.
* St Leonard’s Church could provide a very useful location for community use in the area of the town closest to new homes.

1. The community role of St Leonard’s:

* The Parochial Church Council is committed to increasing community use of the building and broadening its local appeal as a venue for a wide range of activities.
* Changes to enable a wider use have been planned over several years and building works are expected to begin in January. These will comprise an extension to provide a kitchen and toilet facilities.
* Good lighting systems are already in place together with audio visual facilities to enable a wide range of activities to take place.
* The Church is a successful venue for concerts/performances and will be the venue for the Paddock Picturehouse over the winter months.
* The seating capacity is about 120 but can be increased to 150 if needed.
* Extended use of the building is expected to generate income to offset mounting costs. The hourly rate is flexible to take account of the nature of the use/event but is set at approximately £18 per hour.
* Future projects may include a new platform for bell ringers which could create an additional space in the base of the tower for smaller scale activities including meetings etc. and new heating systems using ground source heat and solar panels.
* Plans are in place to ensure that the wider community is well informed and up to date with the planned changes to the Church. It was suggested that a stall at the Christmas Market on 1st December would be a good opportunity to let people know what will be happening.

1. Development of the Church Hall site:

* The Diocese will develop both the new Rectory and the additional house on the site. This is also expected to commence in January.
* There will be 22 new parking spaces with the option of using overflow parking on the retained green space adjoining the Churchyard. It is likely that current residential users of the parking area will be able to continue but this will be reviewed over time.

1. Moving forward:

* It was agreed that good communications should continue between the PCC and the Advisory Board in order to maximise the benefit of increasing community use of St Leonard’s as the population of Watlington grows.