

Excerpt from Fran Hopkins Report - Benefice Treasurer

As in previous years my records for the accounting year Jan 1st to Dec 31st 2015 include receipts and payments for 2014 and 2016. Adjusting for this the total receipts for the magazine in 2015 is £1,520, total payments ££1,870. A loss of £350. 2014 showed a loss of £420. This was attributable to fewer receipts that year. Costs have remained fairly consistent.

Conclusion: combined loss over 2 years of £770. This was clearly unsustainable, and what surplus there was had been quickly eroded.

Way Ahead Meeting. ACH. March 31st

This led to an urgent review, not only of the finances but also of the format and content of the Magazine. As *The Benefice Magazine* it was previously under the editorial control of Pauline Stentiford. When Rev Celia Cook arrived the structures of production and management were very unclear so I offered to convene a meeting to with a view to charting a clearer way forward. Almost two dozen people attended that meeting in the ACH, bringing together representatives for the Mag team, PCs and PCCs. I am very grateful to all who came along to that meeting. The numbers attending, together with the enthusiasm of the contributions, gave a clear idea of the importance we attach to our Magazine, and its central role in ensuring good communications within and between our villages.

Steering Group Meeting

That meeting gave a clear mandate for change, and I brought together a steering group, with representatives from all four villages. No responses had been received from readers in the 10 days after we had published our ideas in the May issue of the Magazine. We took this as a sign either of overwhelming apathy - or, more positively, that people were keen for us to get on with it. We took the latter course. We tasked ourselves with taking key decisions, as mandated by the initial meeting, and concluded that the nettle needed grasping sooner rather than later. As a consequence the June issue will show those changes, the main ones of which are:

Principle: This will clearly be a secular magazine with church contributions, rather than a church Magazine with secular contributions - a corollary of the bulk of the money coming from secular sources.

1. There will be colour on the cover and inside spread.
2. The title will change to *The Fynn-Lark News* (provisional)- *the Magazine for the Parishes of Great-and Little Bealings, Playford and Culpho*.
3. The cover design will change - and keep changing. The first issue will feature parish bridges.
4. Of the 10 editorials a year, two will be church-led (Easter and Christmas), and two will be contributed by each of the villages.
5. Our two editors remain but NP will be in the background as consultant for difficult decisions.
6. We are setting up our own independent bank account. We need a Treasurer and signatories.
7. We need to have stricter control over the size of the Magazine, with a more consistent template. We need to prescribe word counts.
- 8 The content: this will evolve more slowly, but we have various ideas for innovation.
9. Advertising. A new scale of charges will be published next year. For the rest of this year we need to negotiate. We need more advertising. We also have a clearer policy re. charity adverts a/ Within parishes b/ Outside parishes.
10. We received quotations both from Sharward Services and from KDS, our current printers. The more colour we use the more advantageous it is to stay with our present printers. The difference over one year amounted to £500. Next month's colour edition will cost about the same as previous black and white editions, if we can keep to 28 pages plus colour cover. KDS will also deliver to a Dealings address.
11. In a normal year we calculate that we should aim for income of £2500, to cover potential over-runs of pages and other expenses. That could be covered by:

a/ Proportionate PC contributions amounting to around £5/600.

b/ There is the possibility of a Village Hall contribution.

c/ The rest would come from 10 pages of adverts, calculated at £200 per annum per page.

12. The steering committee will meet twice a year, one of the meetings being in November, to set a budget for the following year.

13. NP is prepared to be Co-ordinator for the rest of this year and for 2017, but no more. This is conditional on support for our plans from all 4 PCs and all 4 PCCs.

Where are we now, and why was this review so urgent? We have less than £400 to be transferred to our new account, I think we have identified three or four more advertisers in the last couple of days, which will help. Please be fully aware that the situation is urgent. If we have no money in the account we will not be able to commission our printers to print any impending issue. Those responsible for moving the Magazine forward are confident that the future of the Magazine is bright, provided that we can move positively over the next few months. The future of this Magazine - or, at least, its free distribution to every household in our four villages - is in the hands of our readers, the Parish Councils and those who entrust us with the advertising of their wares and services. The following notice will appear in June:

- We seek help from **anyone** who can be, or might be able to identify, possible advertisers, to fill the pages allocated to advertising.
- Parish Council contributions become all the more vital.
- Any donation, from whatever source, will be greatly welcomed.
- We would be pleased to attract sponsorship from business or private sponsors. (Any sponsorship would be acknowledged appropriately)

Good communications are part of the very fabric of community life in rural villages. While there may be many who now rely on digital media, we are persuaded that a modernised hard-copy Magazine, distributed free to all households, will still have a vital role to play in years to come.

Norman Porter. 16* May 2016.