

Improving homes boosts clergy morale

FOR the Rev James Cook, it was a genuine sign of how much he felt valued by our diocese.

He and his wife Suzanne had moved into the vicarage at Christ Church, Totland Bay, in 2013 and had been very happy there. Their only slight disappointment from the start was with their kitchen and utility room, which were looking a bit ‘tired’.

They redecorated the rooms, but there seemed to be no prospect of the cabinets and work surfaces being renewed. So they were delighted to get a phone call out of the blue from our diocesan office, asking them to contact kitchen suppliers.

Their new kitchen was fitted last year as part of our diocese’s £600,000 commitment to improve clergy housing in the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. It was a recognition that the state of clergy homes makes a massive difference to the morale of clergy and their families. It was also a recognition that there had been a historic underspend on clergy housing in previous years compared to neighbouring dioceses.

Our diocese’s Property Sub-Committee was given the job of looking at all of our vicarages and working out which needed the most urgent repairs. Around £200,000 will be spent from diocesan reserves in each of the three years, shared geographically across each of our Archdeacons.

The money has been allocated from the sale of property no longer required to house ministers. Kitchens and bathrooms were given top priority, as those are usually the issues that cause most problems for domestic life. And for James and Suzanne Cook, the process of refitting their kitchen last year was very smooth and didn’t cause too much disruption.

“The appointed suppliers had showrooms on the island, so we could see the various finishes from which we might choose,” said James. “Their designer promptly visited the vicarage, measured up, made suggestions and emailed with excellent drawings and impressions of the finished product.

“The design was so good that we only had minimal changes to suggest, and these were readily evaluated and accepted where appropriate. The main contractor then agreed an installation date in advance and stuck to it.

“The installers and local flooring contractor made every effort to avoid undue disruption to our domestic life. The finished product is very much to our liking: quality cabinets maximising storage, floor space and work surfaces, plenty of electrical sockets, and good lighting.

“Not only are we delighted, so are our congregation, feeling that the diocese is showing it cares about us and our ministry. So we say a big thank you to Chris Pride, the diocesan surveyor, and all those who have



Paul and Becca Chamberlain outside their new vicarage



Left: the new kitchen at Christ Church vicarage in Totland Bay; right: the Property Sub-Committee meets to consider improvements

worked to provide us with the new kitchen.” In 2016, our Property Sub-Committee also ensured that new kitchens were installed at the vicarages occupied by several clergy and their families – the Rev Andrew Poppe in Cowes, the Rev David Power in Copnor, pioneer ministers Barney and Sara Barron in Warren Park, the Rev Ian Snares in Cowplain, the Rev Will Hughes in Petersfield, the Rev Jane Ball in East Meon, and Canon John Draper in Rowner.

There were new bathrooms for the Rev Janice O’Shaughnessy in Newchurch, the Rev Darcy Chesterfield-Terry in Fratton, the

Rev David Power in Copnor, the Rev Claire Towns in Swanmore, and the Rev Gregg Mensingh in Botley.

This was all on top of the regular repair and maintenance work which is normally carried out by our property team – Chris Pride, our diocesan property manager and surveyor, and Sue Rau, our property administrator. They are the first point of contact for our clergy families if there is a problem, and they have a network of contractors who can be called in to help.

As well as helping our clergy deal with issues in their vicarages, they also manage

tenants who live in our parsonages during parish vacancies and the glebe land we own.

We rent out clergy housing to tenants, usually on a short-term basis between one vicar or curate moving out and the next one moving in. We also hold some glebe land, mainly in agricultural use. The income from both tenants and our glebe land helps to reduce the amount that needs to be raised across the diocese by parish share.

And our Property Sub-Committee, chaired by Norman Chapman, who is a member of Bishop’s Council, includes our three Archdeacons, who have an in-depth



Vicarage is first for 18 years

IT’S the first brand new vicarage built in our diocese for 18 years – and it’s long awaited.

It will be the new home for the Rev Dr Paul Chamberlain, vicar of St Faith’s Church, Lee-on-Solent, his wife Becca, and their children from this month.

The four-bedroomed detached house in Victoria Square has been built to the highest environmental standards possible, with solar panels, comprehensive insulation and a heating system that recycles warm air.

It includes a separate entrance for the study, to ensure privacy for the vicar’s family.

For Paul and Becca, who have been living over three miles away in the vicarage for St Thomas, Elson, for three years, it will be a relief to finally move in.

“It’s a lovely house which I’m sure will be a very happy family home,” Paul said. “It’s modern and its uber eco-friendly, which will ensure



One of the three other detached homes being built on site our carbon footprint is very low. It’s also a lovely area and good for us to live in the community that we’re serving, and where the children already go to school.”

And Becca said: “It’s a fabulous house which we’re really looking forward to living in.”

The last brand new purpose-built vicarage in our diocese was at St Mary’s Church, Warsash, which was

completed in 1999.

The new vicarage was needed at St Faith’s because the previous building had to be demolished.

Its structure and foundations were damaged by bombing in the Second World War and subsequent repairs never quite addressed the problem. It was also very damp.

To help pay for it, three other homes are being built

on land also owned by the diocese in Victoria Square. They have been designed to fit into the style of housing in the local area.

These detached homes will be completed in the summer, and many potential buyers have already signalled their interest.

This allowed our diocese to use existing assets to help pay for the new vicarage, rather than using parish share payments designed for mission and ministry.

There is also a programme of landscaping around the new homes, as agreed with Gosport Borough Council, which includes the planting of hedges and trees.

The Archdeacon of the Meon, the Ven Gavin Collins, said: “We’ll be planting species that are in keeping with the area, that are mature and healthy, and have potential to grow further.

“We’re confident that residents’ views of Victoria Square will be just as pleasant as before, if not more so.”



The Rev Ian Snares in his new kitchen

New kitchen makes a difference

IT has made a real difference for Ian and Jo Snares to have a modern kitchen in their vicarage.

When Ian became vicar of St Wilfrid’s Church, Cowplain, he inherited a kitchen that was 15 or 20 years old. So last year builders

moved in for a couple of weeks to transform the room with brand new fixtures and fittings.

“They took down the pantry which was part of the room, and that made it look a lot bigger,” said Ian.

“And they

transformed a tired-looking kitchen into a modern, functional kitchen.

“It has made the space more usable, and given us more space. The contractors were excellent – they did great work and were very friendly.”

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