

A statement in response to 9th Sale Scout fundraising banner, 27 June 2020

“No need for scouts to close” claims local vicar

“There is no need for 9th Sale Scouts to close,” says the vicar of St Anne’s, the Revd Canon Alison Cox. **“There are two halls side by side on Budworth Road; with willingness on both sides, surely the scouts can continue their activities in the hall next door to their own.”**

In July 2019, the church council from St Anne’s Church decided to sell its land where the scout hall is currently located in order to fund urgent re-ordering in its church building.

St Anne’s Church offered to accommodate Sale 9th Scouts in its hall next door to the present Scout Hall on Budworth Road. The offer included providing additional facilities on the site paid for by the church. The scouts turned this option down last year during the negotiation between the two parties.

Instead, the scouts have opted to buy the site where their hall is situated from St Anne’s Church who own the land. The scouts have begun their fundraising campaign to raise the amount needed but have warned that if they cannot achieve this, the scouts will close.

“In these days of Covid-19, many local and national charities - including our own - have lost income and fundraising opportunities; families have lost salaries and we know there is more financial hardship to come,” says Revd Cox. **“I urge the scouts to think again about their refusal to use the St Francis’ Centre so that their activities may continue in Sale Moor without the need to ask hard pressed, local families to fund raise.”**

The church council has been discussing decorating, installing new heating and other much needed improvements for St Anne’s church for decades. The stumbling block has always been how it would be paid for. **“We have finally recognised that releasing our assets from the site we own on Budworth Road would go a long way towards paying for this project. We can no longer afford to ignore this option before us,”** says Revd Cox.

OUT OF DATE LEASE

The site next door to St Francis’ Centre was originally bought in 1961 to house a vicarage for the new church. St Anne’s ran out of money and could not afford to build both the vicarage and the church so a dual purpose hall was built instead called St Francis. The land beside it - where the planned for vicarage should have been built - stood vacant for nine years. In 1970, the church council signed a 21 year lease with 9th Sale Scouts allowing them to put their wooden hut on the site and use it for their scout activities. A peppercorn rent of £1 per annum was agreed. The lease was renewed in 1984 for another 21 years; it has not been renewed since.

The Charity Commission has stated that peppercorn rents are no longer acceptable. In December 2019, the church council asked the scouts to pay a more realistic rent contribution but they refused.

Note: St Anne’s Church is unaware that it has ceased to sponsor 9th Sale Scout; this is not our understanding and invite the scouts to explain this statement.

ends