



St. Cuthbert's Church, Copnor has served the community which has grown up around it, for 90 years.

In 2012 the church re-opened after an extensive renovation which saw the original building split into three, to accommodate cutting-edge community facilities.

Vision

The wide-ranging vision saw the original church building - described by Nikolas Pevsner as 'an ambitious and in many ways an original design' - split into three.

In the east end a GPs' surgery was to be created, in the central part, a four-storey community complex would be built and in the west end a new worship area was planned. The final £180,000 phase saw the worship area finished in time for Easter Sunday 2012.

How did you start?

Planning for the project started in 1999, and the church's Parochial Church Council embraced the vision in that year. The Baffins GP Surgery, which at that point operated from a cramped building nearby, became the church's major partner, and fundraising started in 2000.

In 2004, the congregation moved out of the building and started worshipping in Langstone Junior School while the new GPs' surgery was built in the east end of the building.

The four-storey community complex came next, and that is now being used by a children's centre, a pre-school, Portsmouth College students and other community groups. Once that was completed in 2007, worshippers could meet for Sunday services in a hall on the top floor of the community complex.





The worship area in the east end of the church was refurbished in time for three services over Christmas 2011, but the congregation moved out again while builders completed the new entrance and foyer. Visitors can now access the church, community centre or surgery via the new foyer.

What was the total cost of the project?

The total project costs were £4.5m.



What lessons were learnt?

The vicar, the Rev David Power, who has been at the church since 1997 and oversaw the entire project. He said: “It has been quite a journey, one that has been challenging, but I have been blessed with the skills and support of so many other people. The congregation have been wonderful – they have held together through thick and thin.

“And the PCC have been extraordinary, the best PCC in the entire Church of England in my view, a wonderful body of people. Since 1999 we have met over 135 times, virtually all the decisions about the project have been unanimous and we haven’t had a single row! It has been a privilege to sit with them.”

Successes:

In May 2012 the bishop, the Rt. Rev Christopher Foster, re-dedicated the entire building – not just the worship area – at a service to celebrate the success of the project, and declared:

“We are brimming over with delight at the completion of these projects, the transformation of this building and the fulfilment of the vision for St Cuthbert’s, a church and so much more,” he said.



16,000 buildings. One resource

“This is truly a spiritual house - not just the one-third of the building devoted to worship, but the whole complex of community facilities, the surgery and its people make this a spiritual house.

“This is a re-dedication not of St Cuthbert’s Church, but St Cuthbert’s - the whole complex with all its interlocking elements and the whole parish. It is a re-dedication, not just of a building, but of the people here, residents, worshippers, neighbours, congregations, office-holders and clergy.”



Any future plans for the building?

There is still some work remaining – worshippers want to build a new vestry, landscape the garden and create a suitable backdrop for the altar. These final elements of the project will be done as funds permit.

There are also plans to create a new font as a centrepiece of the worship area. One dramatic design being considered would look like a swirling vortex of water rising from the earth, topped with a stainless steel bowl.