

THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON Tuesday 1 February 2022
Via video conference starting at 7pm

Present: The Bishop of Huntingdon (in the Chair), Revd Canon Brian Atling, Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker, Very Revd Mark Bonney, Dr Felicity Cooke, Revd Canon Adrian Daffern, Revd Becky Dyball, Revd Canon Sarah Gower, Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Canon Simon Kershaw, Mrs Elaine Levitt, Revd Dr Robert Mackley, Mr Steve Mashford, Revd Canon Anna Matthews, Canon Peter Maxwell, Ven Hugh McCurdy, Revd Canon Nick Moir, Canon Rob Needle, Revd David Newton, Canon Janet Perrett, Mrs Sarah Robinson, Canon Lizzie Taylor and Mr Christopher Townsend.

In attendance: Canon Paul Evans, Ms Rebecca Boswell, Mrs Sheena Bridgman, Mr James Owen, Mr Andrew Read. Revd Canon Simon Talbott,

Dwelling in the Word was led by the Revd Canon Nick Moir

Apologies were received from the Bishop of Ely, Revd Canon Dr Jessica Martin

The **Minutes** of the Bishop's Council meeting on 23 November 2021 were agreed and signed.

Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.

Bishop's Business - The Bishop of Ely is additionally acting as Bishop of Lincoln, while maintaining regular contact with Senior Staff in Ely. The Bishop of Huntingdon will chair Bishop's Council meetings, with the exception of the all-day May meeting.

New Deputy Directors of Education (Sarah Conant) and Mission and Ministry (Revd Peter Leech) have been appointed and both start after Easter 2022. The Ven Hugh McCurdy steps down as Archdeacon of Huntingdon & Wisbech in April, and will continue in an EDBF role to coordinate Deanery Development Planning and leading the Changing Market Towns Project.

Diocesan Synod Report - in 2022 Diocesan Synod will focus on Finance at their meeting in June and Living in Love and Faith at the October meeting.

Safeguarding update: The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Ms Rebecca Boswell, summarised the Safeguarding Annual Report. New practice guidance has been published by National Safeguarding Team and includes three documents commended to Bishop's Council for adoption: *Responding Well to Victims and Survivors of Abuse*; *Declaration of Conflict of Interest policy*; *Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults*. Referrals at end 2021 had increased by 21% over 2020. It was noted that the increased number of Confidential declarations and DBS checks reflected an increase in recruitment numbers. DBS checks are now required to be repeated every three years

There were 19 Safeguarding Agreements in place at end 2021

New House of Bishops guidance on Safer Recruitment Practices was implemented in January 2022. The EDBF Safeguarding Team continues to promote new training, the new guidance and the renewal of self-assessments to parishes.

Past Cases Review 2 report was passed by Board in November 2021 and the Safeguarding Team is now working on a range of recommendations reflected in Past Cases Review.

Thanks were given by Mr Jon Chapman (JC), Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Liaison Group, to DSA and her team.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Liaison Group has been renamed Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP). As Independent Chair, JC is reassured that areas of leadership, training, safer recruitment, policies, procedures and processes are sound.

Ely2025 Changing Market Towns: The Ven Hugh McCurdy, Archdeacon of Huntingdon & Wisbech, as Chair of the Market Towns Board, and the Revd Jon Randall, Project Leader for Changing Market Towns (CMT), gave a mid-term presentation reviewing progress, delivery planning, staffing and a project reset.

The first 18 months of the project showed good progress with positive returns on the investments made. All activities halted immediately at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic which impacted targets, relationships within and between the towns and the success of the overall project. Through Covid there was rapid development of community-related initiatives.

John Truscott, a church administration and operations specialist, was engaged at the project's mid-term to undertake a review. The successes in the market towns should be celebrated, however he identified weaknesses to be addressed; leadership challenges, cultural change, lack of support staffing, insufficient planning for future sustainability, a disconnect between Market Towns and the Diocese, together with weak local ownership and strained relationships. JT's report can be read on the Diocesan website: <https://www.elydiocese.org/church-in-action/changing-market-towns/market-towns-mid-term-project-review.php>

Four key areas of future focus include strengthening links to the Project Board and to the Diocesan centre, providing leadership in both staffing and governance, rethinking mission and staffing in the context of each town and the promotion of a spiritual heart to the whole project. The Project team has developed a delivery plan to address and action these recommendations. All recipients of Strategic Development Funding across the country are carrying out reviews and/or project resets post-Covid.

Breakout Groups discussed the question: *How do you think the project could work with deaneries, parishes and others over the next three years to enable and sustain church growth and community transformation?*

Business of the Ely Diocesan Board of Finance - Revd Canon Brian Atling (BA)

The Diocese's auditors will commence their annual audit in March 2022 after which the final figures will be known. The anticipated deficit of £900k will be substantially reduced as a result of a remarkable performance on Ministry Share receipts against what was anticipated (approximately 94% received of that requested). One of the Diocese's investment managers has distributed an unexpected Fund dividend of £500k, and this, together with adherence to keeping clergy numbers within the cap set by Bishop's Council and close attention to expenditure, has reduced the deficit.

The budget for 2023 will provide considerable challenge with current levels of inflation. There will be an increase in clergy stipends, staff costs and request for Ministry Share.

+C agreed that **Project Lancaster** (new office building) will become a standing item on the Bishop's Council agenda, with a presentation by the Chairman of the Project Lancaster Board, Canon Tim Walters. The Board overseeing the project is a sub-Committee reporting to the Finance Committee.

Deanery Development Planning: Both Bishops visited each Deanery Chapters before Christmas to encourage participation in the exercise. Documents for LivingEly2025 available via the website <https://www.elydiocese.org/about/strategy/living-ely2025/>. The Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech outlined the purposes for the exercise.

The role of each Deanery is one of facilitator, enabling and encouraging churches and parish communities to consider their local development needs, and to coordinate responses.

After Easter, Hugh McCurdy, having retired as Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech, will continue to support engagement in LivingEly2025 in the Deaneries and parishes thus providing extra capacity.

The National Sports and Wellbeing Project was introduced by the Archdeacon of Cambridge. Bishop's Council accepted unanimously the commendation that Ely become one of the pilot Dioceses for this project. The Revd Danny Driver (Christ the Redeemer, Cambridge) will represent the Diocese of Ely on the national working group.

Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee.

Huntingdon and Wisbech: there have been no candidates for the March Team Vicar post. Revd Sandra Gardner has been licensed to additional parishes.

A full review of all **Lay training** pathways via Revd Julie Norris as Diocesan Director of Lay Ministry will be complete before Easter. Outcomes will be presented to Bishop's Council.

The meeting closed with prayer at 9pm

Dates of remaining 2022 Bishop's Council meetings: 23 March, 21 May - all day, 6 July, 28 September, 23 November.