

THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON Wednesday 15 September 2021
Via video conference starting at 7pm

Present: The Bishop of Ely (in the chair), the Bishop of Huntingdon, Mr Donald Ashmore, Revd Canon Brian Atling, Very Revd Mark Bonney, Revd Canon Adrian Daffern, Revd Martin Dale, Mrs Sue Freestone, Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Canon Simon Kershaw, Mrs Elaine Levitt, Mr George Lynn, Mr Martin Macfarlane, Mr Steve Mashford, Revd Canon Anna Matthews, Canon Peter Maxwell, Ven Hugh McCurdy, Revd Canon Nick Moir, Mr Rob Needle, Revd Carol Nicholas-Letch, Canon Janet Perrett, Mrs Sarah Robinson, Revd Canon Simon Talbott, Canon Lizzie Taylor and Canon Tim Walters.

In attendance: Canon Paul Evans, Ms Rebecca Boswell, Mrs Sheena Bridgman, Revd Dr Hannah Cleugh, Mr Adam Evans, Mr Jon Green, Mr Martin Kenward, Mrs Lorraine Orbell, Mr James Owen, Mr Andrew Read.

Dwelling in the Word was led by the Bishop's Senior Chaplain, Revd Dr Hannah Cleugh

Apologies were received from Mr Francis Burkitt and Mr Stephen Tooke

Retired members: Revd Canon Mike Booker, Mrs Diana Lucas, Revd Canon Alison Myers, Dr Arvan Pritchard.

The **Minutes** of the Bishop's Council meeting on 22 May 2021 were agreed and signed.

Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.

Bishop's Business - the Bishop's recent Ad Clerum will be sent to all members of Bishop's Council.

Safeguarding update: The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Ms Rebecca Boswell, updated Council members on the current number of referrals, from whence the referrals may come, the current number of Safeguarding Agreements (17) and training numbers.

She also advised Bishop's Council of the new Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidance documents and training which were published in June 2021, replacing those from 2016 already adopted. Online training modules are available, supported by an updated e-manual

The Diocese of Ely Safeguarding training dates for 2022 will be published in mid-autumn

Proposal to Council members from Bishop Steph to adopt formally the new Safer Recruitment and People Management Guidelines was carried unanimously.

The Bishop of Huntingdon paid tribute to the DSA and her team

Business of the Ely Diocesan Board of Finance

Budget Proposal for 2022 - Revd Canon Brian Atling (BA)

The preliminary forecast figures for the out-turn of 2021 was a deficit of approximately £1m. BA was pleased to report that, as at September 2021, the predicted deficit had reduced to just under £600k. Ministry Share income also remains at a positive level and better than anticipated, being currently just 3.4% below the equivalent figure at the same period in 2020. He thanked the Archdeacons for managing tightly the clergy vacancy situation, adding that office running costs were reduced due to savings made through staff working from home and close management of all

Diocesan Office expenditure, although expenditure has increased where equipment has been purchased or replaced to support staff home-working.

The Budget leaflet for 2022 had been circulated after consideration by both Finance Committee and the Deanery Liaison Group (DLG). The national stipend benchmark for 2022 is to be increased by 1% to £27270 (a 1% rise). It was decided that the Diocese take the opportunity to increase stipends into line with National Church, which would mean a 1.5% stipend increase. Therefore, a recommended corresponding increase in Ministry Share of 1.5% was agreed by Finance Committee and DLG.

BA added that the 2021 increase in National Insurance contributions was not going to be passed on to parishes.

A vote of thanks was given to Deaneries and parishes for their generosity in connection with Ministry Share.

Proposals:

1. That Bishop's Council accept the Budget for 2022

Proposer: Revd Canon Brian Atling

Seconder: Canon Tim Walters

Passed unanimously

2. That Ministry Share be increased by 1.5% for 2022

Proposer: Revd Canon Brian Atling

Seconder: Revd Canon Simon Talbott

Passed unanimously

Thanks were noted to the Financial Controller and the Finance team.

Bishop Stephen acknowledged with thanks the remarkable generosity of the parishes in the face of the pandemic also noting Bishop's Council's appreciation for the support and engagement of the Deanery Liaison Group members

Future Office Accommodation

The circulated business case had been agreed by Finance Committee, with the strong assurance that no Ministry Share contributions will be required to finance the new building. DLG had also considered the financing of the project and are satisfied that this is something the Diocese can financially afford. Funds are able to be taken, with the auditors' approval, from the Diocesan Pastoral Account to purchase the freehold at Lancaster Way, Witchford, and build the new office building. The freehold of Bishop Woodford House will be retained by the Diocese of Ely Religious Educational Trust (DERET), preserving the Diocese of Ely foothold within the bounds of Ely.

The purpose of building new offices is to better serve the needs of the Diocese, the Deaneries, teams and parishes. The new offices would be designed to be as environmentally efficient as possible, to accommodate staff working in a hybrid fashion i.e. home working with contact time in the office, to be Health and Safety and Equality Act compliant, which the current premises are not.

A new building would offer new methods of working with stable and fast IT, together with up-to-date training suites with near-broadcast standard equipment for the transmission of Safeguarding training events, a new suite of training programmes for Mission and Ministry plus hybrid meetings to permit both in-person and video conference attendance.

The Diocesan Secretary advised that Kings Ely are very keen to proceed with renting the entire Bishop Woodford House site from DERET (they would continue with the lease of the former Retreat House)

The Diocesan Secretary commended the business case to Council.

Proposals:

1. That Bishop's Council approves the continuing work by the Project Team to acquire the site on Lancaster Way facilitate move plus building per business case.

Proposer: Revd Canon Brian Atling
Seconder: Revd Canon Simon Talbott
Passed unanimously

2. That Bishop's Council authorises the Diocesan Secretary to continue with the lease negotiations of letting of Bishop Woodford House to Kings Ely on behalf of the Trustees of DERET.

Proposer: Revd Canon Brian Atling
Seconder: Revd Martin Dale
Passed unanimously

Bishop's Council to be updated once decision is reached

3. That a Project Board be created as a Sub Committee of Finance Committee to manage the project between Bishop's Council meeting and report to Bishop's Council

Proposer: Revd Canon Brian Atling
Seconder: Revd Martin Dale
Passed unanimously

Terms of Reference for the Project Board are to be brought to the next meeting of Bishop's Council (November 2021)

Strategy Implementation Group

The Bishop of Huntingdon reported that work has begun on a Diocesan Strategic Implementation Plan. Dave Gardener from the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich will be guiding Ely colleagues through the Jigsaw planning framework.

Deanery Representation on Bishop Mission Orders: the circulated draft document aims to permit Bishop's Mission Orders to have elected representation on their local Deanery Synods. These nominated representatives will become electors in Diocesan and General Synod elections in the same way as elected parish representatives.

Proposal: That the amended document go forward to Diocesan Synod for approval.
Carried by majority

Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee.

The Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech presented the Deanery restructuring plans for the Deaneries of Yaxley and Fincham & Feltwell, which had been discussed and agreed at ADMPC level. With the recommendation of the Archdeacon, members of Bishop's Council were invited to give approval to significant structural reorganisation.
Passed unanimously

The Archdeacon of Cambridge advised that, in recent days, it had come to his notice that St Andrew the Great in Cambridge had proceeded with a re-appointment process without following due process, involvement or authorisation from the Rural Dean. This process is in place to support the management of clergy numbers, the distribution of posts and relevant expenditure.

Bishop Stephen reiterated the stipulation that, in order not to disadvantage any other parishes, every future request for a post must be brought in the first instance to the appropriate Deanery before commencing any part of the appointment process, and that communication at all levels was both necessary and required. Suitable candidates must be interviewed by the appropriate Archdeacon as the Bishop of Ely's representative before any formal appointment process commences.

The Archdeacon of Cambridge in his upcoming meeting with the incumbent was to ascertain why STAG had breached the standard process and to confirm that STAG recognise and acknowledge their potential support might be needed for another parish in vacancy, whose clergy appointment might have been delayed as a result of this aberration.

The Archdeacon is to bring an update to the next Bishop's Council meeting

General Synod Elections

Elections for General Synod are taking place for four (4) Proctorial members and three (3) members of the House of Laity. There are 10 candidates for election in each House:

House of Laity

Mr David Berry
Dr Jonathan Chaplin
Dr Felicity Cooke
Mrs Rebecca Cowburn
Miss Hannah Fytche
Dr Martin Johnson
Mr Richard Morgan
Dr Thomas Nixon
Canon Elizabeth Taylor
Mr Christopher Townsend

House of Clergy

Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker
Revd Dr Lee Gatiss
Ven Dr Alex Hughes
Revd Paul Hutchinson
Revd Canon Nick Moir
Revd Charlie Newcombe
Revd Toby Sherring
Revd Canon Simon Talbott
Revd Eleanor Whalley
Revd Dr Caroline Yandell

Hustings will take place over Zoom on 29 September for the House of Laity, Canon Simon Kershaw in the Chair, and on 30 September for the House of Clergy, Canon Janet Perrett in the Chair. The voting period ends on Friday 8 October 2021.

Bishop Wynn Trust: Resolution to approve re-appointment of EDBF as Custodian Trustee

Bishop Stephen explained that the Deed had remained unreformed since 1954. It is now being degendered for current standards. The Resolution refers directly to how these discretionary funds are managed and requires an annual audit going forward.

Passed unanimously

The remaining papers on the agenda were deemed business.

The meeting closed with prayer at 9.25pm

Dates of next Bishop's Council meetings: 23 November eve