

THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON Saturday 20 MAY 2023
In person at St Mary's, Ely

Present: The Bishop of Ely (in the Chair), Revd Canon Brian Atling, , Very Revd Mark Bonney, Mr Francis Burkitt, Dr Felicity Cooke, Ms Lindsay Davies, Revd Becky Dyball, Revd Canon Sarah Gower, Ven Richard Harlow, Mrs Elaine Levitt, Mr George Lynn, Revd Dr Robert Mackley, Revd Canon Dr Jessica Martin, Canon Peter Maxwell Canon Rob Needle, Revd David Newton, Revd Iain Osborne, Canon Janet Perrett, Mr John Pigott, Mrs Sarah Robinson, Revd Canon Simon Talbott

In attendance: Ms Rebecca Boswell, Mrs Sheena Bridgman, Canon Paul Evans, Mr Jon Green, Canon Andrew Read, Revd Peter Leech

Eucharist led by the Bishop of Huntingdon

Apologies were received from the Revd James Blandford-Baker, Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Canon Simon Kershaw, Canon Lizzie Taylor, Mr Christopher Townsend and Canon Tim Walters

The **Minutes** of the Bishop's Council meeting held on 23 March 2023 were agreed and signed by the Bishop of Ely. There were no **matters arising**.

Bishop's Business: Bishop Stephen welcomed Revd James Shakespeare as interim Archdeacon of Cambridge. He advised that Deanery Development Planning is currently more advanced in some areas than others and discussed the challenges of deployment, buildings and ministry and being imaginative with ministry and responsibilities. He encouraged further discussion about the full economy of ministry.

Safeguarding update: Ms Rebecca Boswell presented her update to May 2023. 93 referrals had been received by the Safeguarding Team - mostly resulted in the team members giving advice and support in connection with welfare concerns. There are 47 open cases within which there are 21 Safeguarding Agreements. There are less than five open cases against Church Officers. New guidance has been received from the National Safeguarding Team in connection with new Safeguarding Agreements, the Church Safety Plan.

609 DBS checks have been completed in the year to date. Digital DBS checks can now be carried out and this process has been rolled out in some parishes. This is to be followed up.

76% of parishes are now signed up to the Parish Dashboard

Bishop Stephen expressed deep appreciation to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and her team.

Deanery Development Planning/ Principles and Practice of Stipendiary Deployment - presentation by Ven Richard Harlow, Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech. The Archdeacon focussed on issues of resource and deployment of stipendiary clergy, using two Deanery examples for discussion. The role of stipendiary clergy and what it encompasses should be considered as well as the areas of new housing, financial squeeze on parishes, growing younger church, what criteria should carry the most weight when deploying stipendiary clergy. The Diocese is currently subsidising over 50 stipendiary posts and the Archdeacon raised the question of the wealthier parishes offering financial support to those parishes less financially able.

The presentation was followed by table discussion and suggestions to the Archdeacon of Huntingdon & Wisbech for future planning.

Ely Church Buildings Partnership - presentation by Ven Richard Harlow, Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech. This is a new initiative where churches may apply to join - where churches are closed

the EDBF will make that decision. The Diocese's Church Buildings and Pastoral Department holds a list of contractors who may be sent in to carry out high level maintenance. There is funding available from the central church for a Church Building Support Officer; a bid is being prepared.

Giving and Parish Giving Scheme - presentation by Martin Kenward, Projects and Development Officer. Mr Kenward gave his presentation about the benefits of being a member of the Parish Giving Scheme, other forms of digital giving and giving generally.

Deputy Director of Planning: The background to the Job Description for this role was introduced by the Diocesan Secretary who gave the background to the decision to create the position (creating the capacity to deal with change). The elements of the role include creating the 2035 strategy; deal with managing the processes to bring Deanery Planning together; publicising the Ely's direction of travel across the Diocese; writing applications in connection with identified funding to minister to new communities, supporting Children and Youth and training for ministry. Costs for half of the post is to be funded for time limited contract up to 4 years with funding from NCIs (EDBF to fund the balance). The post holder could be an ordained or lay person (holding Christian values).

Relocation Board: The Chair, Canon Tim Walters, advised that six tenders had been received for the construction of the new Diocesan office at Lancaster Way. Four of these were considered suitable, of whom 2 were interviewed. The interview panel identified a local firm on the grounds of cost and project plan. The ground breaking ceremony will take place led by Bishop Stephen on Thursday 29 June 2023. The Relocation Board's role is to monitor costs, progress and snagging. The Diocesan Secretary advised that staff will be invited to work in the building once it had been fully commissioned and tested and a complete guide to using the building had been produced and issued.

Development of Ministry in our Parishes was introduced by the Bishop of Huntingdon and followed by discussion and subsequent reportage from collated comments circulated. Revd Peter Leech also provided the current list of Bishop's Advisers.

Business of Ely Diocesan Board of Finance: Revd Canon Brian Atling, Vice Chair of the EDBF, introduced Adam Halsey from haysmactintyre, the Diocese's auditors, and invited him to give his report.

Mr Halsey reported that the annual audit was clean and that the Diocese's accounts were satisfactory, with good budgetary controls, management and governance. He stated that EDBF had the best accounts management in any Diocese. The Annual Report and Accounts showed a small, although manageable, deficit and positively compared Ely's finances with other Dioceses where structural deficits were in place. Mr Halsey recommended that the reserves policy be increased from three to six months.

He confirmed that the Diocese of Ely/EDBF is a going concern. The sector is challenging, but he has no concerns about EDBF and commended the Annual Accounts to the Trustees (members of Bishop's Council). There were no questions to the auditor.

Motion - to accept and approve 2022 Statutory Report and Annual Accounts

Proposed: Revd Canon Sarah Gower

Seconded: Revd Dr Rob Mackley

Unanimously agreed

The 2022 EDBF Statutory Accounts were therefore accepted, approved and signed.

Assets Sub Committee - Francis Burkitt (Chair of the Assets Sub Committee) gave an introduction to the role of the committee with particular reference to two long term major projects, the sale of Diocesan land to form the future development called The Lattenburys and the lease of land at Rat Hall, Balsham for use as a solar farm.

The Lattenburys project will develop housing, with educational facilities, and space for a church and a vicarage. A potential yield of approximately £50m will assist in the creation of possibly 20 new clergy posts.

Proposal: that Bishop's Council gives their full consent to Francis Burkitt as Chair of Assets Committee to initiate the next stage of the Lattenburys Project.

Proposed: Canon Janet Perrett

Seconded: Revd Dr Rob Mackley

Agreed unanimously

There was extensive discussion regarding the proposed solar farm at Rat Hall, Balsham. It was agreed there would be a Zoom meeting to discuss the Heads of Terms for this project in more details (set for 5 July 2023).

Risk Register - George Lynn (Chair of Audit Committee) advised that the Risk Register is reviewed annually in advance of annual audit and is then brought to Bishop's Council for endorsement. The live log is reviewed every quarter. The Operational Risk Register mirrors the views of the auditors and is considered to be satisfactory.

A Risk Register is to be prepared relating to Project Lancaster.

Diocesan Synod - forward planning was outlined by Revd Canon Sarah Gower (Chair of House of Clergy). The Bishop's Advisers will be commissioned at the June meeting of Synod, at which meeting the Annual Accounts will be presented for endorsement and an update on Project Lancaster (new office building).

The next meetings of Bishop's Council were subsequently confirmed as 27 July 2023, 28 September and 23 November.

The meeting closed with prayer at 3.50pm