

THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON Wednesday 24 March 2021
Via video conference at 6.45pm

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 Mike Booker, Revd Martin Dale, Mrs Sue Freestone, Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Canon Simon Kershaw, Mrs Elaine Levitt, Mrs Diana Lucas, Mr George Lynn, Mr Martin Macfarlane, Mr Steve Mashford, Revd Canon Anna Matthews, Canon Peter Maxwell, Ven Hugh McCurdy, Revd Canon Nick Moir, Revd Canon Alison Myers, Mr Rob Needle, Revd Carol Nicholas-Letch, Canon Janet Perrett, Dr Arvan Pritchard, Mrs Sarah Robinson, Revd Canon Simon Talbott, Canon Lizzie Taylor, Mr Stephen Tooke Canon Tim Walters.

In attendance: Canon Paul Evans, Mrs Sheena Bridgman, Revd Dr Hannah Cleugh, Mr Adam Evans, Mr James Owen, Mr Andrew Read

Dwelling in the Word was led by Mrs Elaine Levitt

Apologies were received from Mr Francis Burkitt and Revd Canon Adrian Daffern

The **Minutes** of the Bishop's Council meeting on 27 January 2021 were agreed and signed.

Matters Arising: The Bishop's Study Day held on 3 March, dedicated to introducing Living in Love and Faith, had the highest attendance to date and formal thanks are noted for Dr Eeva John, Revd Canon Dr Jessica Martin and the Bishop of Lancaster for their guidance through the day.

Synod Information note: Presented by the Chairs of Houses and recommended for onward distribution to Deanery Synods and PCCs. At the suggestion of the Revd Nikki Mann, the Bishop's BAME Adviser, Synod agreed to carry out, in autumn 2021, a Diocese-wide and gender audit across the Diocese, which was widened to include disability and LGBTQ+. This will produce a strategy for better inclusion. The Chairs of Houses highlighted the plans for future Synod business, advising there would be an additional informal meeting for the incoming 2021-2024 Synod members with specific focus on Living in Love and Faith resources. Additional topics include Ely2025 strategy, Deanery planning, clergy and lay minister wellbeing, climate and environment and the diversity audit.

Bishop's Business: Bishop Stephen emphasised his requirement to focus on kindness to others.

Business of Ely Diocesan Board of Finance (EDBF): Revd Canon Brian Atling (BA), Chair of EDBF, presented the draft end of year figures and noted that the financial situation was far more positive than had been anticipated. The end of year deficit has reduced to less 50% of that forecast as investment income started to be paid and the unexpected total of 94% of funds requested were received through parish contributions to Ministry Share. BA formally expressed his sincere gratitude to the parish and Deanery Treasurers for this marvellous achievement.

BA noted the increased uptake in parish applications to the **Parish Giving Scheme (PGS)** which has, with its regular income, allowed parishes to meet more easily their Ministry Share requests. BA strongly commended consideration of joining PGS to those who have not already considered it. Diocesan expenditure has been kept to the lowest figure possible. BA warned that 2021 is expected to be a financially challenging year.

The annual audit of the Diocesan accounts is currently ongoing and should be complete by end April.

Formal thanks are recorded to Finance Committee and the office team.

Clergy vacancies: BA advised that the Diocese continues to operate within the agreed cap on clergy numbers and is keeping within budget. Vacancies previously agreed by Bishop's Council are in the process of being filled. Market Towns vacancies, as noted, continue to be filled when required. The Archdeacons request Bishop's Council's permission to appoint to two further vacancies, both of which will not be affected by a pastoral re-organisation process. It is hoped that the pause in clergy appointments will be lifted in Autumn 2021, when the management of filling vacancies will revert to the Archdeacons.

Proposed: Brian Atling
No abstentions

Seconded: Janet Perrett

Passed unanimously

Ely2025 Strategy Implementation Group (SIG): Bishop Dagmar reported that SIG is currently concentrating on Deanery Development Planning, Buildings Oversight Board, Market Towns, Clergy Wellbeing, Diocesan communications, the restructuring of schools and church closures. SIG is also considering how the Diocese plans to look at the end of 2022 and is currently laying markers for the direction of its work.

Clergy Wellbeing Covenant

Ven Dr Alex Hughes (AH), Archdeacon of Cambridge, read and confirmed the motion passed by Diocesan Synod on 13 March 2021.

“This Synod affirms and adopts the Clergy Covenant for Wellbeing Act of Synod 2020; commits the Diocese of Ely, through its senior staff and institutions, to implement the Covenant and the associated shared commitments as an integral part of all aspects of diocesan work;

Proposed by Canon Janet Perrett

Seconded: Ven Dr Alex Hughes

This Synod

asks the Bishop's Council to bring back to this Synod by the end of 2021:
a. proposals for implementation of the Covenant at a diocesan level; and
b. proposals for how the Covenant should be taken to deaneries and parishes.

Proposed by Canon Janet Perrett

Seconded: Ven Dr Alex Hughes”

It was proposed that, if approved by Bishop's Council, a Task Group with full Terms of Reference would be set up to carry out this work on behalf of the Council and to steer Council on how to mainstream clergy wellbeing in all aspects of our daily lives. This Task Group will also form part of the extended and refreshed Clergy Wellbeing Forum.

Following discussion in breakout rooms, each appointed scribe is to send a summary direct to AH to share with Bishop Dagmar.

The proposed Terms of Reference will be proposed to Bishop's Council at the 22 May meeting, subsequently reporting to Bishop's Council in autumn 2021, prior to reporting to Diocesan Synod.

Proposed: Alex Hughes

Seconded: Simon Talbott

Unanimously approved

Unloved Buildings

The Ven Hugh McCurdy presented the attached slides. The novel options raised in connection with local and Diocesan Trusts were discussed with questions being raised about finance and funding,

acknowledging the difficulties of being realistic, governance and liability, careful process management and potential on-going worship.

Bishop Stephen thanked HMcC for raising novel options regarding local and Diocesan trusts.

Diocesan Synod and General Synod elections: the timetable for General Synod elections will be circulated once it has been finalised.

Through careful scrutiny and debate during the expected online hustings, candidates are to be encouraged to demonstrate transparency in their motivation and purpose for standing. The online hustings are expected to probe candidates' stands on the anticipated issues to be debated during the forthcoming quinquennium.

Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee: the minutes for both Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committees were received. There were no matters to be raised, and there were no questions.

The remaining papers on the agenda were deemed business.

Any Other Business :

The Bishop's Mission Order for the Deaf Church to operate across the Diocese was proposed and commended by Bishop Stephen

Agreed unanimously.

The meeting closed with prayer at 8.58pm

Dates of next Bishop's Council meetings:

22 May - all day by Zoom
14 July eve
15 September eve
23 November eve