

## THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 30 JANUARY 2025 AT ETHELDREDA HOUSE

**Present:** The Bishop of Huntingdon (Chair), Revd Natalie Andrews, Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker, Very Revd Mark Bonney, Dr Jonathan Chaplin, Canon Dr Felicity Cooke, Revd Dr Beth Cope, Miss Lindsay Davies, Revd Danny Driver, Revd Canon Becky Dyball, Mr Christopher Falvey, Revd Canon Sarah Gower, Ven Richard Harlow, Revd Canon Philip Howson, Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Canon Simon Kershaw, Mrs Elaine Levitt, Revd Canon Rob Mackley, Canon Janet Perrett (by Zoom), Mr John Pigott, Mrs Sarah Robinson, Mr Jon Smith, Mr Christopher Townsend, Canon Tim Walters, Mrs Felicity Watson.

**In attendance:** Revd Iain Osborne, Revd Peter Leech, Mr Jon Green, Mr Jon Young, Ms Anna Spriggs (part attendance), Mr Jonathan Chapman (part attendance), Mrs Philippa Pearson (Clerk).

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The Bishop of Huntingdon and Acting Bishop of Ely welcomed members new and returning for the new Triennium and opened the meeting with Dwelling in the Word.

1. **Apologies were received from** Canon Francis Burkitt, Mr George Lynn, Canon Lizzie Taylor.
2. **Elections update: Bishop's Council (nominations and co-options) and Vacancy in See Committee**

#### 2.1 Bishop's Council

Jon Green advised that following Bishop's Council elections at the end of 2024, all posts have been filled. There were three Bishop's appointments: Canon Francis Burkitt, Lindsay Nevis and George Lynn. The Council had not yet co-opted anyone, and four spaces are available, if required. Members are asked to contact Canon Tim Walters with recommendations.

#### 2.2 Vacancy in See Committee 2025-2028

The current committee will continue with their work although a new one has been elected. The Ven Dr Alex Hughes has spoken to the Prime Minister's Senior Appointment Advisor and they and the Archbishop of Canterbury's Senior Appointment Advisor will visit the Diocese in March to take soundings from the Committee.

**Proposal: That Mr Jon Green, Interim Diocesan Secretary, to be appointed as Secretary to the Vacancy in See Committee.**

**PROPOSED:** Mr Simon Kershaw  
**AGREED:** UNANIMOUS

**SECONDED:** Mrs Felicity Watson  
**ABSTENTIONS:** None

The Committee will meet soon and confirm if a new Chair is required.

**ACTION:** VinS Committee

Elections took place in October 2024 for the 2025-2028 Vacancy in See Committee which has 20 members; the minimum membership is 21 to include *Ex officio* and elected members. It was **AGREED** that another five members should be admitted to this Committee.

Mr Jon Green will form a sub-committee from Bishop's Council members and send recommendations for additional membership by email for approval by Bishop's Council. Current membership of the Committee should be advised, to include size of the committee and deanery placement, and recommended new members are to be drawn from lay members and clergy across both archdeaconry areas and from Bishop's Council. **ACTION:** JG

### 3. Minutes of the Bishop's Council meetings held on 26 November 2024

#### 3.1 Approval:

The minutes were **unanimously APPROVED**, subject to the day of the week amended to

Tuesday from Thursday, and the following amendments to Item 7:

- i. Page 7, paragraph two last sentence to omit: *It was noted the T&F report did not identify any deficiencies nor evidence that anything is awry.*
- ii. Appointment of a Core HR group, Chair of EDBF/Finance Committee, Finance Terms of Reference: Penultimate line in final paragraph amended as thus: *In the event of an appointment being needed prior to such review, it would be for the Bishop to appoint.*

### **3.2 Matters Arising:**

None.

## **4. Safeguarding**

In the absence of Mrs Rebecca Boswell, Mr Jonathan Chapman, Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, reported. A report was circulated before the meeting.

### **4.1 Local update**

Canon Paul Evans has now left the Diocese and Mrs Rebecca Boswell will be leaving in March 2025 after eight years in the role of Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor. The recruitment process for this role is in process with the aim of having a successor in place in June/July 2025. This will leave a gap for a professional strategic safeguarding lead and to oversee operational matters. There is confidence that the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor role will be filled after discussions with the Bishop of Huntingdon and the national safeguarding team, and it is important to get the right person. Other dioceses have had a good recruitment response to similar roles. In addition, the structure of the safeguarding team will be reviewed to ensure it is future proofed.

The diocesan safeguarding team are extremely busy, and training is now a large call on their time and HR resources. It is important that safeguarding training is maintained and to mitigate the additional workload on the team, there has been an agreement for the organisation that provides the out of hours safeguarding advice service to take up additional hours and also some discussion around how the safeguarding operational capacity can be achieved in the interim.

### **4.2 National update**

A paper looking at the suggested models of safeguarding will be discussed at General Synod in February. This includes options for the safeguarding structure to remain in dioceses and a recommended option that the safeguarding function would go to a national team. This would potentially affect personnel in the diocese and the cathedral, and that some aspects of safeguarding would move to another organisation.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) have recently carried out a victim and survivor review and a key recommendation from this was to seek to alleviate some of the pressure put on the team for matters that don't meet the safeguarding threshold. The safeguarding team will need to triage how this is accommodated with their workload.

A national safeguarding audit will take place in February 2026 for the Diocese and Cathedral.

The Bishop of Huntingdon advised that General Synod will also be considering more accountability in senior roles in response to recent serious allegations and reports in the media and acknowledged that there are some inaccuracies in reporting. The Bishop gave thanks to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, Parish Safeguarding Officers, parishes, benefices and communities across the country for their work and dedication during difficult times. The Bishop asked Council members to keep in their prayers those that have been affected by recent revelations, and if anyone needs further support they are encouraged to contact in confidence the Bishop, Archdeacons, safeguarding team or national organisations.

It was noted that potential changes to the structures of employment of diocesan safeguarding teams cause some uncertainty to team members, yet nonetheless, Mr Chapman confirmed that the team are providing excellent safeguarding delivery, safely and to national guidelines.

The interim Diocesan Secretary will do an exit interview with Rebecca Boswell which is part of EDBF's policy guidelines. **ACTION: JG**

The Bishop of Huntingdon gave thanks to Mr Chapman for his work.

## **5. Induction to Bishop's Council**

### **5.1 Role and duties of Trustees and Directors**

Ms Anna Spriggs, partner at Howes Percival and Registrar for the Diocese of Peterborough, discussed a document she had prepared and distributed on the Roles and Responsibilities of the Members of Bishop's Council. This included requirements of being part of registered charity, legislation and governance, guidance on various aspects of duties and responsibilities, consideration of conflicts of interests as a member of Council and transparency of *modus operandi*.

The Board/Council need to re-confirm their approach to conflicts of interest. EDBF's Conflict of Interest Policy will be reviewed and tabled for re-adoption at the March meeting. Agendas will henceforth include a standing item for declarations of conflicts in relation to items on that meeting's agenda. **ACTION: JG/Clerk**

Many or most Trustees will have some standing conflicts of interest (e.g., clergy in receipt of a stipend or living in a church house, trustees of other charities such as PCCs whose finances are affected by EDBF decisions). Trustees are to consider and identify such issues, so they can be registered. **ACTION: EDBF Trustees**

Further information and guidance are available at:

[Conflicts of interest: a guide for charity trustees - GOV.UK](#)

Thanks were given to Ms Anna Spriggs for her work on this, who left the meeting after this agenda item.

### **5.2 Bishop's Council and Board: current priorities**

The Bishop's Senior Chaplain and Strategy Advisor.

Revd Iain Osborne considered the Council's spring-clean of its processes over the past year and acknowledged that are still some things to do. This is an exciting time for the diocese on mission and strategy requirements with opportunities to look in new directions and projects to plan for. Members of Bishop's Council plan strategy for the Diocese as a whole and recommend this to Diocesan Synod, whereas defining strategy for EDBF Ltd as a charitable company is a focused role for its Trustees. It is important to consider the whole Diocese holistically and include all parishes, schools and the cathedral. Projects will need to be prioritised to consider which ones are viable and will fulfil strategy going forwards.

The recruitment of a new bishop is a high priority along with a Diocesan Secretary and Safeguarding Advisor. HR support for EDBF staff, clergy and PCCs will be reviewed. A sub-group looked at governance in 2024 and three aspects were highlighted that need to be considered by members:

- how the council self-evaluates
- how to engage with mission and ministry
- trustee assurance and risk management

For the latter, this will include the appointment of a new Trustee Assurance Group, considerations of comprehensive risk registers, restarting the audit committee and being more risk-led in our work approach.

Revd Osborne concluded that the overall strategy process aims to ensure that the urgent projects doesn't lose sight of the important ones and that matters will be discussed in greater detail at future Council meetings.

## **6. Bishop's Business**

The Bishop of Huntingdon gave a presentation on mission priorities over the next three years, with the emphasis on growing churches and social action.

Positive indicators are growth in all areas with half of churches reporting an increase in attendance, including some smaller churches, more involvement with outdoor space, Warm Space and Foodbank. We need to consider the pathways for the next steps in curating this growth.

Challenges include financial ones, particularly the three-year forecast for the Diocese which shows a deficit. The Diocese has held down overheads, and the Ministry Share has fared better than other dioceses. Other challenges include vacancies and filling these locally and from national pools, trust in churches and Living in Love and Faith feelings. To face these challenges, we need to build on strengths and inspiration.

Growth from healthy churches relates to The Five Marks of Mission, principles that need to be at the forefront of our mission. We need to challenge people across the dioceses and be bold in their work. Deanery Development Planning was implemented in 2023, and the strategy aims to facilitate growth from healthy churches, promote key leaders and supporting smaller churches with the tools to grow.

Areas of priorities for growth are:

- New communities
- Children and youth work support
- Rural leadership
- Support for church schools to strengthen parish ties
- Social justice support at grass roots level
- Financial support to encourages parishes to not have a deficit and seek growth in investments as well as using investment income to reduce costs in other projects
- National church funding programmes to consider
- Inspire people and their faith, provide skills and support to accomplish projects
- Communicate good new stories
- Use information from DDP to action requirements

The Diocesan Synod meeting on 8 March and Bishop's Council on 26 March 2025 will discuss priorities in more detail, with a planning point of mid-2025 to action projects.

Discussions included supporting clergy at the frontline with funds and personnel to implement changes, and support to include mentoring and counselling. How this can be developed needs to be considered in the light of HR changes, particularly at EDBF. It was noted that the job description for the role of Diocesan Secretary has been discussed in detail at the weekly Heads Of Departments Meeting (HODs) and will be advertised in February-March 2025. The Interim Diocesan Secretary will be doing exit interviews with Canon Paul Evans and Revd Canon Brina Atling as part of standard policies and procedures for EDBF staff.

Thanks were formally given by the Bishop of Huntingdon and Bishop's Council to Canon Paul Evans for his eleven years of service as Diocesan Secretary and Revd Canon Brian Atling for the year being Interim Diocesan Secretary.

## **7. Business of the Ely Diocesan Board of Finance**

Canon Tim Walters, Chair of EDBF.

### **7.1 EDBF Managements arrangements**

A recent change to structure now means that meetings will have a main focus that alternates between Bishop's Council and EDBF Trustees, and agendas will make clear which set of duties and powers apply to each item of business.

Committees:

- The Financial Committee considers financial aspects and Ministry Share, making representations and reports to Council and EDBF on outcomes. Membership needs to be confirmed now, and recommendations will be advised at the Bishop's Council meeting March 26 2025.

**ACTION: TW/JG**

*(Post-meeting note on the basis of having checked the Terms of Reference: Members (up to five) are appointed by the Council every three years, running on the same timeframe as*

*the Council triennium. The Committee also includes two ex officio members - the Chair and Vice-Chair of EDBF Ltd - and can co-opt up to three further members.)*

- The Assets Sub-Committee considers investments and glebe land assets and making the best use of these. The investments portfolio and Stipend Fund manage their own targets.
- The Houses Committee considers the maintenance, upkeep and refurbishments of parsonages and clergy housing when vacancies arise.
- The Audit Committee considers risks and insurance and has met infrequently since 2023: it is planned to re-convene soon.

## **7.2 Budgets for 2026-2028**

Lorriane Orbell, Financial Controller.

The 2025 EDBF budget has been affected by the increase announced in the government's autumn 2024 Budget of employer's National Insurance contributions, rising from 13.8% to 15% from 6 April 2025. This will affect EDBF budgets up to 2028. It was noted that Ministry Share payment collections have fallen from the end of 2024 which may increase the deficit, and the Finance Committee discussed this at their recent meeting on 23 January 2025.

The recommended increase in the Ministry Share is c.5%, and for clergy stipends c.4%. The Deanery Liaison Group (DLG) has been beneficial in engaging with deaneries during the early stages of drawing up the Ministry Share budget. DLG would prefer both increases to be matched going forward. General Synod in February 2025 will consider a proposed move to remove clergy stipends to salary apportionment, currently set at national levels which are higher than local ones. Potentially, this will save the diocese around £340,000 a year but there are other aspects to consider which will become clearer when the Finance Review Committee in London have made a decision on this.

Some unbudgeted costs are outside of EDBF's control. Housing rental income may be affected by proposed changes in legislation and this Bill is yet to go through parliament.

Discussion raised the following points:

- The number of stipendiary posts (FTEs) across the Diocese has been agreed as 104 and this should be budgeted in the Management Accounts. Considerations are how many clergy are required and where do we need them. **ACTION: TW/LO**
- Is there an equivalent agreed ceiling for numbers of EDBF staff? This will be added into the 2026 draft budget and brought to Council for approval and published in the Management Accounts. **ACTION: TW/LO**
- Is there a discount for direct payments? There is, and the Finance Committee discussed Ministry Share payments at their recent meeting, acknowledging that many parishes are having to access reserves to pay for this which is unsustainable. The Ministry Share calculation will be considered on affordability. Parishes should be encouraged for their giving to be paid through the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) as this makes a big difference in their stewardship. **ACTION: TW/JG/LO**

## **7.3 Finance committee minutes; 23 January 2025**

Canon Tim Walters.

These were not available for the meeting, and it was advised that the Committee discussed Ministry Share collections and options for the way forward, the 2026-208 budget, the draft 2024 accounts for audit and general spending in the diocese.

## **8. Business of Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee**

### **8.1 Minutes of the HWADMPC: 21 November 2024.**

These were re-circulated with an addendum to the previous minutes circulated for Bishop's Council on 26 November 2024, and there were no further comments.

### **8.2 Approval of new post: Love's Farm, St Neots**

The Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech, the Ven Richard Harlow.

A background paper was circulated outlining the requirement and need for an Anglican clergy post at this new housing development built over ten years ago on the edge of St Neots. The

proposal is to fund a 0.5 stipend so that the church there can progress to become a LEP whilst continuing to grow a new worshipping community serving the Loves Farm, Wintringham and Monksfields estates in St Neots East. Funding is sought for a five-year period, by which time it is hoped that Loves Farm Church (LFC) will be able to self-support financially. A group of lay ministers have been working in prayer and service in this community for ten years.

The 0.5 stipend would be £20,722 (at 2025 prices) for five years, a total of £103,610 (plus inflation). This post may not be able to be contained within the cap of 104 posts, because it is new, and it has not been negotiated to remove a post. It is effectively due to population growth and would bring a head start to the mission to over 10,000 people.

This proposal is supported by LEP members and the Bishop of Huntingdon.

There is still work to be done to form the LEP and it is worth overviewing the Anglican and LEP presence in Northstowe, another new housing community, are carrying out their work and mission.

There are no pastoral plans in place for Love's Farm and a BMO may be the best way forward initially, with a view to having a full-time appointment in the future.

**PROPOSAL:**

**To fund a 0.5 stipend at Loves Farm Church, St Neots, to enable it to progress to become a LEP whilst continuing to grow a new worshipping community serving the Loves Farm, Wintringham and Monksfields estates in St Neots East. Funding will be for a five-year period. This post is not within the cap of 104 post as it is new and due to population growth.**

**PROPOSED: Revd Canon Robert Mackley**

**SECONDED: Dr Jonathan Chaplin**

**APPROVED: UNANIMOUSLY**

**ABSTENTIONS: None**

**9. Chairs of Committees**

No items to discuss.

**10. Deemed Business**

The following notes and minutes circulated under deemed business were taken as read:

- Minutes of DAC: 21 November 2024

**11. Dates of 2025 Meetings (all at Etheldreda House)**

- Wednesday 26 March at 6.45pm (meeting as EDBF)
- Saturday 17 May all day (meeting as Bishop's Council)
- Thursday 17 July at 6.45pm (meeting as EDBF)
- Thursday 25 September at 6.45pm (meeting as Bishop's Council)
- Wednesday 26 November at 6.45pm (meeting as EDBF)

The meeting closed at 21:40 with prayers from The Bishop of Huntingdon, who thanked members for their contributions to the meeting.

Signed:

Date:

