

THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 18 JULY 2024 AT ETHELDREDA HOUSE

Present: The Bishop of Huntingdon (Chair), Revd Canon Brian Atling, Very Revd Mark Bonney, Canon Francis Burkitt, Canon Dr Felicity Cooke, Ms Lindsay Davies, Revd Canon Becky Dyball, Revd Canon Sarah Gower, Ven Richard Harlow, Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Canon Simon Kershaw, Mrs Elaine Levitt, Revd Canon Rob Mackley, Canon Peter Maxwell, Canon Rob Needle, Canon Janet Perrett, Mr John Pigott, Mrs Sarah Robinson, Revd Canon Simon Talbott, Canon Lizzie Taylor, Canon Tim Walters

In attendance: Ms Rebecca Boswell, Revd Peter Leech, Revd Iain Osborne, Mrs Shirley Thackray (Clerk)

	The meeting opened with Dwelling in the Word led by Becky Dyball
1.	Apologies were received from Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker, Canon Paul Evans, Mr George Lynn, Mr Christopher Townsend.
2.	<p>Minutes of the Bishop's Council meetings held on 18 May 2024</p> <p>The minutes of the Council meeting and the Reserved Business meeting held on 18 May were approved and signed.</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>
3.	<p>Safeguarding update</p> <p>Ms Rebecca Boswell, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, gave an oral report.</p> <p>The Safeguarding team continues to quality assure its work and to support parishes to do the same through the implementation and delivery of the National Safeguarding Standards. In parishes this is primarily via the safeguarding dashboard which the team support parishes in completing. Bespoke local Dashboard workshops and drop-in sessions have been available to parishes.</p> <p>When there is a serious safeguarding incident in parish, it often emerges that there are areas of non-compliance: deficits in training, DBS checks, safer recruitment. This is felt due more to a lack of capacity and resources rather than lack of inclination. The team try to support parishes in understanding their legal responsibilities.</p> <p>Referrals remain steady - less than five cases are being managed under House of Bishop's allegations management procedures.</p> <p>Training and DBS checks - numbers remain steady. A new Domestic Abuse training module will be released to coincide with the White Ribbon campaign scheduled in November. It is understood the new training framework will reduce the requirement for all PCC members to complete Domestic Abuse training and mean a minimum number of PCC members will need to undertake the domestic abuse training.</p> <p>Leadership training will be moved to the national safeguarding training portal. Training will continue to be delivered locally but bookings, reflections and pre-course reading will be administered through the portal. Ely is waiting to be onboarded to the portal. This will save administration time for the safeguarding team.</p> <p>Progress has been made regarding the implementation of the recommendations of the independent enquiry into child sexual abuse; recommendations 1 and 8. The main one affecting the diocese locally is the implementation of the regional model of supervision and the change in role from Safeguarding Adviser to Officer, but there is still no clear date for these changes. There is ongoing uncertainty regarding what the recommendations of the Jay report will mean for safeguarding in the Church of England.</p>

4.	<p>Bishop’s Business: The Bishop of Huntingdon</p> <p>Further to the non-appointment of a new Bishop of Ely, the Bishop of Huntingdon stressed that the Diocese will continue with its usual business.</p> <p>The Bishop’s Staff Team has started to consider ways to mitigate the impact of the decision on clergy, the Bishop of Huntingdon and the senior team. The structure and staffing of the senior team is being reviewed to enable capacity for tackling issues which cannot wait for two years for example, resourcing the vast areas of new housing. Revd Canon Simon Talbott will retire at the end of the year and a new appointment will be needed. The Archbishop of Canterbury has offered support to Ely; consideration is being given as to what this might best be.</p> <p>Horizons will shift back by two years whilst the process starts again. It was queried as to what could be done to prevent this situation in the future. One solution could be for the Standing Orders to be changed so a simple majority was enough. The Crown Nominations Commission will meet in Spring 2025 to discuss the process. The Diocese will have a new Vacancy in See Committee following the Synod elections, but the existing Committee will continue in relation to this vacancy.</p> <p>Recommendations arising from the T&F Group</p> <p>The Scheme of Delegation and list of policies will be covered later in the agenda. For the remaining recommendations, Bishop Dagmar will work over the summer on the agreed actions.</p> <p>The report helps to understand and clarify governance processes and responsibilities. There is a large amount of complex work to be undertaken as a result and it is important for this to be carried out in a measured and organised way.</p>
5.	<p>Business of the Ely Diocesan Board of Finance: Canon Tim Walters, Chair</p> <p>The Finance Committee has not met since the last Bishop’s Council meeting. The Committee is in the process of completing the half year accounts and indications are that these are on target. The accounts will go to Finance Committee on 25th July and will then be referred back to the Bishop’s Council.</p> <p>The Deanery Liaison Group (DLG) meeting on 16th July discussed in principle how to better engage at deanery level in terms of budget shape. The DLG is taking a longer-term view for the next three years. This will form part of next year’s budget process. Following the Finance Committee meeting, the draft budget will be sent out to deanery treasurers for comment.</p> <p>The accounts have been audited, and a meeting held with the auditor; there was nothing of concern in the accounts. <i>The audited accounts will be brought to the September Bishop’s Council meeting and the senior audit partner will attend.</i></p> <p>Relocation Board/Project Lancaster update</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 17 May had been previously circulated. A further meeting took place on 12 July where it was agreed that, now Etheldreda House is fully in use, the Relocation Board will disband. This will be replaced by a building user group to be convened by September.</p> <p>The registered and postal addresses have now been formally changed to Etheldreda House. Bishop Woodford House has been completely decommissioned and will be handed over to Kings School at the end of July which will bring in increased rent. The Cottage has already been handed over to Kings. Consideration for the longer-term future of Bishop Woodford House will be needed.</p> <p>A hybrid working policy operates at Etheldreda House with different teams coming in on specific days which helps support the use of the office space.</p>
6.	<p>Diocesan Synod</p> <p>The Synod last met on 19 June, the final meeting of the current triennium. Several questions had been raised under Standing Order 86.</p>

	<p>Diocesan Synod elections have taken place. There will now be a series of follow up elections for other committees. There will be several new Diocesan Synod members on the Bishop's Council.</p> <p>A schedule of business items for both Synod and the Bishop's Council will be drafted. Also, an induction programme for new members to enable individuals to fully understand their role of charity trustees.</p>
7.	<p>Mission and Pastoral Matters (Bishop's Council sitting as the Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee - DMPC)</p> <p>Cambridge ADMPC minutes 4 July 2024</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting were received.</p> <p>Huntingdon & Wisbech ADMPC minutes 25 June 2024</p> <p><u>Minute 5 b)</u> The Ven Richard Harlow asked the Council to approve the closure of the ruined church of Wiggshall St Peter. This will then pass to the Church Uses Committee. The building will then be insured by the central Diocese and not at cost to the parish. It may also allow for the conversion of the building. <i>All members voted in favour of this proposal.</i></p> <p><u>Minute 5 c)</u> The Council were asked to approve the creation of the new benefices of 'The Isle of Ely Villages Team' and 'The Ely Team'. <i>All members voted in favour of this proposal.</i></p> <p>Council members asked for clarification regarding the oversight and acceptance of any minutes brought before the Council as members do not see the papers from the original committee meeting. It was acknowledged that sub committees are entrusted with delegation of powers but agreed that a brief description of the papers referred to in the minutes would be helpful. Council members can also ask to see papers relating to a particular parish.</p>
8.	<p>Education headlines: Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Archdeacon of Cambridge and Chair of EDEC</p> <p>EDEC Strategic Risk Register</p> <p>The risk register, previously circulated, has been updated for this Council meeting and has not yet been reviewed by EDEC.</p> <p>The Education team is looking forward to the arrival of the new DDE in September and an induction process is being drafted.</p> <p>The team meets the local authority monthly to monitor school performance. There have been 21 Ofsted inspections: 10 for VA/VC schools and 11 for DEMAT schools. Of those 21, only two schools were judged as requiring improvement, and several schools have now received a good judgement for the first time in years. There are significant strategic and operational risks in one school, but EDEC members are working with trustees and the Roman Catholic diocese to put plans in place to mitigate those problems. There have been 12 SIAMS inspections, of RE and Christian distinctiveness, in the last academic year - all were judged J1 which is a positive outcome. These inspections were carried out under a new and more demanding framework.</p> <p>EDEC is working to review historic trust funds. It is looking to spend funds more quickly and easily and to consolidate funds where possible into the Barchester Fund. A more strategic view of those funds will be undertaken once the new DDE starts.</p> <p>Many school buildings are aging, and much investment is needed. The government provides lump sums for work for some schools, but those schools must contribute 10% towards the cost of the project.</p> <p>Net carbon funds prove difficult to spend as the technology is not always compatible with schools.</p> <p>Academy conversions of two schools are in process: Burrough Green and St Michael's will join ACT which is a new Diocesan multi-academy trust originating in Buckden. There has been a request from a single academy trust to join a non-church MAT which breaks Diocese policy, so members are currently in negotiation with that secular MAT to see whether they can change their articles to possibly take on a church element. This is a major issue for the Diocese as this would mean giving the school away for 125 years under current regulations. There has also been a request from a group of schools in the Peterborough area to set up a new MAT.</p>

	<p>The team has run headteacher conferences on RE and SIAMS inspections, governor training, and training for EDRAs (exceptional headteachers who provide challenge and triangulation in other schools).</p> <p>There are no bids for new schools at present - the process is costly and there is little appetite. However, this will be reviewed in relation to new developments.</p>
9.	<p>Relating Well Together: a suite of behaviour policies: Revd Peter Leech, Director of Mission & Ministry</p> <p>The policies document, developed by a group comprising Peter Leech, Rebecca Boswell and the Archdeacons. had been previously circulated. This had been borne from recommendations of independent reviews, from what Mission and Ministry have observed in parishes, and from safeguarding concerns. The group sought endorsement from the Council that it should continue to develop these and to work on how to implement the policies.</p> <p>Several points were made by Council members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Code of safer working practice</u>: clarification is needed as to whom referred if a behaviour concern is not a safeguarding issue. • <u>Dealing with bullying and harassment policy</u>: there could be a perceived or actual conflict of interest if a parish adviser has to both support a complainant and undertake an investigation. The policy should also confirm there will be training in how to carry out an investigation. • <u>Appendix 3 of above policy</u>: the focus is on support for the complainant, with no reference to the alleged perpetrator; this needs to be balanced to reflect there is ongoing support for both parties. • <u>Parish code of conduct</u>: it was suggested this the reference to alcohol should be amended to “unauthorised consumption of alcohol”. <p>The Council endorsed the continuation of work on the suite of policies by the working group. It was suggested the group should also have some lay representation from the Council. Canon Dr Felicity Cooke and Ms Lindsay Davies agreed to join.</p> <p><i>The updated document will be presented at the September Council meeting.</i></p>
10.	<p>Scheme of Delegation: Revd Iain Osborne, Director of Strategy</p> <p>A draft Scheme of Delegation had previously been circulated, which documents how EDBF currently operates. Confirmation was requested from Council members that the document was on appropriate lines. Further consultation is needed, particularly with committee chairs to ensure there is alignment with the responsibilities and reporting lines of the committees which feed into Bishop’s Council. There should also be reference in the Scheme to committee members who are not EDBF employees.</p> <p>It was noted that in the HR section, where decisions are to be taken about posts by the Diocesan Secretary in consultation with the line manager, the process needs to be clarified where the Secretary is also the line manager.</p> <p>It was further noted that offer letters to new employees should clearly state for whom and to whom they will be responsible.</p> <p>Members commended Revd Osborne for producing a clear and detailed document which concisely sets out decision-making responsibilities and solves some previous ambiguities.</p> <p><i>The Scheme of Delegation will be brought back to the Council for final review and adoption in September.</i></p>
11.	<p>Policies Review: Revd Canon Brian Atling, Acting Diocesan Secretary</p> <p>A current list of EDBF policies and where they are published had been previously circulated. This is not an exhaustive list as several policies are being developed and are under review. The list is part of a bigger spreadsheet which include review dates and links to documents which will in due course be published on the website.</p> <p><i>Members should notify Mrs Thackray of any additional policies.</i></p>

12.	<p>Truscott report on Changing Market Towns (CMT) project: Ven Richard Harlow, Archdeacon of Huntingdon & Wisbech</p> <p>The Lessons Learned review had been previously circulated together with a response from some members of the CMT Board to the report.</p> <p>Whilst the project still has another year to run, a Lessons Learned report had been requested from John Truscott who had delivered a hard-hitting mid-term review. This was prompted by several factors: firstly, transition within the CMT project with the departure of Hugh McCurdy as chair, Jon Randall ceasing to be project lead in August, and the management of the project being integrated into the Mission and Ministry team overseen by Mike Kelly. Secondly, Revd Iain Osborne's appointment as Director of Strategy ramps up diocesan capacity for the next round of bids to SMMIB, which will require the Diocese to demonstrate it has learned from lessons arising from CMT.</p> <p>Truscott's research method was to ask a wide range of stakeholders to complete a survey which was followed by interviews. The CMT Board was not asked for its assessment of the project nor the Strategic Development Fund. The report is not wide enough to be balanced nor deep enough to be reliable; it is a subjective report made objective by the number of individuals involved. It focuses on areas which went badly as that is where most lessons can be learnt. Jon Randall is drafting a report which can be read in conjunction with this, which offers a more balanced reflection of the project. It is hoped this will be available by September and can then be circulated to the CMT team and PCC members in the project towns with an abridged version of the Truscott report. It was emphasised that both the original Truscott report and the response from some members of the CMT Board should remain in confidence to Bishop's Council members.</p> <p>The report provides useful learning for both for the Diocese and the wider church, for the ongoing work of the project and future projects. It will be important to digest and learn from this before the next bid is submitted to maximise its positive impact.</p> <p>Members noted that initially, the complexity of the project was not appreciated, and it has evolved. More engagement communication would have been helpful. Timescales were not long enough; there was a very limited window to submit bid. Future projects need more time to set up and should be consolidated as they progress. One of the biggest lessons is how best to assess these types of project which involve people.</p> <p>Projects need to be embedded and owned which takes time. Some activities were very positive but were not scaled up so stopped when funding stopped; scaling up will be needed to ensure long-term benefits. For future projects, better communication across the Diocese will be paramount to bring all on board.</p> <p>A shorter version of the report will be made public without mention of identifiable individuals. It was suggested that once the report is finalised, a one-page aide-memoire is produced to go with any further project proposals.</p> <p><i>The report, once it is properly finalised, will be brought back to the Council in September to consider in more detail, near the beginning of the meeting.</i></p>
13.	<p>Boards and Committees: The following notes and minutes previously circulated under deemed business were taken as read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing Market Towns Project Board minutes 10 July 2024 • Diocesan Safeguarding Panel - notes 19 June 2024 • Church Uses Committee minutes 13 June 2024
14.	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>The next meeting will take place on 26 September 2024 at 6.45pm.</p>
15.	<p>The meeting closed with prayers by the Bishop of Huntingdon at 9.05pm.</p>