



THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON Thursday 27 July 2023 In person at St Mary's, Ely

Present: The Bishop of Huntingdon (in the Chair), Revd Canon Brian Atling, Very Revd Mark Bonney, Ms Lindsay Davies, Revd Becky Dyball, Revd Canon Sarah Gower, Ven Richard Harlow, Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Canon Simon Kershaw, Mrs Elaine Levitt, Mr George Lynn, Revd Dr Robert Mackley, Revd Canon Dr Jessica Martin, Canon Peter Maxwell Canon Rob Needle, Canon Janet Perrett, Mr John Pigott, Mrs Sarah Robinson, Canon Tim Walters

In attendance: Canon Paul Evans, Mrs Sheena Bridgman, Revd Peter Leech, Revd Mark Rodel

Dwelling in the Word was led by the Revd Canon Dr Jessica Martin

Apologies were received from Revd James Blandford-Baker, Ms Rebecca Boswell, Canon Francis Burkitt, Dr Felicity Cooke, Revd David Newton, Revd Iain Osborne, Canon Andrew Read, Revd Canon Simon Talbott, Canon Lizzie Taylor, Mr Christopher Townsend

The **Minutes** of the Bishop's Council meeting held on 20 May 2023 and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 6 July 2023 were agreed and signed by the Bishop of Huntingdon. There were no **matters arising**.

Bishop's Business: The Bishop of Huntingdon advised that there would be visits from Bishop Nathan from Kigali and from a Nordkirche group, both in September 2023. During the Nordkirche visit there would be an Environmental Open Synod on 23 September.

Business of Ely Diocesan Board of Finance: Canon Tim Walters (TW), EDBF Chair, introduced the management accounts to June 2023, observing that some parishes were withholding payment of Ministry Share in protest at the General Synod vote at its February sessions regarding Living in Love and Faith. These parishes have agreed to pay at a minimum the direct costs for their stipendiary clergy by November, following decisions made at General Synod.

TW expressed concern that a second year of incurring a £200k deficit would allow a structural deficit to grow and explained the necessity of bringing the accounts back into balance in order to maintain the work being carried out. It was noted that some EDBF contracted staff working hours have been increasing incrementally, specifically in the Department of Education Mission and Ministry, resulting in the equivalent of an additional 2.8 members of staff. It will be necessary to take immediate action in order to avoid any cuts in clergy numbers, either by reducing the numbers of personnel and/or identifying projects to be halted. Following discussion it was agreed that TW, on behalf of the Board, would conduct an appraisal of the staffing structure to identify any possible overlaps or duplication in roles. TW agreed to report to the Council at its next meeting.

The Diocesan Secretary advised that the two new national initiatives were being implemented, supported by the central church: Net Zero Carbon and Racial Justice. In order to receive both sets of grants match-funding from the Diocese has to be identified from savings. The Diocesan Secretary agreed to updated Council at its next meeting noting that Net Zero Carbon and wider environmental issues will be a major point of discussion at the forthcoming Diocesan Synod on 14 October 2023.

Relocation Board: Canon Tim Walters as Chair of the Board reported that the programme for the new office building is progressing smoothly and that a ground-breaking ceremony had been held. The building programme is on track and being closely monitored by Adam Evans, Strategic Programme Manager.

Safeguarding update: 134 referrals had been received by the Safeguarding Team, There are 53 open cases within which there are 21 Safeguarding Agreements.

912 DBS checks have been completed in the year to date.

76.4% of parishes are now signed up to the Parish Dashboard and 21% of Parish Safeguarding Hubs are now live.

Diocesan Synod report from the Chair of the House of Clergy. Bishop Stephen's last Diocesan Synod was held at Ely College. A number of the Bishop's Special Advisers were commissioned; presentations were delivered on the Annual Accounts and Deanery Development Planning

DMPC Business: The Archdeacons advised that there are two Bishop's Mission Order issues for consideration

Christ Church Huntingdon's five year review has been paused subsequent to General Synod's February sessions on Living in Love and Faith. They have asked for a six-month extension of the BMO, pending the subsequent discussions at General Synod in November, with the agreement that their full Ministry Share will be paid at that point whether they stay within the Church of England, or leave.

Proposal to grant retrospective permission for Christ Church Huntingdon's BMO to be extended Proposed: Revd Canon Brian Atling Seconded: Elaine Levitt Agreed by majority One abstention (Revd Dr Robert Mackley)

Alconbury Weald BMO was established in 2018. It is anticipated to be self-sustainable in 10-15 years. With a cold start (unlike Northstowe), an emerging community of 15-20 people now meet each Sunday from a pool of approximately 30. The Alconbury Weald model may be replicated in the new community at Waterbeach, Revd Robert Paddison is highly regarded by the developers for the work he has carried out in Alconbury Weald.

Recommendation to extend Alconbury Weald's BMO for a further 4 years, with a review on progress after 2 years.

Proposed: Revd Dr Robert Mackley Agreed unanimously Seconded: Revd Canon Brian Atling

Education update: Ven Dr Alex Hughes, as Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education, reported that SIAMS Inspections are currently rated good or excellent across DBE and DEMAT schools. There are serious challenges to the smaller educational establishments, particularly those in rural areas, where a number of which are susceptible. The relationship with the Local Authority is currently particularly good.

Rat Hall Solar Farm, Balsham: TW introduced the Heads of Terms and supporting papers for the project which had been discussed in a previous informal meeting offered to members of Council on 5 July 2023. He explained that the Heads of Terms had been prepared to allow the contractors to explore planning and the development opportunities of the project. Further proposals would come back to Bishop's Council for agreement to move to the next stage if considered feasible.

Proposal to accept the Heads of Terms and to proceed with exploring development opportunities

Proposed: Canon Tim Walters Agreed by the majority 1 against (Canon Peter Maxwell) Seconded: Canon Rob Needle

See Appendix 1 (attached) for questions and comments raised by Canon Maxwell.

Board of Patronage: Geoffrey Hunter, Head of Church Buildings and Pastoral Department, had submitted a paper for Bishop's Council members which related to streamlining the Ely Diocesan Board of Patronage (EDBOP). EDBOP holds a number of patronages and sits when needed in cases of vacancy or pastoral reorganisation. This paper has been reviewed by the Registry. The recommendation is EDBOP holds a position as a sub group of the individual Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committees (ADMPCs) where decisions will be made when needed. Each ADMPC will be required to identify which of their members will form the relevant EDBOP.

Proposal to amend the membership of EDBOP to include members of each ADMPC Proposed Ven Dr Alex Hughes Seconded: Revd Canon Sarah Gower Agreed unanimously

Vacancy in See Committee (ViSC): an update was received from the Very Revd Mark Bonney, Chair, who reported that a preliminary meeting of ViSC had been held to discuss the question of electing four further members should it be felt that the Committee's existing makeup was not representative of the Diocese. 22 members currently sit on the Committee, both ex officio and elected members. The Committee's decision after wide ranging discussion was that the recommendation for Bishop's Council's decision is that no further nominations be made.

Proposal: Bishop's Council are invited to support the VISC recommendation not to appoint any further members

Proposed: Bishop of Huntingdon Seconded: Revd Dr Robert Mackley Agreed unanimously

An online survey / questionnaire (with a closing date of 18 September 2023) is to be launched and promoted across the Diocese.

A list of people to be consulted by the Archbishops' Appointments Secretary and the Prime Minister's Appointments Secretary in short online invterviews is being drawn up. Proposed names are invited to be submitted to the Diocesan Secretary.

Any Other Business: Revd Canon Brian Atling advised confirmation from the central church that stipends will increase by 5% in 2024 and that Ministry Share will increase by 4%.

The meeting closed with prayer at 8.46pm