

THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT ETHELDREDA HOUSE

Present: The Bishop of Huntingdon (Chair), Revd Canon Brian Atling, Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker, Canon Dr Felicity Cooke, Miss Lindsay Davies, Revd Canon Becky Dyball, Revd Canon Sarah Gower, Ven Richard Harlow, Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Canon Simon Kershaw, Mrs Elaine Levitt, Mr George Lynn, Revd Canon Rob Mackley, Canon Peter Maxwell, Canon Rob Needle, Canon Janet Perrett, Mr John Pigott, Revd Canon Simon Talbott, Canon Lizzie Taylor, Mr Christopher Townsend, Canon Tim Walters

In attendance: Mr Adam Halsey, Revd Peter Leech, Revd Iain Osborne, Mrs Shirley Thackray (Clerk)

	The meeting opened with Dwelling in the Word led by Canon Simon Kershaw and Revd Canon Becky Dyball
1.	Apologies were received from Canon Paul Evans, Very Revd Mark Bonney, Revd Canon Dr Jessica Martin, Mrs Sarah Robinson
2.	<p>Minutes of the Bishop's Council meetings held on 18 July 2024</p> <p>The minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 July were approved and signed, the following amendments having been made:</p> <p><u>Min 4</u> Crown Nominations Commission (not Committee). <u>Min 5</u> Added Deanery Liaison Group (to clarify DLG acronym). <u>Min 9</u> Amended to read: '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>Min 14</u> Removed 'of the new Triennium'.</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>
3.	<p>Safeguarding update</p> <p>The report on behalf of Rebecca Boswell, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser <i>in absentia</i> presented by Revd Canon Brian Atling.</p> <p>Casework Concerns referred to safeguarding team year to date 159. Majority of these relate to concerns regarding congregation members and church social outreach users. Open concerns (61 of which 20 are in relation to a Church Safety Plan with one pending). Cases managed under Allegations against Church Officers Guidance are less than 5. The majority of concerns offered advice and signposting, largest categories of referral were mental health and concerning adult behaviour. Referrals consistently identify issues in relation to safeguarding practice in parishes (e.g. church officers have not accessed training or it has expired, gaps in safer recruitment).</p> <p>DBS Checks Year to Date 1123</p> <p>Training year to date Completion has been as follows: Basic Awareness 1031; Foundation 847; Leadership 245; Safer Recruitment & People Management 268; Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse 662; PSO Induction 22; DBS workshop 12; Dashboard Workshops 11.</p> <p>Safeguarding Dashboards and Hubs The Parish Safeguarding Dashboards have switched over to align with the National Safeguarding Standards this month. This has caused Ely's overall compliance scores to drop back. The Team will be focussing on supporting parishes to work with their new style Dashboards. More parishes have signed up, so 86.3% of parishes are now using the Dashboards.</p>

	<p>Jay/Future Safeguarding Response This is ongoing.</p> <p>Soul Survivor/Mike Pilavachi Fiona Scolding case review was published today. The full report is available on the Church of England website with signposting to support for anyone affected by the information.</p> <p>IICSA 1 and 8 The role of Eastern Regional Safeguarding Adviser has been advertised. We continue to await timescales for transition to Regional Network/Diocesan Safeguarding Officer Role as per Draft Diocesan Safeguarding Officers Regulations 2024/Amending Canon 42.</p>
4.	<p>Bishop's Business: The Bishop of Huntingdon</p> <p>Support has been offered to Ely by Archbishop Justin. This has been welcomed in principle; the Bishop's team is preparing a rationale for what it needs. The plan is for the team to be more mission-focused to help support clergy and raise clergy morale. In order to scale up the personal contact with clergy, support will be needed for other business. It was emphasised that this funding will not come from ministry share but from the national church.</p> <p>From 1 October, Revd Iain Osborne will become Bishop's Senior Chaplain and Strategy Advisor for a period of around 2 years, certainly to see in a new Diocesan Bishop of Ely. Canon Simon Talbott will stay on for a handover period until Christmas before his retirement. Thanks were extended to Canon Talbott for ensuring a smooth transition. Revd Osborne will retain oversight of the strategy work. Other aspects of his previous role including the SMMIB bid will be allocated to both new and existing roles.</p>
5.	<p>Truscott Report on Changing Market Towns (CMT) project: Ven Richard Harlow, Archdeacon of Huntingdon & Wisbech</p> <p>Ven Harlow presented a trimmed down report intended for wider public release, context specific elements having been removed from the original report. This will be circulated to CMT staff, the wider diocese and further afield, including the press. The CMT Board met this morning and have agreed that the wording of paragraphs L1 and R1.1 needs slight amendment prior to further circulation. The report will be sent back to John Truscott to request changes.</p> <p>Bishop's Council members formally received the report and endorsed the recommendations of the CMT Board. <i>Approved unanimously with two abstentions.</i></p> <p>It was emphasised that the current version is not to be shared beyond Bishop Council members at present.</p>
6. 6.1	<p>Business of the Ely Diocesan Board of Finance: Canon Tim Walters, Chair</p> <p><u>Finance Committee Meetings Minutes 25 July 2024 & 12 September 2024 (Papers C.1, C.2)</u> The Committee has spent several meetings and met DLG group to discuss the budget process and cycles, partly to enable deaneries to feel engaged with the construction of the budget process and to make the structure clearer, but also to look at a two-year budget with a third year of indicative travel. There was discussion around the Ephesian Trust which is money paid on behalf of certain churches and all comes in as ministry share.</p> <p><u>Statutory accounts (Paper C.3): Adam Halsey, auditor, haysmacintyre</u> Mr Halsey encouraged members to consider whether the risk management section is proportionate to the severity of individual risks? The reserves policy does not appear to cover much of the figure on the balance sheet; this is because the Diocese is steward of a large number of assets that can only be used for ministry purposes. It was noted that the unrestricted funds include ministry share, investment activity and the work of subsidiary companies. The restricted funds include all assets within the stipends' capital fund and this income subsidises ministry share. The Diocese agreed it needs to generate sufficient income to help supplement money from parishes particularly as parishes continuing to struggle financially after the pandemic. If the Diocese adopts a total return system of accounting and spends the capital as other dioceses have, could mean in years to come that there is very little capital to be used and ministry share is likely to need to rise significantly. Key message is that the Diocese has broken even in a difficult year and a large balance sheet. Its assets are generating positive returns. Ely accounts for all its property at fair value that is, the</p>

amount which would be received if sold. Unrestricted funds are slightly below the top level of reserves policy. It was acknowledged that there are challenging times ahead and it will be difficult to break even each year but Ely is well-placed to deal with these challenges whilst not excessively wealthy.

Designated funds include monies put aside for essential repairs and maintenance to parsonages. Income funds are largely restricted to particular projects. This gives a good amount of flexibility.

It was queried where we stand compared with other charities. If take ministry share as fundraising could argue all is spent on charitable activities. All overheads and infrastructure is borne by investment income.

A question was asked as to the £1.5m loan in the balance sheet. Canon Atling was sure this was a loan to support cash flow rather than sell investments for a short-term requirement.

This has subsequently been checked and is correct.

Audit Findings Report for EDBF (Paper C.4)

It was noted that parsonage houses and team vicarages are shown at fair value. The value Ely places on its glebe land is shown as 10% yield which is higher than other dioceses declare. Glebe is farm or agricultural land, which is tenanted, and the rental value is the best metric as to its value. Ely glebe land was massively understated in the accounts; this is an asset so its appropriate value should be reflected. Revd Canon Atling assured the Council that the Diocese has undertaken a total review of all its glebe land through its agents in the last year including rental and development opportunities through the Assets Committee. It was noted that both church workers and clergy pensions schemes are in surplus.

All transactions have been run through the data analytics and the auditors are comfortable that there are no issues. Control points are all IT related. Whilst the Diocese feels some of these are too expensive, it may need its IT advisers to understand vulnerabilities and consider an action plan.

Motion: to accept the 2023 Statutory Report and Accounts

Proposed by Ven Dr Alex Hughes and seconded by Revd Canon Dyball. Approved unanimously.

EDBF Management accounts (Paper C.7)

These demonstrate that ministry share income does not cover clergy costs and housing and these are supported by investments and other income. Ministry share receipts were behind budget mainly due to not having received funds from the Ephesian Trust. *This has now been received.* Investment income was slightly behind budget, but performance has now improved. Clergy numbers and costs were all within budget. Overheads are slightly higher due to the move to Etheldreda House but building efficiency should lead to savings in the longer term.

EDEC Management Accounts to 30 June 2024 (Paper C.8)

The deficit has been reduced mainly by cost savings in staffing.

Budget Leaflet and Poster for 2025 (Paper C.9)

It was noted that for next year there will be a ministry share and fees income of 64%, whereas stipend and housing costs equal 73%, demonstrating again that parishes are not funding operating costs. It was felt that the tone of the foreword should be amended to not focus solely on the budget. Ven Richard Harlow agreed to suggest some revised wording to Canon Walters.

The leaflet has been circulated to all parishes and deaneries for comment. The timing will be adjusted in future so parishes have more time to comment.

The actual cost of clergy was queried and it was suggested this should be split out to show stipends and oncosts as separate lines to show actual stipend cost.

Earlier this year stipends rose by 7% due to a recommendation by the central church. This could be offset as the Diocese will ask for a smaller contribution as to what it pays for pensions. The Diocese is trying to narrow the gap further over the next three year budget cycle.

	<p><u>Ministry Share Proposal for 2025 (Paper C.10)</u> Ministry share is proposed as 4.5% for 2025 plus £9k where a deanery is not covering the full request. The ministry share spreadsheet shows where deaneries no longer meet their fully supportive costs. Each year ministry share is broadly increased by the same amount as stipends. However next year, curate stipends will rise by 7% creating a deficit which deaneries will not meet. The Diocese has discussed with deanery treasurers. Whilst it needs to reach balance this cannot all be addressed in one year, so this will be spread over several years until supported costs are covered.</p> <p><u>Ministry Share August 2024 (Paper C.11)</u> The Ministry share report does not show Ephesian Fund paying parishes. The paper provided to the Finance committee shows these details; Canon Walters will circulate a paper and will ensure these granular details are included in this paper in the future. Noted the standard payment is usually 70%. If they do not pay their requested ministry share, Ephesian parishes will need to carry forward deficit. It was clarified that ministry share is a voluntary payment. The danger is that parishes may use the tool to try to control their ministry share. This should perhaps be included on the risk register. It was noted that the Diocese bears the cost of any deficit due to non-payment of ministry share meaning future ministry share will need to rise. Ultimately, the cost is borne by all other parishes and there is a risk this may affect the poorest parishes. A concern was expressed that there is no transparency in relation to resolution parishes.</p> <p><u>Strategic agenda setting and budget cycle (Paper C.12): Revd Iain Osborne</u> It is proposed that meetings are alternated between meeting as Trustees (the EDBF Board) and meeting as the Bishop's Council to ensure Trustees/Directors do not just consider financial matters at Board meetings. Clarification is also needed sometimes between the Council and the EDBF board because the same members comprise both. Members were asked if they have any comments to email them to Revd Osborne.</p>
7.	<p>Trustee Assurance Group: Ven Richard Harlow, TAG Chair</p> <p>Members received Paper D, a baseline report. Ven Harlow thanked all members of Bishop's Council who contributed to the report, the findings of which were very good in parts.</p> <p>EDBF staff are extremely knowledgeable, but this could lead to vulnerability if an experienced person leaves the team.</p> <p>Other findings are that Trustees have not been giving enough guidance to EDBF. Ely 2025 was not followed up with a business plan. It is recommended that the Council invites the Bishop to lead a discussion on mission priorities at the November meeting as a basis for the EDBF office to develop a three-year business plan.</p> <p>It was noted that TAG is an independent advisory board which may be set up to ensure that the organisation as a whole has correct governance and operational practice and which should report directly to the Board of Trustees. It will need to be established as to whether the Group is constituted as a committee or as a shadow or independent advisory group, in order to maintain its wide-ranging premise looking at all these areas. Some areas of the proposed terms of reference form part of those for other committees so it will be important to avoid duplication. A full review of TAG will need to take place.</p> <p>This item will be brought back to the November meeting of the Bishop's Council to allow for a substantial discussion. Members were asked to provide feedback to Revd Osborne and Ven Harlow in advance of the meeting.</p>
8.	<p>Governance: The Bishop of Huntingdon & Acting Bishop of Ely, and Revd Iain Osborne, Director of Strategy</p> <p>The intention of Paper E.1 Governance stock take was to confirm the handling of actions arising from the package decided in the confidential Bishop's Council meeting held in May around the governance framework.</p> <p>Canon Dr Felicity Cooke and Mr Christopher Townsend said that if invited they would be happy for their names to go forward as members of the HR Core Group.</p>

	<p>Concern was expressed that some of the recommendations from the original review group in relation to HR delivery have not been included.</p> <p>Members asked to email comments to Revd Osborne and the Bishop. This item will be brought back to the November meeting of the Bishop's Council.</p>
9.	<p>Diocesan Synod: Canon Simon Kershaw</p> <p>A request has been received from the programme director for Living in Love and Faith (LLF) for diocesan synods to consider LLF and Prayers of Love and Faith early next year. Whilst not a formal consultation under Article 8, the LLF Group are keen for dioceses to have a good level of discussion about this area. The Diocesan Synod agenda planning group will consider this.</p>
10.	<p>Mission and Pastoral Matters (Bishop's Council sitting as the Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee - DMPC)</p> <p>There have been no ADMPC meetings since the Bishop's Council meeting on 18 July.</p>
11.	<p>Education update: Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Archdeacon of Cambridge and Chair of EDEC</p> <p>It was reported that Mr Jon Young commenced employment as Diocesan Director of Education on 1 September and has made a very good start.</p>
12.	<p>Relating Well Together: a suite of behaviour policies: Revd Peter Leech, Director of Mission & Ministry</p> <p>The Relating Well Together working party met last week and members are confident the final document will be a very helpful suite of policies which will hopefully reduce the number of issues referred to the Safeguarding team. The final version will be brought to the November meeting of the Bishop's Council.</p>
13.	<p>Visa and Immigration Policy: Revd Peter Leech, Director of Mission & Ministry</p> <p>Revd Leech presented this policy which had been scrutinised by the Diocesan legal team. The policy applies to ordinands and not to appointing clergy in general. There is a total cost of £239 per candidate.</p> <p><i>Motion: to approve this policy</i> <i>Proposed by Revd Canon Rob Mackley, seconded by Canon Tim Walters. Approved unanimously.</i></p>
14.	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>The next meeting will take place on 26 November 2024 at 6.45pm.</p>
15.	<p>The meeting closed at 9.01pm with prayers by the Bishop of Huntingdon.</p>