

THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON Saturday morning, 18 May 2024 A meeting in person at Etheldreda House, Lancaster Way, Ely

Present: The Bishop of Huntingdon (in the Chair), Revd Canon Brian Atling, Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker, Very Revd Mark Bonney, Canon Dr Felicity Cooke, Ms Lindsay Davies, Revd Canon Becky Dyball, Revd Canon Sarah Gower, Ven Richard Harlow, Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Mrs Elaine Levitt, Mr George Lynn, Canon Rob Needle, Mr John Pigott, Mrs Sarah Robinson, Revd Canon Simon Talbott, Mr Christopher Townsend,

In attendance: Mrs Sheena Bridgman, Revd Peter Leech, Revd Iain Osborne

Eucharist led by the Bishop of Huntingdon

Apologies were received from Ms Rebecca Boswell, Canon Francis Burkitt, Canon Paul Evans, Canon Simon Kershaw, Revd Canon Dr Robert Mackley, Revd Canon Dr Jessica Martin, Canon Peter Maxwell, Canon Janet Perrett, Canon Lizzie Taylor, Mrs Shirley Thackray, Canon Tim Walters

The **Minutes** of the Meeting of Bishop's Council meeting held on 21 March 2024 and the Extraordinary Meeting of Bishop's Council held on 8 April 2024 were approved and signed.

Matters Arising. It was noted that the requested item regarding a presentation about the work of the Education Department was postponed until the November meeting of Bishop's Council to allow for the arrival of the new Diocesan Director of Education - Mr Jonathan (Jon) Young. The onboarding process for Mr Young has already commenced. It was also noted that the delivery of the Annual Report and Accounts for 2023 was delayed due to sickness and that the Annual Accounts would be delivered to the July meeting for approval.

Bishop's Business presented by the Bishop of Huntingdon: 10 confirmation services have been held since end April 2024; 9 LLMs have been selected for training (teams will seek to improve this number); ordination weekend takes place at the end of June.

The new version of the Clergy Handbook has been prepared and will be taken to Rural Deans and Bishop's Staff for consultation before circulation.

Revd Canon Wendy Thomson has resigned as Bishop's Adviser for Women's Ministry, as well as Revd Canon Bruce Kinsey, Bishop's Adviser for Counselling. Replacements are being sought with an anticipated start date in September 2024.

With immediate effect, Revd Peter Leech will be titled Director of Mission and Ministry; Revd Iain Osborne will be titled Deputy Diocesan Secretary and Deputy Director of Strategy

A second Multi Academy Trust has been established (ACT) following a school's forced conversion to become an Academy and it was not possible to bring this school into DEMAT. ACT has now taken in other schools; sustainability is a challenge for the smaller schools in the Diocese of Ely.

Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Chair of the Ely Diocesan Education Committee (EDEC) formally thanked the Education Team.

Safeguarding update on behalf of Rebecca Boswell, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser *in absentia* presented by Revd Canon Brian Atling

76 referrals have been entered onto the Casework Management System in the year to date. There are 48 open concerns - 20 of which are in relation to a Church Safety Plan. Less than 5 of these relate to cases managed under House of Bishops' Allegations against Church Officers Guidance (the majority relate to congregation members and church social outreach users). The majority of those expressing concerns were offered advice and signposting - the largest categories of referrals relate to mental health and adult behaviour of concern. Referrals consistently identify issues in connection with safeguarding practices in parishes (e.g. expired or non-existent training, gaps in safer recruitment)

490 DBS checks have been carried out to date in 2024

Following a programme of publicity and promotion regarding the Parish Dashboard, 258 parishes are now live. Of these 258 parishes, 81.1% are using their dashboard and of this number, 57% are making progress.

Monthly drop ins with the Safeguarding team have been planned at Etheldreda House for the remainder of 2024. Safeguarding Senior Leadership training starts in July 2024.

Makin Review (John Smyth case): Ely has been notified that the Diocese/individuals will be referred to in the report and the Safeguarding team are awaiting the extracts to arrive before mid June 2024.

Jay Report: Diocesan response is being sought.

IICSA 1 and 8: the Safeguarding Team and the Independent Chair (Mr Jon Chapman) attended a consultation meeting and are currently awaiting timescales for transition to Regional Network/Diocesan Safeguarding Officer Role per Draft Diocesan Safeguarding Officers Regulations 2024/Amending Canon 42.

Business of Ely Diocesan Board of Finance on behalf of Canon Tim Walters *in absentia* presented by Revd Canon Brian Atling

The 2023 Annual Report and Accounts are running late due to staff sickness at the auditors, haysmacintyre. Despite this, the audit is running well and all queries are easily managed. No issues of any concern have been raised. The 2025 Budget is being prepared and variances are being investigated or researched.

Relocation Board. Etheldreda House is being populated daily; staff are finding it a very amenable place to work and are delighted with the opportunity to work together again. This is promoting increased teamwork and staff morale. Heads of Department meet weekly face to face. It was advised that staff ceased to use Bishop Woodford House at end May 2024 and that this building would be de-commissioned through the month of June, prior to letting the remainder of the property to King's Ely, who are keen to utilise the office space and the cottage.

Appreciative thanks were given to the Project Lancaster Working Group, and particularly to Adam Evans, Project Manager, who leaves the Diocese at end July.

A celebration of completion will take place in mid-July at Etheldreda House, to thank contractors, suppliers and the developers, together with representatives from Bishop's Council, Finance Committee and the Relocation Board. An Open Day for parishes and new members of Diocesan Synod is being considered for the autumn.

Approval was sought for two Office Support Assistants/Receptionists are to be recruited for Etheldreda House, reporting to the Executive Assistant to the Diocesan Secretary. *Agreed by majority with one abstention.*

Audit Committee. George Lynn (GL), Chair, apologised for his absence over the past months. The Audit Committee is to be recast with revised Terms of Reference (last prepared in 2016), with consideration to the role of the Trustee Assurance Group (TAG) and the new governance framework. Revd Iain Osborne and GL to coordinate and consider where Audit Committee will sit. Additional members are to be invited to join the Audit Committee (currently Christopher Townsend and John Pigott as Bishop's Council representatives plus the Diocesan Secretary and Deputy Diocesan Secretary)

Audit Committee will invite members of TAG to comment on the Risk Register which will be presented to the next meeting of Bishop's Council. GL to report at each meeting of Council (agenda standing item).

Members of Bishop's Council were invited to approve the **change of Registered Address** for the Ely Diocesan Board of Finance (together with its associated companies, subsidiaries and charities) from Bishop Woodford House, Barton Road, Ely CB7 4DX to

Etheldreda House, 206 Lancaster Way Business Park, Witchford, Ely Cambs CB6 3NX

Agreed unanimously.

Bishop's Council acting as **Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee.**

With the changes in the Church Representation Rules in 2021, legislation had been prepared to allow the setting up of Joint Councils (PCCs). Two Schemes were presented to Bishop's Council: Whittlesey requesting to upgrade their 1995 scheme, to make the Joint Council smaller, and Leightonstone which would bring two benefices together. Regarding the latter, the plurality order is required to be in place before the scheme may progress. This has been agreed, although is yet to be finalised. Once agreed, the advertisement for a joint Children's and Families' Minister may be advertised.

The upgrade to the Whittlesey Scheme was *approved unanimously*

The Leightonstone Scheme was *approved unanimously*

The Bishop's Mission Order for Northstowe is due for renewal. Revd Beth Cope is make good progress, and an extension of the BMO was requested to be approved until 2029 - at which time it was thought that Northstowe might become a parish in its own right. *Approved unanimously.*

Business of Diocesan Synod presented by Revd Canon Sarah Gower, Chair of the House of Clergy. The next meeting of Diocesan Synod on 19 June 2024 would be the last of the triennium. Due to the delay in the production of the Annual Accounts, the acceptance of these would roll over to the first meeting of the new triennium in October 2024.

At the March meeting of Synod, table conversation took place regarding potential topics for future Synod meetings. The results were presented to Bishop's Council in the circulated paper; there will be a focus on the work of the Education and Mission and Ministry Departments.

Revd Canon Sarah Gower and Canon Simon Kershaw, as Chairs of Houses, have indicated their willingness to continue in post for the next triennium. The induction pack for new members of Diocesan Synod is to be reviewed with the Chairs. New members of Diocesan Synod are to be invited to an Induction Day at Etheldreda Houses. A presentation on the responsibilities of charity Trustees and the new Charity Commission responsibilities is to be considered.

The papers for **deemed business** were accepted as read.

Bishop's Council 18052024 Minutes final

Any Other Business:

Vacancy in See Committee: interviews for the next Bishop of Ely take place on 11 and 12 July 2024. The shortlisting of candidates has been completed.

Trustee Assurance Group: the work of this group will commence on a “shadow” basis. John Pigott, Becky Dyball, Simon Kershaw will be members, together with the Archdeacon of Huntingdon & Wisbech and the Archdeacon of Cambridge. Ven Richard Harlow, Archdeacon of Huntingdon & Wisbech, will be in the chair.

Any Other Business - there was none

The morning session closed at 12.25pm for lunch and was followed by a Meeting with Reserved Business in the afternoon (minuted separately).