

ELY DIOCESAN SYNOD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY 19 OCTOBER 2024

AT ST MARY'S, ELY STARTING AT 9.00AM

	<p>The meeting opened with Eucharist and Communion led by the Bishop of Huntingdon & Acting Bishop of Ely followed by the commissioning of the following:</p> <p>Revd Lynda Davies as Diocesan Advisor for Women's Ministry, Revd Jane Dicker as Bishop's Advisor for Spiritual Direction, Eleanor Richards as Bishop's Advisor for Clergy Counselling, Annabelle Evans as Head of School Estates, Legal & Educational Trusts, Jacqueline McCamphill as Head of Stewardship, Jon Young as Diocesan Director of Education, Niamh Colbrook as Lay Development Officer, Revd Sharon Byrne as Racial Justice Officer and Revd Iain Osborne as Senior Chaplain & Strategy Advisor to the Bishop of Ely</p>
	<p>Result of elections for Diocesan Synod 2024-2027 Vice-Presidents and Chairs of Houses</p> <p>It was recorded that the following nominations were received for Vice-Presidents and Chairs of Houses in the nomination process which closed on 27 September:</p> <p>Revd Canon Sarah Gower for Vice-President and Chair of the House of Clergy Canon Simon Kershaw for Vice-President and Chair of the House of Laity</p> <p>There being no other nominations, Revd Gower and Canon Kershaw were duly elected to the above positions for Diocesan Synod 2024-2027.</p>
	<p><i>Canon Simon Kershaw, Chair of the House of Laity in the Chair</i></p>
<p>1.</p>	<p>Business of the Ely Diocesan Board of Finance</p> <p>Canon Tim Walters, Chair of the Board, introduced Mr Adam Halsey, from Haysmacintyre, the Diocese's auditors.</p> <p>Mr Halsey noted that the Diocese has aimed to reach a breakeven position with all income generated by ministry share, diocesan investments and trading activities. Whilst not about to sell property to raise funds, this may need to be considered to remain sustainable but if Ely considers itself a growing church this may not be the most appropriate decision.</p> <p>He recommended members focused on pages 19 and 21 of the EDBF accounts showing how income is generated. The unrestricted column demonstrates how Ely manages the assets it has under stewardship. Funds derived under stipend capital fund support the budget and 20% of income is earned on those assets so need to protect them. The new diocesan office has been funded by liquid assets. A lot of revaluation is needed under accounting standards. Uplift in value of £15m of glebe land most of which is subject to Agricultural Tenancy: this is volatile so may not see the same increase next year.</p> <p>The reserves policy has sufficient funds at present to manage financial risk, but this is only just in range and funds would be depleted if the diocese continues to operate a deficit budget without selling property.</p> <p>Controls remain robust including property and finance. IT arrangements and equipment are being looked at; recommendations will be reported back next year. Mr Halsey concluded that there is a challenging year ahead, but the diocese is well placed to deal with those challenges.</p> <p>The 2023 Statutory accounts for EDBF, EDSS Ltd and DBF Property Ltd were accepted.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Introduction to Diocesan Synod including strategic agenda setting and budget cycle</p> <p>Revd Iain Osborne, Senior Chaplain & Strategy Advisor to the Bishop of Ely and Canon Simon Kershaw, Chair of the House of Laity, spoke to a presentation on the Diocesan Synod, which forms part of the governance structure of the Church of England and is the democratically elected decision-making body of the diocese. Under the Synodical Government Measure 1969,</p>

	<p>it: comments on proposed national legislation; makes diocesan provision for CofE matters; considers other matters of religious or public interest; advises the Bishop when consulted by the Bishop; considers the diocesan accounts; approves the diocesan budget.</p> <p>Most members are elected by deanery synod so to properly represent them they need to be aware of their deanery’s views on issues and ensure they take information back to their deaneries. It is also important for members to get to know others outside their own deanery to work together effectively as a body. Any comments on how meetings can be improved are welcome. Members are asked to read papers so they can make informed comments and cast votes confidently. It is a two-way process: PCCs and deanery synods can pass business to Diocesan Synod as a way of communicating matters up to General Synod.</p> <p>To ensure all necessary business is covered by Diocesan Synod, a proportion of time to be spent on each topic has been allocated. To ensure items are considered at the right time, topics have been allocated to relevant agendas for each meeting. Finance will be included on every agenda. The list of topics with time allocations and the outline agendas are appended to these minutes.</p>
3.	<p>Apologies for absence</p> <p>Received: House of Clergy 22, House of Laity 11.</p>
4.	<p>Minutes of the Diocesan Synod Meeting held on 19 June 2024</p> <p>The minutes were agreed and signed.</p> <p>Matters arising</p> <p><u>Minute 5 Questions submitted under Standing Order 86</u></p> <p>Under Q2 supplementary from Mr Christopher Townsend regarding expansion of flourishing centres for children, youth and family ministry, it was noted that diocesan Synod was to be briefed on the SMMIB bid at this meeting. It was confirmed it is now planned to be brought to the March meeting to enable sufficient time to be spent on drafting the SMMIB bid. As Revd Osborne has now moved to be Senior Chaplain another person will be appointed to take forward the work on the bid. Growth group meetings took place in parishes, but participants have not had any follow up. The report is now on the Ely website and Revd Osborne will write to parishes who participated to thank them. The group indicated it did not wish to meet again but is happy to be a reference group to help develop strategy.</p>
5.	<p>Questions submitted under Standing Order 86</p> <p>1. Revd Danny Driver, Cambridge North, asked the following question of Revd Peter Leech:</p> <p><i>Following the February 2024 General Synod motion, which unanimously prioritised Estates Evangelism by committing to “achieving a loving, serving, and worshipping Christian community on every significant social housing estate,” and called on all dioceses to include in their strategic mission and ministry plans the goal of planting and renewing churches, or doubling the number of young active disciples in social housing estates and other economically marginalised communities:</i></p> <p><i>Could we please receive an update on how this commitment has been embraced within our Diocese? Specifically, what actions have been taken to identify which communities should be prioritised, and how will this crucial priority be integrated into the new Diocesan Strategy?</i></p> <p>Revd Leech responded, noting that the commitments of the General Synod do not always provide a framework for national implementation, nor do they come with any additional resource. The Diocese of Ely has responded to the commitment made by General Synod to prioritise Estates Evangelism and Bishop Dagmar appointed a Bishop’s Advisor for Urban Estates, Ruth Clay, who was commissioned on 14 October 2023 and brings a depth of knowledge and previous experience of ministry within Urban Estates. Since her commissioning, Ruth has taken time to meet with church leaders within the Urban Estates of the Diocese as part of a review of some of the excellent mission and ministry work that is already being undertaken by ordained and lay church members often in very challenging contexts.</p> <p>Moving forward, Ruth will work closely with teams across the Mission and Ministry Department in the places of intersection, including the Children, Youth and Schools team and the Learning Team. She will also work closely with other Bishop’s Advisors as she seeks to both advise and</p>

resource across the diocese. Ruth is seeking to develop a workstream with clear priorities which will support churches and church leaders in their mission and ministry and she will be developing links with national as well as local partners.

As part of the desire to support and facilitate networking, an Urban Estates Day Conference is being planned in 2025.

This area is something the diocese wants to engage with in a meaningful way and Revd Leech encouraged people with an interest in working within disadvantaged areas to get in contact with Ruth (urbanestates.advisor@elydiocese.org)

This model of enabling and facilitating partnerships both locally and nationally, and identifying areas where working together can add value, is characteristic of how the diocese approaches the support of mission and ministry within the local context.

2. Revd Dr John Percival, Cambridge North, asked the following question of Revd Canon Brian Atling, Diocesan Secretary:

In the accounts year to 31 December 2023, the income of the Stipends Fund was £1,848,000. Out of this, what amounts were applied respectively to the following elements of the actual outturn for the year:

- (a) parish clergy direct costs (e.g., clergy stipends, housing repairs/maintenance);*
- (b) ministry support costs (e.g., archdeacons' stipends);*
- (c) investment in the future (e.g., curates' stipends); and*
- (d) anything else, if applicable (please specify).*

Revd Canon Atling responded, noting that £1.8mil is investment income from the stipend fund. The direct cost is £3.448mil, therefore all of the £1.8mil covers just the parish clergy costs in (a). It does not cover the stipends of curates nor archdeacons.

3. Christopher Townsend, Cambridge North, asked the following question of Canon Tim Walters, Chair of EDBF:

In the draft Budget Guide 2025, in the figures for 'Full Cost of Clergy Post', it is stated that 'Ministry Support Costs' and 'Investing in the Future' (Mission) are £22,924 and £12,704 respectively. For the purposes of these calculations, what has been assumed to be the total number of posts and how is this total divided between: (1) full stipend posts (2) half stipend posts and (3) house for duty posts.

Canon Walters responded that this has been included in the budget analysis; he clarified that these calculations are based on 100 full stipends, 10 half stipends and 8 house for duty posts.

Supplementary question from Christopher Townsend:

Has this changed from 2024?

Canon Walters confirmed it was broadly the same apart from the effect of inflationary cost increases.

Revd Canon Sarah Gower, Chair of the House of Clergy in the Chair

6. Safeguarding update

Rebecca Boswell, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, gave an oral report.

In casework, 167 referrals have been made to the safeguarding team to date, the majority of which relate to concerns regarding congregation members and church social outreach users. There are 66 open concerns of which 20 relate to Church Safety Plans, with one pending. There are less than five cases managed under Allegations against Church Officers Guidance. Advice and signposting were offered for most concerns. The largest categories of referral are mental health and concerning adult behaviour. Referrals consistently identify issues in relation to compliance in safeguarding practice in parishes for instance, church officers have not accessed training, or it has expired, or there are gaps in safer recruitment.

The team is supporting parishes in working with the new style Parish Dashboards which are the best way to ensure compliance with safeguarding practices. Ely now has 86.7% of its parishes

using the Dashboards as against a national take up of 74.7%. Out of the 38 dioceses using the dashboards, Ely is eighth in terms of achievements.

The latest Learning and Development framework has just been published. There are no significant changes to training requirements save that for PCC members, domestic abuse training is now recommended rather than required.

The managing allegations consultation is open; the last set of parish guidance was published in 2017. The Parish Safeguarding Handbook is undergoing a complete overhaul and will be available online, so updates are continuous.

Further to the IICSA 1 and 8 recommendations for each region to have a Safeguarding Adviser, the Eastern Regional Safeguarding Adviser was not appointed and so will be readvertised. This role is non-executive but supervises and quality assures the work of safeguarding advisers in dioceses.

In relation to the Jay Report, work is ongoing to consider how feasible each model is, how much each would cost, and what the benefits might be. This will go back to General Synod in February 2025. Workshops for victims of abuse are being offered this month.

In September the lessons learned review in relation to Soul Survivor/Mike Pilavachi; the full report is available on the Church of England website together with signposting to support for those affected by the information.

7. Presidential Address from the Bishop of Huntingdon & Acting Bishop of Ely

Bishop Dagmar's address had four parts.

In the first part she referred to her pastoral letter sent recently to all clergy in the Diocese which reported on General Synod's vote for amendments to the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations to entitle office holders to not less than 36 hours (a day and a half) of rest in any period of seven days, rather than the current one day a week. Bearing in mind that being a deacon or priest has become much more pressured in recent years, she urged both clergy and committed lay church members to make time for rest, reminding everyone that whilst striving to work with others, undertaking training and generally doing their best, no amount of hard work will be able to control or manage the fortunes and future of the church: it is God who gives the growth (*1 Cor 3:6*).

In the second part, Bishop Dagmar updated about the Vacancy in See, noting that at a recent meeting of the Crown Nominations Committee (CNC) for Ely, it was agreed that no further lengthy consultation process was deemed necessary and that CNC1 (shortlisting) will take place on 2 October 2025 and CNC2 (interviews) on 12 & 13 November 2025, meaning a new Diocesan Bishop should be in place in the first half of 2026. The Appointments Secretaries plan to have conversations with key people in the Diocese next spring to ensure the paperwork for candidates will be up to date. This changed outlook has concentrated minds among the Senior Staff in the Diocese who are preparing a major bid to the Church Commissioners to support their work in new housing, with children and young people, and in rural multi-parish benefices. Given that growing confident people of God is fundamental, she also commended the [Everyday Faith App](#) for an accessible way to develop spiritual discipline.

In the third part, Bishop Dagmar turned towards the current and emotive topic of assisted dying (or assisted suicide) which Parliament is due to debate and urged members to deal sensitively with each other, whatever their stance on this matter. She shares our current Archbishop's deep concern with the move to legalise assisted suicide. This concern echoes the General Synod which has twice voted, with a significant majority, against the legalisation of assisted suicide. This opposition has always been grounded in a concern for the welfare of the most vulnerable in society: the elderly, those living in poverty, those whose disability puts them at risk, and those in coercive relationships. Bishop Dagmar encouraged members to read around and discuss this topic, to contact their MP if concerned, and importantly, to pray about all this. Details of resources for members and their church would be circulated to members; appended to these minutes. She emphasised that, regardless of individual viewpoints, all must work together to push for better hospice and compassionate end of life care that is available for everyone.

Finally, Bishop Dagmar turned to the Middle East, where, as indeed in other troubled parts of the world, the horrific violence meted out is an affront to God. She appreciated how complex

and difficult the situation is and was heartened to read the [Joint letter of the Archbishop of Canterbury with faith leaders marking the one year anniversary fo 7th October attacks in Israel](#) which was issued on the eve of the anniversary. Bishop Dagmar noted the reflections of the Anglican Archbishop of Jerusalem, Hosam Naoum, who is Chief Pastor for Anglicans in the five political regions of Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. He describes his diocese as “bleeding”, with only very small amounts of aid trickling through, including Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza, run by the Diocese of Jerusalem which receives barely any supplies or fuel, yet has managed to function almost constantly throughout. “The whole system is collapsing,” said Archbishop Hosam. “But as Christians, we continue to have hope, and we are called to be resilient. We are called to be God’s presence in the world. ... We need to continue to work together as Israelis and Palestinians to find the way to a peaceful solution to this crisis we are living in.” Asked about what help they need, he said: “A prayer would be the most precious thing. And when we say ‘prayer’ we mean it in a holistic way, not only saying the words but also acting on our prayer, doing something that would really help achieve the ‘Amen’ that we express in our hearts.” Bishop Dagmar commended the work of charities such as [Embrace the Middle East](#) or [Friends of the Holy Land](#), and closed with a prayer by Archbishop Hosam.

8. **Business of the Ely Diocesan Board of Finance**

Canon Tim Walters reported the budget highlights noting that the diocese has budgeted a deficit of £200k, similar in context to the 2024 budget. Performance to the end of September has been 15% better than budgeted for. The 7% increase in stipends proposed by Church House this year to address the fact these have not kept up with inflation over many years, will add around £90k to stipend salary costs. In the 2025 budget, a 3% stipend increase is proposed. The cost base is broadly well controlled.

Ministry share income does not cover the full cost of clergy: for 2024 and 2025, this income accounts for 64% of costs but direct ministry costs are 72% and 73% for 2024 and 2025 respectively. To manage the additional costs, an increase in ministry share of 4.5% is proposed for next year, reducing to 3% thereafter. The remaining shortfall will be covered from investment income and central church contributions as the diocese must ensure it does not become custom to budget for a deficit as reserves will eventually run out.

Canon Walters clarified there is an income stream coming from the lease of Bishop Woodford House to Kings School and emphasised that the construction costs for the new offices at Etheldreda House came from release of old restricted funds and not ministry share.

Deanery Liaison Group (DLG) has had much discussion on the budget at deanery level and agreed in future to work with deaneries to create draft budget.

Questions were taken from the floor.

1. Cdr Ben Peilow, St Ives: *The 2023 accounts cover the principles of sustainability. Ministry share calculations show a 4.5% increase, plus a further £9k per deanery where the demand is below target. Where is the understanding of the impact of this additional request for money as it is likely to prove unaffordable for many. He feels that this level of request is unsustainable.*

Rev Canon Brian Atling responded accepting that ministry share is a challenge for most parishes, but as a diocese Ely is very frugal and aims to balance its budget. The draft budget goes through a significant number of processes including obtaining support from deanery treasurers to take the proposed budget forward. If Ely wants to drive forward its mission using paid clergy this level of ministry share is needed. The diocese has explored giving and found that the amount of average giving per person is in fact quite small. Support will be considered for less well-off parishes who cannot afford to pay their full ministry share. It is the responsibility of each deanery to allocate parish share across its parishes as appropriate. Cdr Peilow responded that this makes sense but does not work as the increase is beyond many parishes’ levels of income.

2. Revd Robert Slipper, Wisbech Lynn Marshland: *Once the stipend fund investment income is added to ministry share does this then cover clergy costs? And is the ‘Support if needed’ section at the bottom of page 4 of the guide a new development in the way it is presented?*

Revd Canon Atling confirmed this was the case noting there is a single pot for income and expenditure so the stipend fund and ministry share must match the total expenditure. The

<p>addition came as a request. The total cost of a full stipend (although not what an individual is paid) is £90k but the diocese does not ask for that amount, it deducts the two amounts shown which is the investment income, to bring down ministry share. The explanatory wording is slightly ambiguous and will be made more explicit for the final version.</p> <p>3. Mr Jon Smith, Granta: <i>The budget does not mention the contribution of clergy and lay ministers who are not paid. Please consider how that contribution is reflected in the budget guide.</i></p> <p>Revd Canon Gower confirmed this suggestion will be taken forward.</p> <p>4. Revd Dr John Percival, Cambridge North: <i>What contingency plans are in place for changes to employers' NI contributions?</i></p> <p>Canon Walters noted that there are no contingency plans as it is not yet known what rises are likely to be.</p> <p>5. Revd Canon Nick Moir, Cambridge North: <i>The ministry support costs shown on page 4 do not appear to be the most up to date figures; can this be clarified?</i></p> <p>Revd Canon Atling confirmed that the overall position has not changed, and it is just the presentation that will be amended: in order to have more clarity, some of that figure has been moved to another part of the budget.</p> <p>6. Mr Christopher Townsend, Cambridge North: <i>I am happy to hear that the language will be clarified regarding 'support if needed' so deaneries do not need to prove they need this. Clarity is needed that members are voting on the budget and not the wording.</i></p> <p>Canon Atling noted it is not intended that support is requested; those amounts are allocated automatically for most deaneries. In relation to the second part of the question, Canon Walters clarified that what approval is sought for is to increase ministry share by 4.5%, to increase stipends by 3%, and under charity commission law, to approve in principal that the diocese can run a £200k budgeted-for deficit.</p> <p>7. Matthew Challis, Huntingdon: <i>Is the £90k an increase over the previous year or above the 5% originally budgeted for?</i></p> <p>Canon Walters clarified that this equates broadly to about 2% which was unbudgeted for.</p> <p><i>Motion: to approve the 2025 budget.</i> <i>Proposed by Canon Tim Walters and seconded by Revd Devin McLachlan.</i> <i>Motion carried with two against and five abstentions.</i></p>
<p>9. Net Zero Carbon Route Map Progress</p> <p>Revd Canon Nigel Cooper, Net Zero Carbon Contractor for the Diocese, noted that globally, carbon emission growth has slowed in the last year. The aim of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was for an increase in temperature to not exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius. The IPCC has carried out a review of how much carbon can be put into the atmosphere before the likelihood of missing it was a third and has concluded that carbon emissions from 2023 have left only 6 years if carbon continues to be emitted at the same rate. Meanwhile, global temperature continues to rise and in September was still a third of a degree higher than ever before.</p> <p>Progress made by the Diocese has been less than hoped due to not being able to appoint NZC officer until March, dioceses having to themselves manage grants given out by the national church and the NZC team being much more involved in DAC casework than expected.</p> <p>To date, 75% of dioceses have achieved Bronze Eco Dioceses standard; Ely is yet to achieve this. A new Diocesan Environmental policy will be brought to the March 2025 Synod meeting with a view to the diocese applying for Bronze standard next year.</p>
<p>10. Deanery Synod Standing Orders</p> <p>Mr Andrew Gore, Granta, noted that rural deans and lay chairs were consulted on the first draft of the Standing Orders in May; the version circulated to Diocesan Synod reflects their feedback. He has now received several detailed responses on this from Synod members and asked for any further responses by 8 November. The document will also be recirculated to rural deans and lay chairs for further comment and a further updated document will then be circulated to Synod</p>

	<p>members to comment on by early January and the final draft brought to the March Diocesan Synod meeting.</p> <p>Mr David Brock, Granta, asked whether a small consultative group could be set up with whom Andrew could work through questions. Canon Atling confirmed that such a group will be convened and extended immense thanks to Mr Gore for this significant piece of work.</p>
11.	<p>Bishop's Council Report 26 September 2024</p> <p>The Bishop of Huntingdon & Acting Bishop of Ely summarised the business of the meeting.</p> <p>The Council had received a report written by John Truscott evaluating learning from the Changing Market Towns project; an abridged version is now on the Diocese website.</p> <p>There was much discussion at the meeting on finances. Other weighty items included the Trustee Assurance Group (TAG) and governance. The Council is becoming more involved in how the diocesan team operates as an organisation including consideration of resource planning, managing risk, succession, and resilience of the staff team, and how it can ensure satisfactory reporting and monitoring of business. The TAG item will be revisited at the November Council meeting. An item on governance was presented. The Council has been concerned with HR matters and that some recommendations from the original review group did not appear to have been followed up. This item will also be brought back to the November meeting.</p> <p>A request had been received from the programme director of LLF regarding LLF engagement with Diocesan Synods. Whilst not a formal consultation under Article 8, Diocesan Synods are asked to discuss. The agenda planning group will consider; this may require an additional meeting. Further information and resources relating to LLF and PLF would be circulated to members; appended to these minutes.</p> <p>The Council had received an update from the Relating Well Together working party on progress on the suite of behaviour policies being developed for parishes; a final version will be brought to the November Council meeting. It is hoped that once proper processes are in place this will relieve pressure on the Diocesan Safeguarding team.</p> <p>The Council approved a visa and immigration policy for ordinands.</p>
12.	<p>Any other business</p> <p>Revd Canon Atling noted that EDBF is working with the archdeacons to provide information to parishes as to which policies are compulsory for them and which are recommended as good practice.</p>
13.	<p>Dates of next meetings</p> <p>The next meeting will take place on Saturday 8 March 2025 at 9.00am at St Mary's, Ely.</p> <p>The dates of the remainder of the 2025 meetings are:</p> <p>Wednesday 18 June at 6.45pm</p> <p>Saturday 11 October at 9.00am (please note this date has been changed since that published previous)</p>
14.	<p>The meeting closed with prayers at 12.50pm.</p>