

BISHOP'S DIOCESAN COUNCIL

comprising

**The Bishop's Council and Standing Committee
The Executive of the Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd.
The Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee**

**Draft minutes of the meeting held remotely
on Saturday 4th December 2021**

Introductory Worship

The Bishop of Exeter in the chair

I. Apologies and Notices

Apologies were received from the Very Revd. Jonathan Greener, the Ven Nick Shutt and Mr. Bob Mills.

- At the final meeting of the triennium, the Chair thanked all members for their work over the last three years.
- Circumstances permitting it was hoped and intended that the Council's next meeting would be held in person rather than remotely.
- The following officers and advisers were welcomed to the meeting: the Revd. Preb James Grier and the Revd Preb Philip Sourbut for item 4; also Mrs Sue Lockwood and Laurie Trounce (of Stephens Scown LLP) for item 5.

2. Declaration of any actual or potential conflict of interest arising from the agenda or accompanying papers.

No actual or potential conflicts of interest were declared.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 13th September 2021 **Paper BDC/43/21**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th September 2021 were approved without amendment.

4. To receive a report on feedback received concerning the consultation on the Diocesan Vision and Strategy: Next Steps and to agree recommendations concerning sustainable mission communities **Paper BDC/44/21**

The Ven. Andrew Beane, Archdeacon of Exeter, and the Ven. Verena Breed, Archdeacon of Barnstaple, introduced the feedback from the consultation process relating to 'Next Steps'. Nearly 500 people had taken part in the various consultation events and around 200 electronic and other consultation responses had been received. Principally, these related to three key questions arising from the 'Next Steps' document and process:

- What excites you?

- What's missing?
- How would this be received in your mission community?

It was clear from the feedback that mission communities were starting from very different situations and contexts, and would need different entry points and processes if it was to be a constructive experience. The culture of 'Next Steps' would need to be invitational and attentive to what each mission community said about its own circumstances. The image of stepping-stones across a river was thought to be helpful in that it invited people to describe where they might see themselves in the journey, what perspective that viewpoint might give them, and the options available to them for moving forward.

In discussion it was noted that there was a minority that did not see the benefit of taking the 'Next Steps' process further. It was not clear from the feedback why this might be, although it was possible to make some general assumptions. However, it did lead to the question of whether, as travellers on the way together faced the river, it might be possible for some to carry or support others across. Networks of support and peer relationships (between colleagues and mission communities) might help some to take an initial step, that may then open up a new perspective.

The Revd. Preb Philip Sourbut, the Diocesan Director of Mission and Ministry, and the Revd. Preb. James Grier, the Diocesan Mission Enabler, then introduced the initial work undertaken on the Mission Community Health Check process. The Health Check was designed on the understanding that different mission communities would need different approaches depending on whether they were ready to move, needed a period of recovery time from the pandemic first or could not even envisage starting on a process. Establishing the appropriate starting point, through conversation, prayer and careful listening, was a pre-cursor to the process. Thereafter, the process would lead to an engagement with the Growth Values and from there to take an initial view on church and community needs, energy (including discerning where the Holy Spirit was already at work) and the sorts of support that might be useful. A Health Check tool kit would be made available, in print and online, providing links to useful resources. Later in the process attention would turn to planning and implementation.

Initial thoughts concerning the Health Check process were that it could be based on the image of the vine and the characteristics that make a vine healthy: it has deep roots, is growing, bears good fruit, is good for its environment, is pruned and trellised, and is part of a vineyard. For each characteristic there would be a range of resources and support via diocesan staff, coaches and peers.

It was noted that if this approach were to receive broad support, it might be possible to run a small number of pilot projects in the first quarter of 2022, prior to any necessary decisions being taken by Diocesan Synod at the end of March.

Members were then asked to discuss two questions in small groups:

- what might be the fruit of the Mission Community Health Check?
- what are the dangers to avoid?

In plenary feedback, the fruits of the Health Check were thought to include the following: development of peer support, opportunities to learn from positive and practical examples, an encouragement that everyone can make a contribution, embedding growth values as essential for culture change, motivation to engage with the wider community, opportunity to focus on a small number of achievable actions, consolidation and development rather than starting from scratch, walking alongside and offering practical support (companionship and encouragement rather than instruction from afar). It was noted that the questionnaire-based approach needed to be flexible in its application. How the Health Check was communicated was thought to be of

great importance, with clear and simple objectives that allowed for a diversity of contexts and trusted mission communities to know their own local contexts.

On the other hand, the dangers of the Health Check process as currently envisaged included the following: being perceived as 'another initiative', 'top down' or as a 'front' for an ulterior agenda, positive examples resulting in others feeling 'left behind', intensive engagement could lead to slow progress, resource implications for those tasked with providing the support, complex governance reform could become a distraction, more forms to fill in, some mission communities may seek to 'tick boxes' in order to get through it more quickly, perception of marginalisation of deaneries. Underlying many of the dangers was the question of whether there was sufficient mutual trust for everyone to enter the process with open hands.

Members were encouraged to submit any further comments outside of the meeting. It was noted that there would be an update at the Council's next meeting in February.

5. To agree in principle a recommendation to the Diocesan Bishop of a new legal form for the Diocesan Board of Education **Paper BDC/45/21**

The Ven. Douglas Dettmer, Archdeacon of Totnes and Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education, reminded members of their initial engagement with this issue, including the process, timetable and main options, at their previous meeting. He noted that the existing Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) would engage with the proposals on 14th December 2021, and that having received the formal approval of the DBE, the draft Scheme would be subject to scrutiny by the Archbishop's Council before going to Diocesan Synod in March 2022.

The Archdeacon then described the contents of the papers (an options appraisal, legal analyses of organisational risks and liability concerning subsidiaries, a template scheme and a draft scheme based on the template), which constituted the detailed evidence supporting the Working Group's recommendation to the Diocesan Bishop that the 'committee of the DBF' model should be adopted for the future operation of the DBE. He noted that, having considered the actions being taken in other dioceses and on balance, the working group had been persuaded by the advantages of this approach, which related primarily to cost, organisational simplicity, consistency and coherence across the Diocese. There were some potential disadvantages (including around liability risks and constraints to the supply of services to connected academies on a profit-making basis) but in the final analysis these were thought to be outweighed by the advantages. The draft scheme would in due course need to be embodied in detailed Terms of Reference for the DBE in its new legal form, in order that all parties would fully comprehend their respective on-going responsibilities.

The Archdeacon then described the draft scheme in detail, highlighting areas of particular note and relating them to the governing Measure. These included the functions to be delegated from the DBF to the DBE, the limited circumstances in which the DBF could intervene in the work of the DBE, the scope of the Terms of Reference for the DBE and reporting arrangements. Where the scheme included provisions that were open to a range of approaches (for example in relation to the membership of the DBE and the way in which property and trusts would be administered and overseen), reasons were given for the option that was being proposed.

Laurie Trounce, external legal adviser to the Working Group, confirmed that the material being presented to the Council had, in her view, covered the relevant considerations that were to be taken into account in reaching an in-principle decision. She advised that, alongside the development of the Scheme, the Terms of Reference would be of critical importance in regulating the future relationship between the DBF and the DBE.

In discussion, clarification was sought concerning the prospective legal status of the members of the Diocesan Board of Education and it was noted that although they would not be trustees in their own right, the nature of some of their roles and responsibilities were analogous to trusteeship and that in terms of qualifying standards and arrangements for indemnity against liability, they should be treated in an equivalent way to trustees. It was also noted that the Exeter Diocesan Education Network (EDEN) would become effectively a subsidiary of the DBF and that the nature of the relationship would need to be explicit in the Terms of Reference. That said, the discrete functions of EDEN in the relationship with Academy Trusts was and would remain important and close attention would need to be paid to its membership.

It was further noted that the skills and experience of the members of the DBE were of critical importance; also that it should be an aspiration, perhaps through the explicit recognition and valuing of wider experience, to seek to increase the diversity of the membership. Finally, it was clarified that the 3-year term of office of the elected members would relate as at present to the synodical triennial cycle, but that consideration would be given to whether the terms of other categories of members might better be off-set from those of the elected members in order to ensure the retention of sufficient continuity at all times.

The following motion was then moved by the Archdeacon of Totnes:

“This Council endorses the draft diocesan Scheme under the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021 for consideration and approval by the Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocesan Synod.”

The motion was approved with one abstention. The Bishop of Exeter indicated that he accepted the endorsement of the draft diocesan Scheme and that the process would continue according to the parameters laid out in the legislation and associated guidance.

6. To approve a Joint Council scheme for the parishes of Newton Tracey with Alverdiscott, Horwood, Yarnscombe, Tawstock, Atherington, High Bickington, Roborough, St Giles in the Wood and Beaford **Paper BDC/46/21**

The Ven Verena Breed, Archdeacon of Barnstaple, introduced the Joint Council scheme for the parishes of Newton Tracey with Alverdiscott, Horwood, Yarnscombe, Tawstock, Atherington, High Bickington, Roborough, St Giles in the Wood and Beaford, noted that the scheme was based on the previously approved diocesan template and was for a partial transfer of functions. She noted that, unusually, the scheme did not make arrangements for all of the parishes in the mission community; one parish, Huntshaw, had decided that it did not wish to participate. However, the remaining parishes had decided to proceed regardless with the scheme to simplify their governance. It would still be possible for Huntshaw to join the scheme at a later date by agreement.

In discussion it was noted that the opting out of one parish in the mission community did not cause any particular legal difficulty and, if anything, demonstrated the flexibility of the Joint Council model. The circumstances of Huntshaw parish were noted and the hope expressed that they might decide to join in the future, to the mutual benefit of all parties.

The Joint Council scheme for the Two Rivers Mission Community (excepting the parish of Huntshaw) was approved.

7. To receive a report on the results of elections to the Vacancy in See Committee, to elect a Chair and to note the process for making additional appointments **Paper BDC/47/21**

The Bishop of Exeter informed members that Mrs. Anne Foreman was the only duly nominated candidate in the election for the Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee for the 2022 to 2024 triennium. She was therefore deemed elected.

Dr. Ed Moffatt, the Assistant Diocesan Secretary, noted that with the Chair having been elected, it was necessary for the Council to appoint a Secretary to the Committee. In the light of the amount of work involved and the need to relate closely with a wide range of people across the Diocese as well as externally, it was often thought that the Diocesan Secretary was in the best position to fulfil the requirements of the role. Mr. Stephen Hancock, the Diocesan Secretary, indicated his willingness to be so appointed, and requested that the Assistant Diocesan Secretary also be appointed as Assistant Secretary to the Committee in order that the workload could be shared.

With reference to the question of the Council making nominations to the Committee, in the light of the recent results of the second call for nominations, Dr. Moffatt proposed that the Council be invited to make such nominations at its next meeting.

In discussion it was noted that it was the responsibility of all continuing members of the Council to consider who might be nominated to the Committee in order to complete its membership. This could include nominated members from the current triennium, if they were willing to serve for a further term. A request was also made for Mrs Foreman's election statement to be circulated to members of the Council, since in the absence of a contested election, this would not otherwise happen.

The proposals concerning the appointment of the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary of the Committee, the making of nominations to the Committee and the circulation of the election statement were all agreed.

8. To review the Code of Conduct and the Policy on Disclosure and Conflicts of Interest for members **Paper BDC/48/21**

Mr. Neil Williams, the Diocesan Director of Finance, introduced the revisions to the Code of Conduct and the Policy on Disclosure and Conflicts of Interest for members. The document had previously drafted with support from the Diocesan Registrar. He noted that the revisions were minor in nature and would come into effect at the start of the new triennium.

In discussion it was noted that although disclosures of interests were required of members of this Council, of some key committees (such as the Diocesan Board of Education) and senior members of staff, the same approach was not taken in respect of members of the Diocesan Synod because of the size and also the nature of the body (ie its members neither being the trustees of a charity nor directors of a company). However, in all circumstances members were invited to disclose conflicts of interest at the start of each meeting and in relation to specific items of business.

9. To consult on the appointment of a new Chair for the Church Buildings Strategy Committee

The Bishop of Exeter reminded members of the importance and functions of the Church Buildings Strategy Committee (CBSC) and noted that, with the resignation of the Revd. Preb.

Simon Franklin, a new Chair would be needed from the start of the New Year. The newly appointed Chair would then also become a member of this Council and the Diocesan Synod. The CBSC's constitution provides 'that the Chair shall be appointed by the Bishop after consultation with the DMPC'.

The Bishop then proposed that Mrs. Laura Ford, Licensed Lay Minister in the Netherexe benefice, be appointed as the Chair of the CBSC. He noted that Mrs. Ford would bring both substantial practical parish experience of a rural Mission Community and also a wealth of professional expertise as a property lawyer. She also holds the role of Exeter Archdeaconry Warden of Readers and is a tutor on the SWMTC training course for Licensed Lay Ministers, which would provide her with a wide network of contacts on which to build in the new role.

The Archdeacon of Exeter (also as Warden of Readers) and the Archdeacon of Totnes (formerly the incumbent of the Netherexe benefice) spoke to commend Mrs. Ford as an enthusiastic and competent candidate for the role.

It was agreed to endorse the recommendation that Mrs Ford be appointed to be the Chair of the CBSC for a term of 3 years with effect from 1st January 2022. It was also noted that member nominations to the CBSC for the new triennium would be included on the agenda of the next meeting of this Council.

10. To receive a report on the results of elections to the Bishop's Diocesan Council, Vacancy in See Committee, Archidiaconal Mission and Pastoral Committees and the Diocesan Board of Patronage **Paper BDC/50/21**

Dr. Ed Moffatt, the Assistant Diocesan Secretary, noted that the second call for nominations had completed on Wednesday 1st December and that paper 50 had been updated accordingly and re-issued to members shortly before the meeting. Two elections arising from the second call for nominations would be completed before the end of the year. This would leave one lay vacancy on the Vacancy in See Committee, one lay vacancy from the Barnstaple Archdeaconry on the Bishop's Diocesan Council and several clergy and lay vacancies on three of the four Archidiaconal Mission and Pastoral Committees (AMPCs). The situation in relation to the AMPCs in particular would need further consideration.

In discussion it was noted that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find people to stand for election, whether to PCCs, deanery synods, Diocesan Synod or to the various diocesan boards and committees. For many of the latter, the Diocesan Synod was the pool from which candidates are drawn, which means that any weakness in that body is potentially transmitted to the other bodies that depend upon it. It was suggested that a wider review was needed, perhaps to be held in the context of the Next Steps process, to consider what actions could be taken to re-energise governance bodies and committees throughout the Diocese. Possibilities could include changing meeting times (so that they are more convenient for working lay people), seeking to change the electorate and qualifications to be a candidate, being more proactive in inviting qualified people to participate and reviewing the role of deaneries in the light of the strategic decision to focus efforts and resources in mission communities.

Deemed Items

11. To receive an update on Common Fund received for the year-to-date **Paper BDC/49/21**
12. DMPC Secretary's report **Paper BDC/51/21**

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| 13. | To receive a report from the Assets Group | Paper BDC/52/21 |
| 14. | To receive a report from the DBF Standing Committee | Paper BDC/53/21 |
| 15. | To receive an update on operational reporting | Paper BDC/54/21 |