

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 at the Old Deanery in Exeter
on Wednesday 6th July 2022**

Introductory Worship

The Bishop of Exeter in the chair

I. Apologies and Notices

Apologies were received from Mrs. Annie Jefferies, Mr. Mike Jefferies, the Revd. Ed Hobbs, the Revd. Samantha Stayte, the Revd. Andy Atkins, Mrs. Laura Ford, the Revd. Canon Mike Williams, Dr. Michael Wykes and Mr. Bob Mills.

- Mr. Tim Borton (Bishop Fleming LLP), Mr. Walker Lapthorne (Chair of the Diocesan Advisory Committee), Mr. Charlie Pitman (Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser) and Mr. Steve White (Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel) were welcomed to the meeting.
- At his final meeting before retirement, tribute was paid to the Right Revd. Nick McKinnel, Bishop of Plymouth, for his unstinting contribution to the work of the Council. The announcement of the Revd. Preb. James Grier, currently the Diocesan Mission Enabler, as the next Bishop of Plymouth was welcomed.

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

Mr. Giles Frampton, Chair of the DBF, declared an interest in relation to item 10 (the approval of a joint council for the Teign Valley and Haldon Hill mission community) and it was agreed that he would leave the room for the duration of the item.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16th May 2022 **Paper BDC/30/22**

It was noted that the draft minutes had incorrectly recorded the location of the meeting (having been held remotely rather than in person) and it was agreed to make the necessary amendment. The amended minutes were then approved.

Chair of the DBF in the chair

4. To approve the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements of the Exeter Diocesan Board of for the year ended 31st December 2021 Finance for presentation to the Annual General Meeting **Paper BDC/31/22**

Mr. Neil Williams, the Diocesan Director of Finance, introduced the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for 2021. He drew members attention to the total income and expenditure figures set out on p.35 and noted that on the surface, the situation looked relatively healthy with an annual operating surplus of £1.6m. In conjunction with a net gain on value of assets of £5.9m, this meant an overall increase in assets of approximately £7.6m. However, it was important to realise that £1.2m of the £1.6m was the result of the sale of clergy housing and a further £1m was a consequence of an adjustment in the value of pension funds (which could move the other way). Removing these two factors revealed an operating loss of around £0.5m. In respect of the value of assets, adverse market conditions thus far in 2022 (including a reduction of around 15% in investment values) meant that the 2021 increase had already been almost entirely reversed. Mr. Williams then set out the values of the relevant asset classes and the restrictions on their uses. He noted in particular that at year end the unrestricted general reserve was approximately £9m, a higher level than in many previous years in order to manage increased, pandemic-related, cash flow pressures. Just as the general reserve had benefited from the realisation of assets and growth in investment values in 2021, so it was decreasing in 2022 with the strong economic headwinds, as well as associated pressures on income streams (including Common Fund).

Mr. Tim Borton, of the DBF's auditors, Bishop Fleming LLP, noted that the outcome of the audit was to be found in the Key Issues document. Members' attention was drawn in particular to the assessment in section 3. He noted that all necessary information had been received and the outcome had been assessed as good in every respect. There were also no issues identified in relation to risks, the correct recognition of income or the allocation of funds. He also noted that investment property was not professionally valued every year but that the arrangements were satisfactory for accounting purposes. Overall, the audit report was therefore unmodified, with just one minor adjustment made in relation to EDPS in section 6.

In discussion, clarity was sought and provided on the purpose of EDEN and the nature of its relationship to the Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) of which it was a member. It was noted that the situation would change once the new scheme under the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2019 was brought into effect, which would formally make the DBE a statutory committee of the DBF. This would inevitably have an impact on how services to MATs could be provided and charged for.

Mr. Giles Frampton, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, then moved the following motion:

'This meeting of the Board of Directors of the Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance approves the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2021'

The motion was put to the vote and passed unanimously.

The Bishop of Exeter in the chair

5. To record formally the receipt by the Bishop's Council of the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for 2021 and to recommend their presentation to Diocesan Synod.

The Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements of the Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance for 2021 were received and it was agreed to recommend their presentation to the Diocesan Synod.

6. To recommend the appointment of Bishop Fleming LLP to Diocesan Synod as auditors for the ensuing year.

Mr. Giles Frampton, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, informed members that a re-tendering process for the DBF's auditors had recently been undertaken. Six tenders had been invited, four of which had been shortlisted (two local firms and two national) and then interviewed. The result of the process was a clear recommendation, subsequently endorsed by the Assets Group, to re-appoint Bishop Fleming LLP for a further seven-year term, with a review and potential break point after five years. There would be a new lead audit partner, for whom references from charity clients had been taken up, and who would provide a fresh perspective and constructive challenge. It was noted that the Bishop Fleming LLP tender price had also been the lowest of the short-listed firms.

After a brief discussion about the value of the tender process, which it was thought should be repeated in five years' time, it was agreed to recommend the appointment of Bishop Fleming LLP to the Diocesan Synod as auditors for the coming year.

7. To make appointments to the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches
Paper BDC/32/22

Mr. Walker Laphorne, Chair of the Diocesan Advisory Committee, introduced the proposed appointments to the Committee at the start of its new 6-year term on 1st August 2022. He noted that it was the responsibility of the Bishop's Council to make the appointments and he set out information relating to the existing members who had stepped down, those who wished to continue and one new member. The intention was to keep the membership of the Committee as light as possible while still fulfilling the requirements of the governing Measure.

In discussion, it was noted that in the minutes of the Council's previous meeting it was stated that the appointment process would be reviewed. It was confirmed that this review was expected to take place in the first few months of the DAC's new term of office.

The Chair then moved the following motion:

'This Council appoints members to the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches as set out in Paper BDC/32/22'

The motion was put to the vote and approved.

8. To receive the annual report of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel **Paper BDC/33/22**

The Bishop of Exeter warmly congratulated, and paid tribute to the work of, Mr. Charlie Pitman, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, on his appointment as Regional Safeguarding Lead for the South-West. This sentiment was also echoed by the Very Revd. Jonathan Greener on behalf of the Cathedral. The Bishop also reminded members of their responsibilities to carry out due diligence in respect of safeguarding in the Diocese, as well as the work of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, to assure themselves that the legal responsibilities are being discharged effectively.

Mr. Steve White, independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Panel, introduced the Panel's annual report and indicated that his view was that the Diocesan Safeguarding Team had

continued to function effectively throughout the pandemic. Although it was a significant loss that the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser would not be continuing in post, there would be benefits in continuing to work with and relate to Mr. Pitman in his new role, as well as for the person in that role to have a detailed knowledge of procedure and practice in the Diocese of Exeter. Over the past few years, an independent audit and the Past Cases Review 2 process had been satisfactorily completed and the recommendations arising, which were mostly administrative in nature, were in the process of being implemented. During that same period, a lot of time and effort had been invested in training, particularly in trying to deliver it in as accessible a way as possible for clergy and parish representatives. One issue that could benefit from greater attention was that of quality assurance; the parish safeguarding dashboard was very helpful at driving up standards but there was scope to embed it more thoroughly and also to consider the value of a version for the Diocese as a whole. At the heart of all such initiatives, however, was the desire to see an on-going renewal of the safeguarding culture in and throughout the Diocese. For this reason, the relationship with the Diocesan Vision and Strategy, as articulated in 'Next Steps' was of critical importance and an opportunity not to be missed to catalyse change and improvements in all contexts and communities.

In discussion it was noted that the parish safeguarding dashboard was being used by a large minority of parishes and that it would need persistence, positive communication and encouragement for the roll out to be completed. In terms of case work, it was noted that the number of new safeguarding cases in the Diocese was broadly stable (although inevitably there were significant variations in their severity); there was an increasing sense of focus in relation to domestic abuse, which had also been impacted by social changes occasioned by the coronavirus pandemic. There was also an important area of work that was not strictly speaking within the scope of safeguarding but that related to other forms of harmful behaviour (for example, bullying); the engagement of the safeguarding staff in providing pastorally-motivated support and care in such cases was much appreciated. New training approaches were being developed to see if the role of local churches could be further enhanced in this regard.

In respect of the staffing of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, it was noted that the current Assistant Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, Mr. Costas Nassaris, would be appointed as Acting Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, and his role would also be back-filled internally, with a new administrator also being appointed. If all was satisfactory after six months, then staff would be confirmed in post with the approval of the National Safeguarding Team.

9. To receive the annual report of the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee

Paper BDC/34/22

Mrs. Sophie West, the Secretary to the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, summarised the work of the Committee over the last 12 months and noted that the annual report would be forwarded to the next meeting of the Diocesan Synod. She noted in particular the situation in respect of the national review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure, in relation to which draft proposals were now expected to be received by the General Synod in February 2023. She also noted the current position in relation to suspended benefices in the Diocese, to the development of joint councils and also to church closures.

In discussion, clarification was sought on aspects of casework, including in respect of the closure of churches. It was also noted that there remained vacancies on three of the AMPCs and it was suggested that there be a co-ordinated attempt with support from the Communications Team, to fill them in the autumn, along with vacancies on the Diocesan Synod.

10. To approve a joint council scheme for the Teign Valley and Haldon Hill MC **Paper BDC/35/22**

Having declared an interest, Mr. Giles Frampton absented himself for the duration of the item.

The Ven Andrew Beane, Archdeacon of Exeter, introduced the joint council scheme and described both the local context and the processes that the parishes had been through to reach the point of submitting the scheme for approval. He paid tribute to the incumbent, the Revd. Ruth Frampton, whose creative vision for a mixed ecology of church in a rural mission community was being enabled by the scheme. He noted that the scheme was for a partial transfer of functions, with the aim of promoting missional activities throughout the benefice, with different accents and priorities in each of the parishes. He also noted that the scheme had been in preparation for more than two years and that the length of the process had occasioned some procedural difficulties, including in respect of the wording of the template scheme on which it was based, which had subsequently been updated, without those amendments having been applied to the scheme itself. He further highlighted for the Council's particular attention that the scheme contained some innovative provisions concerning financial arrangements, which were intended to meet the circumstances of the local context.

Mrs. Alison Stock, the Diocesan Registrar, described her engagement with the development of the scheme and noted that the function of the templates that had previously been approved was to provide a framework for each individual scheme, capable of adaptation to the circumstances. She noted that she had no concerns with the scheme from a legal perspective and that it complied with the Church Representation Rules.

In the absence of any discussion the scheme was approved by general assent.

11. To consider a scheme for lay representation on deanery synods **Paper BDC/36/22**

Dr Ed Moffatt, the Assistant Diocesan Secretary, introduced the proposed scheme of lay representation on deanery synods and noted the legislative changes that had come into effect during the last triennium. He also noted the general level of lay vacancies on deanery synods and the related variations around the Diocese and also feedback recently received from deanery officers, which had been useful and insightful but inconclusive. The scheme being proposed was at this stage unchanged from the one last agreed in 2019 but it was possible for the Council to amend it before forwarding it to Diocesan Synod for approval.

In discussion a wide range of views were expressed about whether the scheme should be amended now, in the future or not at all. For some the priority was to make the scheme fit for purpose for the contemporary situation; for others, more fundamental governance reform was the priority, notwithstanding the time that such an approach would take. A further view was that the priority should be to enable deanery synods to make any organisational changes that they wanted to make locally and to invest the resource available in clarifying their purpose, functions and operations. This would increase their sense of identity and hopefully make them more attractive to potential new members.

It was agreed that the draft scheme for the next triennium should proceed unamended to Diocesan Synod for approval and also that further consultation be undertaken with Rural Deans and Lay Chairs as to how to reinvigorate the life of the deaneries, to ensure that they had a locally appropriate sense of purpose, and to seek new members. Given the level of vacancies on other governance bodies and in other roles (eg PCCs and their officers, Diocesan Synod, diocesan committees) it was felt that there would be value in a co-ordinated communications campaign in the autumn, to highlight the importance of these roles in the life of the church.

12. To agree items for the agenda of the October meeting of Diocesan Synod

Mr. Stephen Hancock, the Diocesan Secretary, proposed the following items for inclusion on the agenda of Diocesan Synod at its next meeting on 15th October 2022:

- Minutes of the meeting of 26th March 2022
- Presidential Address
- To consider the implementation of the Diocesan Vision and Strategy 'Next Steps'
- To receive the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for 2021
- To approve the Diocesan Budget for 2023
- To receive the annual report of the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee
- To receive the annual report of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel
- To receive a report from the July 2022 group of sessions of General Synod
- To receive an update on women in ordained ministry
- To approve a scheme of representation to deanery synods
- To receive an update on work relating to the net zero target for carbon emissions by 2030
- To make a scheme relating to the Diocesan Board of Education and to agree arrangements for elections arising therefrom
- Questions

The proposed agenda items were agreed.

Deemed Items

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| 13. | To receive a draft report from the Assets Group | Paper BDC/37/22 |
| 14. | To receive an update for Common Fund for the year-to-date | Paper BDC/38/22 |
| 15. | To receive a report from the DBF Standing Committee | Paper BDC/39/22 |
| 16. | To receive a forecast of BDC and Synod business for next 12 months | Paper BDC/40/22 |
| 17. | To note documents sealed by the Diocesan Board of Finance | Paper BDC/41/22 |
| 18. | To note Trusts and funds for investment accepted by, or wound up by, the Diocesan Board of Finance | Paper BDC/42/22 |