

# EXETER DIOCESAN SYNOD

A meeting of the Exeter Diocesan Synod  
held at County Hall, Exeter on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at 10.00

## Minutes

Introductory worship

The Bishop of Exeter in the chair

### 1. Welcome and apologies

- A welcome was offered to the Right Revd James Grier, Bishop of Plymouth, for his first meeting as a member of the Synod.
- Visitors were also welcomed to the meeting: Steve White, independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Panel, and Costa Nassaris, Acting Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser for item 8 on safeguarding. Also to Sophie Phillips, the Diocesan Net Zero Carbon Officer and Lydia Perris, Diocesan Social Justice and Creation Care Officer for item 9 on net carbon zero.
- Apologies have been received from 18 members of the House of Laity, including Mrs Annie Jefferies, the Chair of the House of Laity, and 8 members of the House of Clergy.

### 2. Notices

- The Chair noted with sadness the recent death of Mr. Nick Wright of St Nectan's, Hartland, diocesan synod lay representative for Hartland Deanery.
- Unfortunately, the Revd. Samantha Stayte, Dean of Women in Ministry, had given her apology due to ill health and the decision had been taken to defer her report until the Synod's next meeting.

### 3. To approve the minutes of the meeting of Diocesan Synod held on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2022 **Paper S/12/22**

The minutes of the meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> March 2022 were approved without amendment.

### 4. Presidential Address

The text of the Bishop of Exeter's address is available at:

<https://exeter.anglican.org/who-we-are/addresses-letters/>

### 5. To receive the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 **Paper S/13/22**

Mr. Giles Frampton, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, noted that the Annual General Meeting of the DBF had approved the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements and that they were therefore for receipt by the Synod.

In the absence of any discussion, the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statement for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 were duly received.

6. To consider the implementation of the Diocesan Vision and Strategy 'Next Steps'

The Ven Andrew Beane, Archdeacon of Exeter, introduced the report on the implementation of 'Next Steps', noting that in the context of the overall vision and strategy for the Diocese, it seeks to set out some collective values and create mechanisms through which mission communities can be encouraged to flourish and plan more effectively for the future. As it moves into its implementation phase, each mission community will be starting from its own unique place on a map, undertaking its own 'praying, growing and serving' journey towards the vision of John 15:5, with the Health Check process acting like a compass to help navigate the local terrain more easily. There will also be landmarks and resources on the way to confirm the route being taken, whether that comes in the form of training, a grant or any number of other forms of advice and support. The intention is to encourage mission communities to be 'unflinchingly realistic about the challenges confronting us, matched by our trust in the Holy Spirit who leads us.'

The Right Revd. James Grier, Bishop of Plymouth, reminded members of the terms of the Diocesan Mission and Growth Fund and reported on the applications received and grants made for work with children, young people and families in 2022. He noted that 19 applications had been submitted, with a low proportion coming from the north and west of the Diocese, and 12 grants had been approved (only one of which was at the scheme's maximum of £20,000). £81,700 had been awarded in total, with the remainder of the £200,000 fund available to be applied for in 2023.

The Revd. Preb. Philip Sourbut, Diocesan Director of Mission and Ministry, then described the approach being taken to rolling out the Mission Community Health Check. He reminded members that the Health Check had been developed in response to requests made during the 'Next Steps' consultation process and that its purpose was to help parishes and mission communities to hold up a mirror to themselves, to help them to understand what they see and then to assist them in deciding how to respond. The process was intended to be forward-looking, invitational and hopeful rather than judgmental.

In discussion it was suggested that the Health Check process would need to be very sensitive to the local context. There would be a need to discern when a particular church community was in a 'fallow season' rather than fundamentally unhealthy; there would also need to be a way of encouraging a church community that was less healthy to engage with a process of self-reflection that they might initially think was unwelcome. In both cases, the value was less in the quantitative analysis per se than in the conversations that the process gave rise to, which would require careful and skilful facilitation and would encompass cultural values as well as activities. It was noted that the Health Check could be structured in ways that responded to the wider context, including church schools and deanery synods, if desired.

Mr. Giles Frampton, the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, introduced the diocesan budget for 2023 and noted that the intention was to try to chart a steady course through a challenging period, using reserves to maintain operations in the short term while at the same time praying and working for growth.

Mr. Neil Williams, Diocesan Director of Finance, then set out the key factors impacting the draft budget for 2023, including the sharp reduction in participant numbers over the last 2 years, inflationary pressures in general and in particular in relation to energy (as well as initiatives to help bear the associated increased costs), cost-of-living increases to stipends and salaries, long-term policy developments (such as the net-zero carbon agenda) and responses to changing legislative requirements (such as in relation to Energy Performance Certificates). It had been hoped to present a balanced budget but the significant pandemic-related and financial headwinds had led to a projected deficit of around £2.2m in 2023 and, indicatively, similar deficits for the following two years.

On the income side of the budget, the Bishop's Council had considered a series of options and had decided to accept a 7% per participant increase in Common Fund contributions for 2023, which was below the current rate of inflation. However, this relied on the collection rate being sustained and in the light of reducing participant numbers, asset sales would be needed to support cashflow. Significant changes were anticipated in the national funding regime from 2023 onwards (although the Lowest Income Communities Funding was expected to continue), but detail was not yet available. There was an expectation of a need to continue to apply for strategic national grant funding in order to support particular areas of work (from missional initiatives to carbon reduction).

On the expenditure side, a 6.8% increase was projected, mostly as a result of buildings inflation, stipends and salaries. The total EDBF staff budget would rise by 1.2%, the number of stipendiary posts would decrease slightly but in step with the long-term deployment plan, and costs associated with the clergy pension scheme would fall as the scheme deficit had been extinguished.

There were a number of significant risks associated with the income and expenditure assumptions in the budget, not least because of the unpredictability of the national economy. In the longer term, unless fundamental factors were to change in a positive direction (such as increasing participant numbers), it was projected that there would be major challenges that would emerge from 2024 onwards. Contingency planning was underway to evaluate potential options.

In discussion a range of views was expressed on the balance between working for and investing in hoped for growth and being realistic about the affordability of the associated expenditure alongside sustaining core services as far as possible. It was noted that new disciples often initially represented a cost rather than the opposite.

Clarification was sought concerning the performance of Resource Churches, their funding and the contributions (including financial) that they should make to support the work of the wider Diocese. It was noted that there had recently been an

independent review of national strategic grant funding mechanisms and change was anticipated (although the detail of the new processes and criteria was not yet clear). It was hoped that opportunities would open up to make applications that would support the renewal of parish mission and ministry, in order to alleviate the apparent dilemma of choosing between financial sustainability and local missional activity.

Additional support was requested for parishes in writing funding applications, rather than signposting resources and providing advice as at present. The new (partly externally funded) Giving Adviser had been appointed to lead on contactless giving, the Parish Giving Scheme (PGS) and grant support. It was noted that the PGS continued to prove an invaluable tool for many parishes and that the vast majority of participants giving through the Scheme had responded positively to a request to increase their giving, in the light of rising inflation, by 7.8%. This was one reason why the per participant increase in the Common Fund request (of 7%) was thought to be achievable. Support was also requested in terms of parish energy audits.

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

‘That this Synod do approve the diocesan budget for 2023 as set out in Paper S/14/22’

The motion was put to the vote and by a large majority.

8. To receive the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel annual report

**Paper S/15/22**

Mr Steve White, Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, introduced himself, his role and the functions of the Panel, which included risk identification, strategic and operational risk management, case overview and oversight of diocesan participation in national safeguarding reviews. The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser was a member of the Panel, reporting to it on issues arising from operational delivery.

In the light of the annual report, it was noted that in addition to its normal responsibilities, the Panel’s focus for the next 12 months would be to engage with ‘Pathfinder’ model that has resulted from IICSA recommendations, to strengthen national and regional links (particularly through the new Regional Safeguarding Lead), to increase mutual support between dioceses, to pursue a stronger quality assurance framework and to encourage further work on culture change.

In discussion a request was made for the Synod to receive more, suitably anonymised, information relating to case reporting and concern was expressed about the number of cases referred to statutory authorities during the course of the last year. It was noted that a national reporting template was in the process of being created and that the diocesan format could be reviewed for the next annual report. It was also noted that a commitment to full case reporting is an indication of a commitment to effective risk management and a healthy safeguarding culture. The question of culture, how to evaluate it and the actions that could be taken to improve it across something as extensive and diverse as a diocese, was one of great

importance to the Panel as it carried out its work. It was notable that recent independent evaluations (such as the Past Cases Review 2) had assessed the Diocese as having a strong administrative and organisational safeguarding culture.

In terms of other areas of safeguarding activity, it was noted that 74% of parishes had responded to the encouragement to use the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard. Its use was not mandatory (pending the publication of a new national quality assurance framework within the next year), but it was intended to move towards universal uptake as it would result in greater consistency of practice, drive up quality and improve audit trails for parishes. There was some concern expressed about aspects of the Dashboard's functionality and assurances were given that work was on going to improve the user interface, particularly where one safeguarding representative related to multiple parishes in a benefice or mission community and in the area of safer recruitment. Concern was expressed that the burden of this and other improvements (such as the requirement to undertake training) was often falling on the voluntary Parish Safeguarding Representative and there was a risk that in some places no-one would be found willing and able to bear the weight of responsibility.

Mr. White agreed that he would, in particular, express to the Panel the views of Synod members relating to the format of the annual report and also the need to continue to encourage parish safeguarding representatives in carrying out their roles, where possible simplifying the procedures for which they were responsible without detracting from the quality of parochial safeguarding practice.

9. To receive an update on work relating to the net zero target for carbon emissions by 2030 **Paper S/16/22**

Lydia Perris, the Diocesan Social Justice and Creation Care Officer and Sophie Phillips, the Diocesan Net Zero Carbon Officer presented an update on the preparatory work being undertaken on the net zero target for carbon emissions, set within the context of the wider creation care agenda. An Environment Working Group, chaired by the Archdeacon of Plymouth, was being formed with terms of reference appropriate to the current stage of the process in order to provide scrutiny and support.

The Diocesan Net Zero Carbon Officer noted that she had been in post for less than 6 months and it was therefore relatively early to be reporting on progress. However, in that period, there had been significant engagement with churches on the energy footprint tool (establishing local data), creating baseline carbon footprints, reviewing the national Route Map to 2030, starting to develop a draft diocesan action plan and connecting with partner organisations. The national Route Map to 2030, approved by General Synod in July 2022, was viewed as a substantial challenge and a range of stakeholder packs relating to it were being created for different contexts (eg local churches, schools) as an aid to communication. It was important to realise that the actions that were 'in scope' by 2030 for the Diocesan Board of Finance were relatively limited in terms of the elements that could be directly controlled, but that it would also be necessary to consider those same actions in other contexts where the Board had influence but no control (such as parish churches, church schools, the Cathedral and local Theological Education Institutions). Initial work indicated that the three areas of greatest potential impact were church buildings (in relation to which initial efforts would concentrate on the top 20% of energy users), church schools and

clergy houses. For some aspects it had been possible to establish base data and for others it was work in progress; the current picture would therefore evolve as the quality and range of data improved.

Although work had already commenced in relation to the national Route Map, it was noted that this should also be set in a wider context. Connections were being established to external partners, for example in relation to the Devon Carbon Plan and the Devon Climate Emergency Declaration, and consideration would be given to becoming a signatory to the latter. Work on Carbon Literacy (including the delivery of training) and Eco-Church status would provide impetus to the process of cultural change. Also, the work on carbon reduction would engage a series of 'co-benefits' that related well to the Diocesan Vision and Strategy, such as reducing poverty, improving health and well being and creating strong and connected communities.

## 10. Questions

Questions and their respective answers, as well as supplementary questions and their answers, are set out in Appendix 1.

## 11. To make a scheme relating to the Diocesan Board of Education and to agree arrangements for elections arising therefrom **Paper S/17/22**

The Ven. Douglas Dettmer, Archdeacon of Totnes and Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education, reminded members that they had at their last meeting approved the scheme arising from the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021 and explained that having received national approval in the intervening period, the scheme now needed to be made. He then summarised the main provisions of the scheme and noted that once made it would come into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023.

The Archdeacon of Totnes then moved the following motion:

'This Synod resolves to make the Scheme under the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021 as specified in the Certificate of the Archbishops' Council dated 1 April 2022.'

The motion was put to the vote and approved unanimously.

The Archdeacon of Totnes then noted that the scheme required arrangements to be made for the election of members of the DBE committee. Two members of the Synod, one from the House of Clergy and one from the House of Laity, were to be elected by the Synod prior to the scheme coming into effect in the manner set out in the motion. He noted that the motion was worded in such a way as to enable the electoral arrangements to continue into the future, thus avoiding the need to seek synodical approval before the start of each new triennium.

The Archdeacon of Totnes then moved the following motion:

'This Synod resolves that elections to the Diocesan Board of Education committee should be conducted as follows:

- a. That one member of the House of Clergy and one member of the House of Laity of the Diocesan Synod should be elected to the DBE committee by the combined membership of the Diocesan Synod by means of the 'first-past-the-post' electoral system;
- b. That the aforementioned members should be elected for a 3-year term, with the first such term commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023;
- c. That a person elected in accordance with this resolution should cease to be a member of the DBE committee upon completing his or her term of office (subject to the possibility of election for a further term if eligible) or upon ceasing to be a member of the relevant House of the Diocesan Synod, whichever shall come first;
- d. That the period in which the election is to take place is 1<sup>st</sup> October to 15<sup>th</sup> December in the year preceding the commencement of each 3-year term.'

The motion was put to the vote and approved unanimously.

12. To receive an update on women in ordained ministry **Paper S/18/22**

This item was deferred.

13. To receive a report from General Synod **Paper S/19/22**

The Ven Douglas Dettmer, Archdeacon of Totnes and member of the General Synod, introduced the report from the July 2022 Group of Sessions of General Synod. He noted the wide range of business under consideration, including issues of national and social importance (where the Synod was often felt to be at its best, with policy development being informed by the experience and testimony of its members), legislation, finance and internal organisation.

All of the relevant papers, reports and minutes were available on the Church of England's website: [General Synod July 2022 | The Church of England](#)

In discussion it was noted that significant work was underway between the July 2022 and February 2023 Groups of Sessions of General Synod on the development of proposals arising from 'Living in Love and Faith'. The publication of the proposals in early 2023 would be the start of a new stage in the process and it was thought important that the General Synod representatives from the Diocese of Exeter listened carefully to their own local contexts as they considered their responses. It was expected that the Diocesan Synod would have the opportunity to give its own consideration to proposals at a subsequent point.

14. To approve a scheme of representation to deanery synods **Paper S/20/22**

Dr. Ed Moffatt, the Assistant Diocesan Secretary, introduced the proposed scheme of parochial lay representation to deanery synods for the forthcoming triennium. He noted that the scheme was unchanged from that agreed for the current triennium and that research undertaken on the possibility of alternative approaches had been inconclusive. He also noted that there was some concern at the number of lay

vacancies on deanery synods but that the Bishop's Council, having reviewed the evidence, had decided to propose an unamended scheme to the Synod.

In discussion it was noted that the election of representatives was a function of the parish and the APCM and therefore it was not possible (without the extensive process of sending a scheme to General Synod for approval) to make formal arrangements relating to, for example, benefices, mission communities or joint councils, for the representation of the laity on deanery synods. Deanery synods themselves would be in a position to agree and facilitate any informal arrangements. It was also noted that the minimum threshold for the size of deanery synods was to be treated flexibly on the grounds of practicability. Finally, a suggestion was made for future consideration concerning an alternative scale for calculating the number of representatives.

The scheme was approved by general assent.

### **Deemed Items**

15. To receive the Annual Report of the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee  
**Paper S/21/22**