

DIOCESE OF EXETER

**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, Exeter  
on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 18:00**

Introductory worship

The Bishop of Exeter in the Chair

I. Apologies and Notices

Apologies were received from the Ven Verena Breed, the Ven Jane Bakker, Dr. Michael Wykes, Mrs. Laura Ford and the Revd. Ed Hobbs.

- The Revd. Preb Rosie Austin (elected from Barnstaple archdeaconry) and Dr. Lystra Hagley-Dickinson (Bishop's nominee) were welcomed to their first meeting. It was also noted that the Revd. Preb. Samantha Stayte, Dean of Women in Ministry, had now ceased to be an elected member of the Council but had taken up a place as a Bishop's nominee.
- Mr. Craig Sullivan, present on behalf of the Board's auditors, Bishop Fleming LLP, was also welcomed to the meeting.
- It was noted with regret that Mr. Steve White, independent chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel, had had to withdraw from presenting the Panel's report at short notice. Mr Costas Nassaris, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, had agreed to present the report in his place and accordingly he too was welcomed to the meeting.
- It was also noted that calls for nomination had recently been circulated for lay representatives from the Barnstaple and Totnes archdeaconries. Unfortunately, no qualified candidates had been nominated and accordingly the places remained vacant.

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

The Revd. Canon Dr. Mike Williams declared interests as a paid coach to the interim principal of the South West Ministry Training Course, a Director of First Federation MAT and a member of Dartmoor MAT, as a potential conflicts in respect of item 4.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023

**Paper BDC/21/23**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 were approved with one amendment, confirming the date of the meeting in the minutes and all related documents as 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 rather than 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

## The Chair of the Board of Finance in the chair

4. To approve the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements of the Exeter Diocesan Board of for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 Finance for presentation to the Annual General Meeting **Paper BDC/22/23**

Mr. Giles Frampton, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, briefly introduced the Board's Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for 2022. He noted that since the end of 2019, at which point income received from the Common Fund was more or less in balance with expenditure on parochial ministry, a significant funding gap had opened up. This was being managed in the short term by the sale of clergy housing not currently needed for its primary use. These sales had been used to support cashflow and bolster general reserves (which, as a result, were in an apparently healthy position at 44% of budgeted expenditure). However, this remedial measure made things appear better on the surface was really the case; in fact, in 2022 the DBF experienced an operational deficit of around £1.2m. The situation could be sustained in the short term but not thereafter without further remedial actions being taken.

Mr. Craig Sullivan, of the DBF's auditors, Bishop Fleming LLP, noted that the outcome of the audit was to be found in the Key Issues Discussion Document. He drew members' attention to the trustees' responsibilities and noted in particular that the audit report was unqualified with a small number of minor control findings.

In discussion clarification was sought concerning the formal relationship between EDBF, Exeter Diocesan Education Network (EDEN) and, separately, the South West Ministry Training Course (SWMTC); in particular whether there were any controlling interests or whether the organisations should be identified within the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements as related parties. It was confirmed that neither organisation was identified as such and that they were not understood to be so but that it would be prudent to seek confirmation prior to the documents being formally approved.

In the light of the discussion, it was agreed not to move the motion on the agenda to approve the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 but instead to delay approval until a suitable subsequent occasion, still with a view to their being presented to the members' AGM, at Diocesan Synod, on 14 October 2023.

Members were invited to take note of the contents of the Key Issues Discussion Document and approved the trustees' letter of representation.

## 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 2022 and to recommend their presentation to Diocesan Synod.

In the light of the decision by the Executive of the Diocesan Board of Finance to delay the approval of the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022, this item was postponed until a future occasion.

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, reminded members that a re-tendering process for the DBF's auditors had been undertaken in 2022 and that this was therefore the first year's audit under the new arrangement with Bishop Fleming LLP.

It was agreed to recommend the appointment of Bishop Fleming LLP to the Diocesan Synod as auditors for the coming year.

7. To receive the annual report of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel **Paper BDC/23/23**

Mr. Costas Nassaris, the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, introduced the Safeguarding Advisory Panel's annual report, noting in particular that although the number of referrals made during the course of the year had increased, this was potentially as a result of intentional awareness-raising around reporting and a sign that safeguarding was appropriately embedded in the life of the diocese. Most importantly, the seriousness of current cases had not increased and the vast majority of cases were not at a level that would otherwise engage the attention of statutory authorities. A few serious cases have been reported but they were typically non-recent in nature. It was also noted that the central record keeping concerning cases was satisfactory but the current database did not relate well to the requirements and systems of the National Safeguarding Team; a decision had been taken to move to direct use of the national safeguarding management system in order to improve performance in this area.

Beyond casework, there was a great deal of activity around training and the provision of advice and support to clergy and parish safeguarding officers. As ever there was a balance to be struck between seeking improvements in quality assurance and safeguarding practice and culture in local contexts on the one hand and not overwhelming the volunteer parish safeguarding officers on the other. The safeguarding team attempted to make themselves as available as possible to provide support (in person, on the phone and via training events) but inevitably there was occasionally some push back, sometimes influenced by wider concerns and developments within the life of the Church of England as a whole.

Finally, it was noted that the participation as a pathfinder diocese in a trial of some functions being held regionally (albeit with dioceses retaining their own decision-making responsibilities) was going well and producing some encouraging results.

In discussion members sought further information about the implications of the move to the national safeguarding management system, including the associated costs and workload implications (both of which would depend on whether some or all of the closed cases would be transferred, since they make up around 90% of the total). More detail was also requested on the management of ex-offenders in church communities, particularly around the number, scope and monitoring of the associated safeguarding (/attendance) agreements. In this regard it was noted that the Church was almost unique in seeking to welcome in ex-offenders, while simultaneously seeking to support survivors and serve the community at large, and as a result to boundary and manage the associated risks (for all parties). It was further noted that the agreements were highly individualized and context-dependent, based on an assessment of risk concerning specified activities, and that there was some work in hand to develop and trial some improvements to existing processes that would enhance risk management.

Members also sought reassurance about training delivery and in particular the support of Parish Safeguarding Officers, on whom much of the burden of delivering good safeguarding practice fell. The associated workload was significant and although efforts had been made to streamline administrative processes (for example through the provision of the Parish Safeguarding Dashboard), there was inevitably still some significant variation in local practice;

there could only be limited opportunities to reduce the burden on PSOs if the effectiveness of safeguarding in the local context was to be sustained.

It was noted that having been received by the Council, the Panel's annual report would be taken to the next meeting of the Diocesan Synod. One minor amendment to the report was suggested to be made prior to circulation to members of Diocesan Synod.

8. To receive information concerning a Ministry Training Review in the Dioceses of Exeter and Truro **Paper BDC/24/23**

The Revd. Ian Bussell, the Diocesan Director of Mission and Ministry, set out the context in which it had been decided to undertake a ministry training review across the two dioceses, which had a history of joint working in this area. The need for the review had emerged from a range of circumstances, including emerging differences in the directions of travel of the two dioceses and the impact of the pandemic on the two regional training institutions: St Mellitus South West and the South West Ministry Training Course (SWMTC). In particular the number of candidates for stipendiary ordained ministry had fallen in the post-pandemic period, imperilling the training institutions' main income stream. A research report, prepared by Professor Andrew Village, had provided a great deal of useful information but it was now for each of the dioceses to decide how to proceed (particularly if they wanted to go in different directions).

In the Diocese of Exeter it had been decided to set up a series of working groups to engage with different aspects of the situation and these had been tasked with producing proposals by July 2024. In the interim, a decision had been taken to moving the existing provision for phase 2 of Initial Ministerial Education (curate training) and 'Foundations in Christian Ministry' from SWMTC to be delivered in-house by staff of the Department for Mission and Ministry, in order to seek synergies with other training already being delivered through the department (such as Continuing Ministerial Development and the 'Grow' courses). It had been agreed that no other decisions would be taken for the next 12 months while the review was on-going.

In discussion members sought to highlight the importance of training for lay ministries and leadership and encouraged the review to focus its attention on current and future training needs and opportunities rather than primarily on financial considerations. The need for adaptability and a variety of training routes and models of ministry was also emphasised; ordained oversight ministry would form part of the picture, as would focal ministry, integrated team ministry and others besides. Innovation was also encouraged, for example the development of an 'apprentice' style training route, and the approach to continuing ministerial development and formation should be responsive to specific contexts and circumstances.

9. To receive a verbal update on preparations for the 'Come and See' mission with the Archbishop of Canterbury **Paper BDC/25/23**

The Right Revd. James Grier, Bishop of Plymouth, briefed members on the 'Come and See' mission, scheduled for the weekend of 10 – 12 November 2023. The fact that the weekend included Remembrance Sunday was unavoidable (the dates having been set by the Archbishop of Canterbury) but in some senses presented an opportunity since it was already one of the primary points of contact between the Church and wider community. The programme of events would focus on creating opportunities for people outside of the Church to encounter Jesus Christ (and therefore not for people inside the Church to meet the Archbishop). It was intended to be an occasion for taking risks locally (for which some seedcorn funding would be made

available) but also with a requirement that follow-up arrangements be put in place so that any contacts made would be sustained effectively after the event.

10. To consider a scheme of amendment to Diocesan Synod Standing Order 108

**Paper BDC/26/23**

Dr Ed Moffatt, the Assistant Diocesan Secretary, explained the reasons why it was thought necessary to ask Diocesan Synod to amend Standing Order 108, with the intention of enabling the Council's consideration of the Diocesan Budget to take place annually in September.

In the absence of any discussion, it was agreed to propose the following amendment to Standing Order 108 to Diocesan Synod for its approval:

“Preparation of annual accounts and draft budget:

~~Not later than the 31<sup>st</sup> August, t~~The Board of Directors of the Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance Limited (in these Standing Orders referred to as ‘the Executive’) shall in each year submit to the Bishop’s Council a Report and Accounts for the preceding financial year ended on 31<sup>st</sup> December and a draft budget, taking account of the priorities laid out by Synod, for the following year. The Bishop’s Council may make to the Executive and the Synod such recommendations thereon as it thinks fit. The drafting of the budget and any meetings relating thereto shall take place such that the draft budget shall be circulated to members of the Synod at least 21 days before the meeting at which a motion for its approval shall be moved.”

11. To receive an update on the work of the Vacancy in See Committee

**Paper BDC/27/23**

Mrs. Anne Foreman, Chair of the Vacancy in See Committee, reminded members of the process to date and reported that responses to the open, on-line, invitation to comment were being received in large numbers. This process would continue over the summer. In the meantime, members of the Vacancy in See Committee were taking time to get to know each other (ahead of the election of representatives on the Crown Nominations Commission in early September) and had started to draft the Diocesan Statement of Needs, although there remained much work to be done. In addition, some Committee members had taken the opportunity to visit schools to listen to the voices of children and young people, as well as to consult with school leaders.

In discussion it was noted that a diocesan prayer for the vacancy had been written and would be distributed throughout the Diocese. This would feature as a prominent part of the Diocesan Day of Prayer that had been arranged for Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> December. It was also noted that the Committee had a full membership, which was appropriate given the relative size and diversity of the Diocese; owing to its location and geography the See of Exeter would inevitably be seen as pivotal within the south-western region and externally the vacancy (and the work of the Committee) would be seen and understood in that wider context.

12. To consider a draft scheme of elections to Diocesan Synod for the 2024 – 2027 triennium

**Paper BDC/28/23**

Dr Ed Moffatt, the Assistant Diocesan Secretary, set out the proposed electoral scheme for the next triennium of the Diocesan Synod. It was noted that the proposed scheme was the same as the existing scheme and that there were reasons to consider that the scheme was under strain (for example in respect of relatively high vacancy rates) and that this would be exacerbated if historical trends (such as falling parochial electoral rolls) were to continue or even accelerate.

In discussion concerns were expressed about presenting the same scheme to Diocesan Synod for its approval, especially given the Synod's request before the start of the current triennium (in October 2020) for the scheme to be reviewed. It was also noted that the coronavirus pandemic had had a major impact on participation in synodical structures during the last three years. It was also noted that it was unrealistic to expect to carry out a full review, which might involve an assessment of potential structural reform, in the time available.

It was agreed that for the present, it would be better to offer the Synod the current scheme, potentially with an option of an alternative version against a different arithmetical base to address the most immediate concerns, for the forthcoming triennium. Consideration would need to be given, including by the Chairs of the Houses of Clergy and Laity, as to what the substance of any amendment to the scheme might be. Thereafter, if it wished, the Synod could choose to institute a more thorough review to consider options for the future.

13. 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 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023 (along with the AGM of the Diocesan Board of Finance):

- Minutes of the meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> March 2023
- Presidential address
- To consider an aspect of the implementation of 'Next Steps'
- To receive the Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements of the Diocesan Board of Finance for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022
- To approve the diocesan budget for 2024 and to give consideration to an indicative finance plan for 2025-26
- To receive the annual report of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel
- To consider the diocesan Net Zero Carbon action plan
- To approve a scheme of elections to Diocesan Synod for the 2024 – 2027 triennium
- To receive a report from General Synod
- To receive a report on the work of the Vacancy in See Committee
- To approve a scheme of amendment to Standing Order 108
- To receive the annual report of the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee

The proposed agenda items were agreed.

Deemed Items

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| 14. | To receive the annual report of the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee | <b>Paper BDC/29/23</b> |
| 15. | To receive a report from the Assets Group                                   | <b>Paper BDC/30/23</b> |
| 16. | To receive an update for Common Fund for the year-to-date                   | <b>Paper BDC/31/23</b> |
| 17. | To receive a report from the DBF Standing Committee                         | <b>Paper BDC/32/23</b> |
| 18. | To receive a forecast of BDC and Synod business for next 12 months          | <b>Paper BDC/33/23</b> |

19. To note documents sealed by the Diocesan Board of Finance **Paper BDC/34/23**
20. To note Trusts and funds for investment accepted by, or wound up by, the Diocesan Board of Finance **Paper BDC/35/23**