

Diocese of Exeter Vacancies and Appointments Policy

1. Preamble

‘Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always, to the very end of the age’ (Matthew 28:16-20).

- 1.1 The foundation of our diocesan vision of growing in prayer, making new disciples and serving the people of Devon with joy is our commitment to carrying out Jesus’ Great Commission in 21st century Devon. One of the diocese’s five strategic priorities for this season of our diocesan life is missional leadership: equipping and resourcing the ordained and lay leaders of our Christian communities as best we can to develop disciples and make new disciples.
- 1.2 We are committed to having a Christian presence, under missional leadership, in every community in Devon. Yet this commitment sits alongside the reality of recruitment challenges, which can impact the time that it takes to fill vacancies; and alongside our limited financial resources, which restricts the number of stipendiary posts available for deployment.
- 1.3 The allocation of clergy posts and stipends is kept under constant review by the diocesan Bishop (‘the Bishop’), working in conjunction with the Suffragan Bishops, Archdeacons, Diocesan Director of Finance and other Diocesan officers as well as with the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC). This committee is tasked, amongst other things, with ensuring that our underlying ecclesiastical structures (notably the benefices to which clergy and lay ministers are instituted or licensed) are set up in such a way that they facilitate the best possible deployment of ministers and resources across the county.
- 1.4 Missional leadership is not exercised solely by stipendiary clergy and those self-supporting clergy occupying allocated posts. It would not be possible to sustain a Christian presence across Devon without the invaluable gift of the ministry of all self-supporting clergy (including retired clergy), clergy licensed under seal, licensed lay ministers and lay leaders across the diocese.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Policy

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the procedure for determining the future of the post concerned, at the point at which a vacancy is due to arise, or arises.
- 2.2 The policy applies to all posts that fall within the budgeted ministerial allocation for a benefice whether they are stipendiary, part-stipendiary, self-supporting or house-for-duty. It also applies to stipendiary lay worker posts (such as Church Army Captains).
- 2.3 The policy applies to all vacancies however they may occur – whether the vacancy arises by virtue of resignation, retirement or, on occasion, death in service. The full vacancy and appointments process is set out in the diocesan [*Vacancy and Appointments Handbook for Parishes*](#).
- 2.4 The Policy does not apply in situations where a minister has been suspended under the [*Clergy Discipline Measure 2003*](#), nor to long-term sick leave or similar, where alternative arrangements may be made under the [*Ecclesiastical \(Offices\) and Terms of Service Regulations 2009*](#).

3. Important differences between Incumbencies and other posts

- 3.1 The legal procedure for the appointment of Incumbents – rectors, vicars or team rectors who have overall responsibility for the cure of souls in a benefice – is strictly governed by the provisions of the [*Patronage \(Benefices\) Measure 1986*](#) (PBM). The procedures and timescales in this Measure must be followed whenever an incumbent is to be appointed. The wider decision-making factors that influence whether or not to actually appoint to an incumbency post will however be in accordance with the policy.
- 3.2 Other posts (including team vicars, who are of incumbent status but are not Incumbents) do not fall under the provisions of the PBM¹. The procedure for considering appointments to these posts therefore differs in terms of process, but not in regard to the factors that determine whether or not an appointment should be made.
- 3.3 The different legal context, process and timescales are described in more detail in sections 4 and 5.

¹ A team ministry patronage board may, nevertheless, be involved in the appointment of a team vicar: the people or bodies responsible for making the appointment will be set out in the pastoral scheme establishing the team ministry. See section 5, below, for further information on team vicar appointments.

4. Determining the Future of an Incumbency Post (Rector, Vicar or Team Rector)

4.1 Notices and Timescales

- i) In most cases, an office holder will give three months' formal notice of their resignation or retirement. In some cases, informal notice will be given much earlier; and in rare cases, such as retirement on ill-health grounds or death in service, there will be little or no notice.
- ii) Where possible, the Bishop will review the post during the period between the notice of resignation/retirement being received and the actual commencement of the vacancy. This will involve consultation with the Bishop's Staff and other bodies (as appropriate) and will take into consideration the factors set out in 4.2 below. Inevitably, this aim will be frustrated where it has not been possible for the usual three months' notice to be given.
- iii) The Archdeacon will normally inform the Churchwardens of the decision made by the Bishop prior to the commencement of the vacancy. Sometimes the Bishop might choose to delay notification for pastoral reasons until the outgoing officeholder has vacated the benefice.
- iv) The patron(s) must be informed of their right to begin the process of filling the vacancy, via a formal notice issued by the Designated Officer on the Bishop's behalf, either before or 'as soon as practicable' after the vacancy occurs². The filling of the vacancy is the default position in law and accordingly the appointment process begins immediately following the vacancy date unless actions are taken to delay or interrupt it. These are described in more detail in the following paragraphs.
- v) There is provision for the Bishop³, at their discretion to delay the 'start date' of the appointment process by up to a maximum of three months following the vacancy date. This may be helpful if, for some reason, the Bishop has been unable to review the post ahead of the vacancy occurring; or if, for example, there are short-term concerns that need to be addressed before the PCC(s) can begin the process of preparing the profile and appointing parish representatives. Where a delayed start date is used, the vacancy notice must still be issued before, or as soon as possible after, the vacancy; with the separate start date given within the notice.

² s.7(4) Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986

³ s.7(4A) (b) Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986

- vi) Under the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 ('MPM'), the vacancy process may only be delayed beyond three months if the Bishop, with the necessary consents and following the relevant statutory consultation, either:
- suspends the patron('s/s') right to present a new incumbent⁴; or
 - restricts the patron('s/s') right to present a new incumbent⁵; or
 - at the time of the vacancy, the patron(s) has/have been sent a copy of the Bishop's Proposals for pastoral reorganisation, and a restriction is in place⁶.

If there is no Suspension or Restriction notice in place, the commencement of the appointment process cannot be delayed beyond three months following the vacancy date.

- vii) The MPM and accompanying [Code of Practice](#) set out the circumstances in which a suspension or a restriction under may be put in place.

4.2 Legal and other factors to be considered in reviewing an incumbency post

- i) In determining the future of an incumbency post, the Bishop must have regard to the provisions of the MPM as regards Suspension or Restriction, since – apart from the discretionary ability to delay the start date by up to three months – these are the only mechanisms that may prevent the immediate commencement of the process for filling a vacant benefice.
- ii) The Bishop must inform consultees of the reasons why they are considering Suspension⁷. The MPM Code of Practice⁸ vol. 1, 11.25 states that the use of Suspension '*should, in the main, be confined to benefices where pastoral reorganisation is under consideration or in progress. The bishop should also consider whether the nature of the proposed reorganisation is such that it might be affected by the appointment of an incumbent.*'

The other ground given for suspending presentation is when a change of parsonage house is planned.

- iii) The Bishop may put in place a Restriction only where they have given directions to the DMPC to consider or has been notified that the DMPC intends to consider, particular matters pertaining to pastoral reorganisation⁹.

⁴ s.85 Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

⁵ s.87(2) Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

⁶ s.87(1) Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

⁷ s.85(1) Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

⁸ s.11.25, Vol 1 of the Code of Practice to the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

⁹ s.87(2) Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

These include the creation, alteration or dissolution of benefices and parishes; and the establishment, termination or alteration of team ministries and group ministries¹⁰.

- iv) Broadly then, the primary reason for Suspension or Restriction is the potential for reorganisation that could impact an incumbency post.
- v) The factors considered by the Bishop and (where applicable) the DMPC when reviewing an incumbency post should therefore be those that may indicate a need for pastoral reorganisation; and these are factors to which the DMPC must have regard in carrying out its functions.
- vi) The functions and duties of the DMPC are set out in MPM 3. In particular, the DMPC must take a diocesan viewpoint and not only make decisions based on the perspective of a single parish or benefice.
 - (1) *In carrying out any of its functions the mission and pastoral committee shall [...] have regard to worship, mission and community as central to the life and work of the Church of England.*
 - (2) *In carrying out any of its functions the mission and pastoral committee shall also have regard to-*
 - (a) *the financial implications for the diocese and the Church of England as a whole;*
 - (b) *[...] the need to allocate appropriate spheres of work and to ensure that appropriate conditions of service are enjoyed by those employed or holding office in the diocese and, where relevant, that reasonable remuneration is provided for all those engaged in the cure of souls;*
 - (c) *the traditions, needs and characteristics of particular parishes; and*
 - (d) *any other aspects of the policies of the diocesan synod to which the synod has requested the committee to have regard in discharging its responsibilities*¹¹.
- vii) The policy recognises that the financial implications of making a stipendiary appointment are considerable and enduring. The Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure 2009 and its associated Regulations provide rights under Common Tenure and these rights will apply at the point at which a minister is licensed (whether as an Incumbent or to some other post). Amongst other things, Common Tenure provides a right for a minister to remain in post until they reach the age of 70 (except in limited circumstances) and the potential for them to hold the office for the long term, needs to be borne in mind when considering all clergy appointments.

¹⁰ ss.31,32,34,35 Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

¹¹ s.3(1) and (2) Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

- viii) The cost of clergy appointments is a liability of the Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance ('EDBF'), must be included in its budgeting and must be met by EDBF whatever its income and assets.
- ix) It follows, that one of the matters that needs to be reviewed by the Bishop in the context of the 'financial implications' of the appointment is whether the parishes of the benefice in which the vacancy is arising are meeting their requested contribution to the Common Fund from which a considerable part of the diocesan clergy costs are met. Given the financial risks that EDBF is required to take when appointing clergy and the need for it to act in a financially prudent way the payment of Common Fund is vital.
- x) Payment or non-payment of Common Fund provides a measure of the health of a parish or benefice. The Bishop and the DMPC need to understand the reasons behind any shortfall since this may be indicative of financial difficulty, calling into question the future of the parish or benefice and giving rise to a need to consider Pastoral Reorganisation. There may of course be other reasons behind a shortfall, which would need to be explored.
- xi) The process for assessing the financial health of parishes, and the reasoning behind any decisions that are made, is set out in Appendix 1. This Appendix will be relevant in relation to all posts.
- xii) Additional (but inexhaustive) matters that may be taken in consideration within the context of the factors set out above include:
- church participation numbers,
 - the populations and socio-demographics of the parishes (notably whether there have been any major changes, e.g. new housing areas, since the last vacancy),
 - the geographical area of the benefice;
 - whether the grouping of parishes continues to make sense in light of how the communities relate to each other in day-to-day secular life;
 - clergy allocation needs elsewhere in the diocese.

4.3 Possible Outcomes of the Bishop's Review

- i) There is a range of possible outcomes to the Bishop's vacancy review process, with each case being determined on its own particular merits. It may be that the outcome of the review is a decision by the Bishop to proceed

with a new incumbency appointment, or it may be that the Bishop is minded to consult on possible pastoral reorganisation.

- ii) A decision to appoint may be made even if the review has highlighted areas of concern. The importance of the Bishop's review is to understand the issues that a parish or benefice may face and to weigh those up against the context of that place and the wider needs of the diocese. In some cases this will mean that those places that are currently experiencing difficulties will be supported through their challenges by other parishes, the diocese and its officers.
- iii) In any case where the Bishop is minded to proceed with the new incumbency in spite of financial concerns having been raised, they will seek advice from EDBF's Assets Group¹², which has the responsibility for evaluating the impact of the decision in terms of the discharge of EDBF's fiduciary responsibilities as a company and a charity. This is necessary because of the legal liability of EDBF to pay the stipends and pensions of the clergy who are appointed in the diocese. Under charity and company law it is unlawful for trustees/directors of a charity/company to permit the charity/company to continue to trade when they know or should know, the charity/company cannot avoid insolvent liquidation. There can be personal liabilities imposed on trustees/directors if they do so. It is therefore very important from a legal and regulatory perspective for Assets Group to be involved in decision making where financial issues apply. The process that the Bishop and Assets Group have agreed to follow is set out in Appendix 1 and this process will apply for all appointments where Assets Group is consulted.

4.4 Next steps following the Bishop's review

- i) Where there are no factors identified that indicate a potential need for Pastoral Reorganisation, then normally the appointment process for an incumbent under the PBM will begin without delay – the notice of vacancy being issued either before or immediately after the vacancy occurs, and the 'start date' corresponding to the date of the vacancy¹³.
- ii) Where it has not been possible to review the post before the vacancy occurs; or if there are concerns that it is felt can be resolved within a short period, the Bishop may choose to issue the notice of vacancy with a 'start date' falling up

¹² Assets Group is a sub-committee of EDBF

¹³ s.7(4) Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986

to three months after the vacancy date¹⁴. There is no means of extending the start date beyond three months – thereafter the process must proceed, or other measures be put in place.

- iii) Where there are factors that indicate a need to consider Pastoral Reorganisation (or where Pastoral Reorganisation is already under consideration) the Bishop may restrict the patron('s/s') right to present a new incumbent to the benefice for up to 12 months¹⁵; or, with the consent of the DMPC (and the Crown, in the case of Crown patronage) and subject to consultation with the interested parties¹⁶, suspend the patron('s/s') right to appoint a new incumbent to the benefice for up to 5 years¹⁷.
- iv) When consulting the interested parties on a proposed suspension, the Bishop must inform them of the reasons why they are considering suspension¹⁸. Unless the consultation takes place in person, any interested party may request a meeting with the Bishop or their representative within 28 days of receiving notice of the consultation¹⁹. In practice, this means that the consultation period must last a minimum of 28 days.
- v) If a suspension or restriction is to be put in place instead of the issuing of a notice of vacancy, then the suspension or restriction should take effect no later than the vacancy date; with the relevant consents and consultations for suspension having taken place in good time. A suspension may also be put in place at any time within three months before the vacancy occurs or at any time during the vacancy²⁰. A restriction may be put in place upon a vacancy or impending vacancy²¹.
- vi) If a vacancy notice is issued with a delayed start date, a suspension or restriction may be put in place during the intervening period. This would supersede the vacancy notice; and a new notice would be issued on expiry of the suspension or restriction.
- vii) If a restriction is in place, it may be superseded by a suspension subject to the necessary consents and consultations.

¹⁴ s.7(4A) Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986

¹⁵ s.87(2) Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

¹⁶ s.85(3) Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

¹⁷ s.85 Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

¹⁸ s.85(1) Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

¹⁹ s.85(3) Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

²⁰ s.87(2) Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

²¹ s.85(2) Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

viii) A priest in charge (of permanent or interim status) may be appointed to care for a benefice during a period of suspension; and alternative clergy provision (e.g. an interim assistant curate) may be made for a restricted benefice. Interim posts, for which provision is made under the Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009²², must carry specific briefs, for example to seek to address financial difficulty or to explore the potential for pastoral reorganisation.

5 Determining the Future of all other posts

- 5.1 Non-incumbency appointments do not fall under the provisions of the PBM.
- 5.2 While all benefices should be under the care of an incumbent, there is no requirement to have additional licensed officeholders. The only exception to this is a team ministry - a team constituting a team rector and at least one team vicar²³.
- 5.3 Non-incumbency appointments are made by the Bishop – except in the case of team vicars, who are appointed either by the team ministry patronage board or by the Bishop and the rector jointly, subject to the provisions of the scheme establishing the team ministry.
- 5.4 The Bishop will consider similar factors to those set out in 4.2 above when determining the future of a non-incumbency post. However, there is a great deal more flexibility around whether a non-incumbency post should be replaced, since these are not statutory posts. The Bishop may, therefore, choose not to replace a post for any reason.
- 5.5 If the Bishop wishes to proceed with a like-for-like appointment or some alternative appointment in spite of any financial concern, including Common Fund shortfall, then they will normally seek advice from EDBF's Assets Group. If so, then the process set out in Appendix 1 will be followed.
- 5.6 If it is decided not to reappoint to a team vicar post, and it is the sole team vicar post in a team ministry, then the Bishop should consider whether this is a short-term decision or whether it signals the end of the team ministry. In the latter case, they should request that the DMPC begins the process of seeking to dissolve the team ministry, reverting to a 'traditional' benefice with the cure of souls vested in one individual (the rector or vicar).
- 5.7 The outcome of a decision about non-incumbency cases will be either a new appointment to the same post, an appointment to a different sort of post or no appointment. There will be no need for any suspension or restriction, which

²² s.29 Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Regulations 2009

²³ s.34(1) Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

provides greater flexibility for the Bishop in terms of clergy deployment across the diocese. However, these non-incumbency posts will still (mostly) bring with them the protection of Common Tenure for those who are licensed into the posts, and therefore the financial considerations set out in 4.2 vii) will continue to be relevant.

6 Policy Approval and Review

- 6.1 Under the provisions of the relevant legislation, the decision to appoint and license ecclesiastical officeholders sits with the Bishop subject to the constraints within that legislation.
- 6.2 As such, the policy sits with the Bishop in his corporate capacity.
- 6.3 However, the legislation also sets out responsibilities for the DMPC and EDBF that interact with the provisions of the policy. Accordingly, the Bishop has agreed to review the policy every three years and consult with the DMPC and EDBF as part of that review process.

Appendix 1: Assessing the Financial Health of Parishes Approaching Vacancy

A. Introduction

1. The Vacancies and Appointments Policy sets out the financial implications for the Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance (EBDF) in making an appointment under Common Tenure: to do so is a substantial and enduring financial commitment. Before proceeding with an appointment, the Bishop needs to assess the health of the parishes and the benefice concerned so as to be confident that the current configurations of the benefice and its constituent parish(es) are sustainable and that the proposed appointment is appropriate for the context. Included within that broad health assessment is an evaluation of the financial health of the parishes and benefice.
2. A key indicator of financial health is a parish's ability to meet its annual Common Fund request. Parishes' collective contributions fund the majority of the cost of clergy posts, and therefore where parishes are unable to meet their full assessment, this affects the number of posts that can be sustained and puts at risk the diocesan commitment to providing for the cure of souls in every community. Common Fund shortfalls often co-occur with other concerns around finance, governance and participation, building condition, etc.: all factors that are important to the long-term sustainability of a parish. It is often the case that a Common Fund shortfall is a clear 'flag' for these other underlying issues.
3. Where the headline data gives cause for concern, it is important for the Bishop to dig beneath this in order to understand the particular situation in the given parish(es) and benefice. It may be that the parish does not have sufficient income to meet its Common Fund and to sustain other costs such as the repair and maintenance of the parish church, which is a mark of concern for the long-term viability of the parish (and could require consideration of pastoral reorganisation). On the other hand, it may be that a parish is choosing not to contribute for some other reason. The Bishop needs to understand what is happening in the local context before deciding how to proceed with a vacancy.
4. When the Bishop receives notice of a vacancy, the Archdeacon will in the first instance provide them with headline data for the parishes concerned, including participant numbers, Common Fund request and level of contribution over the preceding two years. Where the Archdeacon and the Bishop agree that there is no cause for concern and no other factors which may require an appointment to be delayed, the Bishop will normally proceed to initiate the Patronage (Benefices) Measure 1986 (PBM) process. If, however, the data raises concern about financial health, the Bishop will refer the matter to Assets Group and has set out a process that they will follow.

B. The Common Fund

5. *'All who believed were together and held all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people'. Acts 2: 44-47*
6. The Common Fund of our Diocese reflects our common life in Jesus Christ our Saviour. It is rooted in the mutual support which the first disciples offered each other (Acts 2). It finds expression in St Paul's image of the Church as the Body of Christ: each member, each cell of the Body has a contribution to make to the well-being of the whole, and that includes our gifts, our skills and our money. Some parishes/Mission Communities are able to give over and above the cost of their clergy. Other parishes/Mission Communities are, in effect, subsidised in relation to the cost of their clergy. Within the Body of Christ, whether we are rich or poor, the invitation is to be generous and joyful in giving the full amount that is asked of us.
7. Over the years, most parishes in the Diocese live out this calling and meet their Common Fund request in full and in a spirit of generosity. The contribution level recovered well following the Covid 19 pandemic (2022 shortfall = £395,000), but in recent years has increased to between £550,000 and £650,000 per annum (against a total Common Fund request of around £9m).

Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Common Fund Shortfall	£385,000	£777,000	£645,000	£395,000	£555,000	£650,000	£590,000

Table: Common Fund shortfalls year on year

8. This level of shortfall cannot be absorbed by EDBF. If it is not addressed, the only recourse will be to reduce the number of stipendiary posts to balance the books, and for a wide range of reasons this is not the preferred course of action. The Common Fund is essential to funding stipendiary ministry and sustaining growth.
9. Actions being taken to tackle the shortfall on Common Fund contributions include:
 - Increasing our stewardship resources to support parishes in their giving;
 - Encouraging parishes to join the Parish Giving Scheme;
 - Recalibrating our central resources so that they are better tailored to the needs of parishes and correspond to our diocesan priorities;
 - Undertaking a comprehensive review of our Common Fund scheme of assessment;
 - Providing support to parishes with financial planning; and
 - Engaging with parishes where there is a shortfall in Common Fund or historic arrears, particularly when a vacancy occurs.

C. Bishop's Process for Assessing Financial Health

10. When the Bishop has been informed of a forthcoming vacancy and the headline data provided by the Archdeacon gives cause for concern, the Bishop has agreed to seek the advice of Assets Group. The Bishop has also agreed a process for the Assets Group to follow, in order that it may provide the advice requested of it.
11. The Archdeacon and the Head of Parish/Mission Community Support will review the finances of the parishes that comprise the benefice/Mission Community. Such a review includes exploring:
 - The reasons for the parish(e)'s(s') lack of full contribution to the Common Fund over the past two years;
 - Whether the parish(es) are committed to making their full Common Fund contribution in the current and future years;
 - Whether there is an agreement by the PCC(s) to make regular Common Fund contributions, preferably by direct debit or standing order;
 - Whether there is a commitment from the PCC(s) to explore participation in the Parish Giving Scheme, if it has not already done so; and
 - The willingness of the PCC(s) to engage with the development of a financial plan for longer term sustainability.
12. The Archdeacon and Head of Parish/Mission Community Support will take their findings to the Assets Group, who will agree on what advice to give to the Bishop in determining how the vacancy will be handled. For example:
 - Where the parish(es) has/have given a clear commitment to addressing the concerns and are engaging with the support being offered, the Assets Group might recommend that a PBM appointment proceeds;
 - Where it is determined that the parish(es) should demonstrate their commitment to a finance plan or to make up historic shortfalls/meet the current year's Common Fund request before an appointment proceeds, they might recommend that the Bishop delays the PBM 'start date' or puts in place a Restriction before proceeding with an appointment – with the possibility of a later Suspension if that becomes appropriate;
 - Where it is felt that there are substantial but not insurmountable challenges to overcome, either in terms of the extent of the deficit or the attitude of the PCC(s), they may recommend that the Bishop and the DMPC consider Suspension and the putting in place of targeted support to address the financial situation, perhaps via the appointment of an interim minister;
 - Where the situation is such that there is concern about the future viability of the parish(es) or benefice in its current configuration, they may recommend that the Bishop and DMPC consider Suspension and pastoral reorganisation.
13. A parish/Mission Community will not be offered a Diocesan loan to cover a shortfall in Common Fund.

D. Historic Arrears

14. A few parishes/Mission Communities in the Diocese have failed to pay Common Fund in part or at all for a number of years and have accumulated a considerable shortfall with no realistic prospect of clearing it. In the spirit of a Biblical Year of Jubilee, their shortfall will be investigated with a view to setting it aside so that as a family of churches across Devon we can move forward together responsibly.
15. Our aim is to create a forward-looking policy; so, shortfalls arising more than two years previously will not be taken into account in relation to filling vacancies. However, shortfalls accrued within the past two years will be taken into account and, where possible, a repayment schedule agreed with the PCC.
16. The final decision on whether an appointment may proceed notwithstanding any shortfall rests with the Bishop.

E. Parish/Mission Community Finance Plan

17. A Parish/Mission Community Finance Plan will include provisions for addressing both missional and financial challenges and will draw support from the various diocesan teams, as necessary. These plans will show the agreed actions that will be taken and the intended outcome within a 3 to 5-year timeframe. The Head of Parish/Mission Community Support will be responsible for working with the Archdeacon and the local teams to pull the plan together. The plan is subject to approval by the PCC. There will be a clear understanding that this is not 'business as usual' and the Head of Parish/Mission Community Support and the Archdeacon will continue to work with the parish on delivery of the plan.

F. Pastoral Reorganisation

18. Occasionally a Common Fund shortfall in one parish hinders pastoral reorganisation e.g. a benefice may be reluctant to take on an extra parish if that parish has a shortfall or historic arrears. To allow the pastoral reorganisation to proceed, the Archdeacon and the Head of Parish/Mission Community Support may seek the approval of Assets Group to set aside some or all of the current shortfall and historic arrears. In these instances, a Financial Plan will still be developed to address the sustainability of the parish and benefice.

G. Curates, loans and grants

19. Parishes/Mission Communities which have a Common Fund shortfall in the current or previous year will not normally be eligible for a curate or a diocesan loan or a grant. Any exception will need to be agreed by the Bishop and/or Assets Group as appropriate. Whilst recognising that providing a

healthy training base for a curate is much more than being financially sound, it gives the Bishop confidence that the benefice will be able to meet the expenses of a curate and assures them that the curate in training is in a context where there is a shared commitment to the mission and ministry of the whole Diocese which is enabled via the Common Fund.