

THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON Wednesday 6 July 2022
Via video conference starting at 7pm

Present: The Bishop of Huntingdon (in the Chair), Revd Canon Brian Atling, Revd Canon James Blandford-Baker, Dr Felicity Cooke, Revd Canon Sarah Gower, Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Canon Simon Kershaw, Mrs Elaine Levitt, Mr George Lynn, Revd Dr Robert Mackley, Mr Steve Mashford, Revd Canon Anna Matthews, Canon Peter Maxwell, Revd Canon Nick Moir, Canon Rob Needle, Revd David Newton, Canon Janet Perrett, Mr John Pigott, Mrs Sarah Robinson, Revd Canon Dr Nicholas Thistlethwaite, Mr Christopher Townsend and Canon Tim Walters

In attendance: Ms Rebecca Boswell, Mrs Sheena Bridgman, Canon Paul Evans, Mr James Owen, Canon Andrew Read, Revd Canon Simon Talbott

Dwelling in the Word was led by the Revd Canon Dr Nicholas Thistlethwaite

Apologies were received from the Bishop of Ely, Very Revd Mark Bonney, Mr Francis Burkitt, Revd Canon Adrian Daffern, Revd Becky Dyball, Canon Lizzie Taylor and Canon Tim Walters

The **Minutes** of the Bishop's Council meeting held on 21 May 2022 were agreed and signed by the Bishop of Huntingdon. There were no **matters arising**.

Safeguarding update: The Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, Ms Rebecca Boswell, presented her regular update to the meeting.

There are currently 117 referrals (increased from the 102 at same date in 2021). The team continue to deliver the full House of Bishops training programme.

1124 DBS checks have been carried out in 2022 to date; there are 20 safeguarding agreements in place.

The National Casework System (Diocese of Ely is one of the first three Dioceses to participate) went live on 5 July 2022. Data migration should be completed by 22 July.

The national summary report of Past Cases Review was due in July - this has been delayed to October at which time Diocese of Ely summary will be published.

The Survivor Care Review being carried out by 31:8 is looking at how support is offered by Diocese of Ely. The final report is due at the beginning of August and the DSA will report back to the Council at the September meeting.

Thanks were given to the Safeguarding Team for their careful work.

Business of the Ely Diocesan Board of Finance: Revd Canon Brian Atling (BA) reported that the management accounts to June would be available for the next meeting. May figures indicated the DBF is close to budgeted figures, with a potential end of year deficit of about £80,000. Ministry Share for the first half of 2022 is up 2% on the same period last year and grateful thanks were given for the generosity of the parishes.

The fast-changing financial environment has delayed work on the 2023 Budget until after the half year's results are available. It is anticipated that there will be a 4% increase in stipends. While the national recommendation comes in Autumn 2022, the Diocese is working on a 5% increase in Ministry Share which better reflects the financial climate and the Ministry Share request. As a

result there may be an anticipated 2023 deficit about £121,000. It would be the DBF preference to have a balanced budget, but these are exceptional economic times nationally.

BA repeated his previously delivered statement that Ministry Share covers the majority of the cost of clergy, while investment income support covers the shortfall and running of the Diocesan Office, Diocese and parishes. He reiterated that the DBF do not ask parishes for the total cost of clergy.

BA advised that, following discussions with the Chair of the Assets Sub-Committee and the Diocesan Secretary, investments managers have been instructed to divest from fossil fuels, emphasising that Bishop's Council should be aware that reinvestment returns and future investment income will be considerably lower.

BA stated that the proposed Government refund of £150 towards Council Tax refund will not be received by clergy because criteria are not met as the Diocese pays Council Tax for clergy housing. There is a Hardship fund set up within the Bishop's Discretionary Trust and clergy in a general hardship situation have been invited to submit an application. The Church Commissioners have made an additional £47,000 available towards these grants. There are no individual tax implications.

Relocation Board: The Diocesan Secretary, on behalf of the Chair of the Relocation Board, updated Bishop's Council about the complicated planning applications and zoning at Lancaster Way to be resolved by end July. The complex leasing arrangements for the Bishop Woodford House are hoped to be approved by the Charity Commission by end August 2022. The DBF is already in receipt of rental income from King's Ely, who are planning significant works at Bishop Woodford House starting in late 2022.

Bishop's Business from the Bishop of Huntingdon. A splendid Ordination weekend had taken place in early July. The Ordination Retreat was held at Wyboston Lakes (on a commercial arrangement); alternative, more appropriate locations being investigated for 2023.

Following the impact of recent years, the Diocese seeks to increase the number of vocations. Peter Leech and his team working on a Vocations project across all levels. Vocations-specific events are to be reinstated.

The new Archdeacon of Huntingdon & Wisbech, Revd Canon Richard Harlow, will be joining from Winchester Diocese. He moves to Ely in September and will be licensed at the end of that month in Wisbech.

Bishop Dagmar invited members of Bishop's Council members to have small group discussions relating to the role and responsibilities of Bishop's Council, its members and functions. Members reported back on their conversations.

Diocesan Synod Business - The Chairs of Houses had circulated a report with the meeting's agenda and papers. A balance between in person and Zoom meetings is to be considered. It was mentioned that there are numerous advantages to zoom meetings which incur no travel particularly for evening meetings. Nothing further was added.

Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee: Revd Canon Dr Nicholas Thistlethwaite (NT), the interim Archdeacon of Huntingdon & Wisbech, together with the Ven Hugh McCurdy, introduced and explained the history behind the purpose of the Resolution below - discussions behind which were initiated in 2019:

'that this Deanery Synod requests the Bishop's Council to appoint an interim priest to work with the 11 parishes in the deanery listed below, 8 of which are in vacancy and 3 of which are at present part of the Ely team but are in discussion with the Team Rector to effect disengagement from the team, in order to assist them all to play their part in formulation of the deanery plan at present going forward. The

benefices in vacancy are Haddenham, Wilburton, Witchford with Wentworth, Sutton, Witcham with Mepal, and Coveney; those parishes at present in the Ely team are Downham, Little Thetford and Stretham.'

This Resolution was passed by Ely Deanery Synod on 16 May 2022 and there is enthusiasm and support to move this forward. An experienced priest is interested in this two-year time limited common tenure post which will work with the initial 8 parishes.

Proposed: Nicholas Thistlethwaite

Seconded: Janet Perrett

The resolution was passed unanimously

The meeting closed with prayer at 8.45pm

Dates of remaining 2022 Bishop's Council meetings: 28 September, 23 November.