

THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON Thursday 28 May 2020
Via video conference

Present: The Bishop of Huntingdon (in the chair), the Bishop of Ely, Mr Donald Ashmore, Revd Canon Brian Atling, Revd Canon Mike Booker, Mr Francis Burkitt, Revd Canon Adrian Daffern, Revd Martin Dale, Mrs Sue Freestone, Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Canon Simon Kershaw, Mrs Elaine Levitt, Mrs Diana Lucas, Mr Martin Macfarlane, Mr Steve Mashford, Ven Hugh McCurdy, Revd Canon Nick Moir, Revd Canon Alison Myers, Mr Rob Needle, Revd Carol Nicholas-Letch, Canon Janet Perrett, Dr Arvan Pritchard, Mrs Sarah Robinson, Revd Simon Talbott, Revd Jason Taylor, Ms Lizzie Taylor, Canon Tim Walters.

In attendance: Canon Paul Evans, Mrs Sheena Bridgman, Revd Canon Linda Church, Revd Dr Hannah Cleugh, Mr Adam Evans, Mr Jon Green, Mr James Owen, Mr Andrew Read, Revd Mark Rodel

Dwelling in the Word was led by the Revd Canon Adrian Daffern

Apologies were received from the Very Revd Mark Bonney, Mr George Lynn, Canon Peter Maxwell, Mr Stephen Tooke,

The **Minutes** of the Bishop's Council meeting on 23 January 2020 were agreed and signed. **Matters Arising:** the appointment of the Growing Faith Officer is currently on hold due to the Covid-19 situation: the Diocesan Peer Review has been postponed to late 2020 or early 2021 (new dates are being explored); the legality of holding Diocesan Synod by video conference is currently awaiting guidance (at present members must be "present and voting" for any formal approval or decision). The potential of a virtual Synod with presentational papers is being investigated. The Chairs of Synod Houses are preparing papers for distribution relating to governance, planning, rolling programme of information and communication.

Bishop's Business: Bishop Dagmar invited Bishop Stephen to address Council. Currently on phased return to full time work, he is communicating with clergy and curates about pastoral care through the period of the pandemic, new forms of worship bringing new connections with the Church and is deeply grateful for what he is hearing. He closed by thanking Bishop Dagmar and colleagues for their support and work during his period of absence.

Bishop Dagmar advised members that her weekly briefings disseminated to Diocesan colleagues were guided by information from the centre. She had been greatly encouraged by the uptake of new ideas, the identification of new opportunities and particularly the rapid technical upskilling by both clergy and lay ministry in parishes, guided by support across the age groups.

Ely Diocesan Board of Finance (EDBF): Revd Canon Brian Atling (BA), Chair of the EDBF, presented the management accounts for January-March 2020 noting that there had been no significant Covid-19 impact in the first quarter. He highlighted, however, the significant reduction in investment income for the same period.

BA advised that the Finance Team had been modelling financial forecasts in the expectation that lockdown might continue into the Autumn and beyond. Ministry Share contributions for April and May had held up unexpectedly well with a lower than anticipated reduction. With all but one member of the Retreat House staff being furloughed, plus a third of EDBF staff, these losses are being offset by the financial support from the Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. All parishes are encouraged to consider moving their giving to the Direct Debit system of the Parish Giving Scheme, with benefits being observed very quickly.

The Growth Fund balance will not be distributed at this time and will be held in abeyance due to the Covid-19 crisis. Decisions will not be made until late autumn 2020 when the EDBF financial position will be clearer.

Regular video conferences have taken place with Deanery Lay Chairs and Deanery Treasurers and the Archdeacons are in regular contact with the Rural Deans. BA is heartened by the positive responses received from the parishes.

There will be a deficit for 2020 - currently projected to be £1.2m - which can be managed by cost reductions, cash flow and reserves. The Budget for 2021 will be prepared in Autumn 2020 when proposals for Ministry Share will also be considered.

Adam Halsey, Partner of haysmacintyre, EDBF auditors, gave a positive presentation on the EDBF's Annual Accounts, noting that the EDBF's strong management team, and strict reserves policy, have resulted in a sound foundation for going forward into 2021. EDBF's risk management is full and fair and includes the impact of Covid-19. EDBF has adequate 12-month cash flow headroom to meet its current obligations. Mr Halsey is not concerned about the Diocese of Ely's financial viability and recommended the Annual Accounts to the Directors.

BA thanked the Diocesan Secretary, Lorraine Orbell, Financial Controller, and the Finance Team for a clean audit and also thanked haysmacintyre for their first annual audit.

Proposal to accept the Annual Accounts
Agreed unanimously

Bishop Dagmar thanked BA

Changing Market Towns - presentation by Revd Canon Mike Booker (MB) and Adam Evans (AE), Programme Manager

AE spoke to the paper previously circulated, recognising the positivity, resilience and adaptability of the Changing Market Towns employees through the Covid-19 pandemic. The Operations Managers have been working very successfully on the implementation of and support for different digital forms of worship in an extremely short space of time. He formally noted his thanks to all the Changing Market Towns workers.

MB noted that the SDF funding for Phase 1 is secure and guaranteed.

Ely2025 Programme Board - the Archdeacon of Huntingdon & Wisbech noted that there is an upcoming meeting with significant contributions from Mission & Ministry reviewing their delivery plans for Levers 1 and 2, with some impact for Lever 3. These will be put forward for consideration by Bishop's Council at a future meeting.

He recorded his personal thanks and good wishes to the Revd Canon Linda Church as she retires at the end of July.

Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee: the Archdeacon of Cambridge advised Bishop's Council that a paper on Deanery Planning and Pastoral Organisation will be submitted for consideration towards the end of 2020.

[Mrs Sarah Robinson raised a question under Minute 9 of the Archdeacon of Cambridge's MPC. The Archdeacon clarified that the minute (whilst misleading as written) referred to discussions about *additional* posts where parishes choose to employ extra clergy in addition to the Deanery Plan allocation]

Bishop's Mission Order for Downham Market: after prior consultation, a vote was taken to approve the proposed BMO for Downham Market. No submissions had been received from the parish

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The majority were in favour - there was one abstention: none against

Bishop Dagmar thanked Mark Rodel, Sarah Molyneux Hetherington and Mike Booker for their input.

Diocesan Offices: Paul Evans (PE), Diocesan Secretary reported that, with his priority of staff safety and maintaining service delivery, the offices were closed on 17 March and all staff smoothly moved to successful working from home. Staff have been furloughed in tranches when business requirements permitted. Expenditure has been cut across the board. Senior Staff are reviewing office operations post-Covid and will re-address strategy at that point. It is unlikely that the Diocesan Offices will re-open until, possibly, the autumn

Paul Evans paid tribute to the Operations Manager and all the EDBF staff.

Before closing with prayer, Bishop Stephen paid personal thanks to the Revd Canon Linda Church on her retirement and to the Revd Jason Taylor, who moves to the Diocese of Gloucester.

The meeting closed with prayer at 8.40pm

Dates of next meetings:

2020: 8 July, 24 September, 18 November