

THE BISHOP'S COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON Wednesday 27 January 2021
Via video conference at 6.45pm

Present: The Bishop of Ely (in the chair), the Bishop of Huntingdon, Mr Donald Ashmore, Revd Canon Brian Atling, Very Revd Mark Bonney, Revd Canon Mike Booker, Revd Martin Dale, Mrs Sue Freestone, Ven Dr Alex Hughes, Canon Simon Kershaw, Mrs Elaine Levitt, Mr George Lynn, Mr Martin Macfarlane, Mr Steve Mashford, Revd Canon Anna Matthews, Ven Hugh McCurdy, Revd Canon Alison Myers, Mr Rob Needle, Revd Carol Nicholas-Letch, Canon Janet Perrett, Dr Arvan Pritchard, Mrs Sarah Robinson, Revd Canon Simon Talbott, Canon Lizzie Taylor, Canon Tim Walters.

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

Dwelling in the Word was led by the Revd Canon Simon Talbott

Apologies were received from Mr Francis Burkitt, Revd Canon Adrian Daffern, Mrs Diana Lucas, Revd Canon Nick Moir, and Mr Stephen Tooke.

The Bishop of Ely, with the Bishop of Huntingdon, noted their sincere thanks to all the Diocesan staff who have continued working most efficiently since March 2020 from their homes. They also noted their gratitude to the parishes across the Diocese of Ely who have maintained payment of their Ministry Share

The **Minutes** of the Bishop's Council meeting on 18 November 2020 were agreed and signed.

Matters Arising: The Diocese's application to the Sustainability Funding grant was unsuccessful, although the Diocese has been invited to apply for the second round of funding in 2021.

The REACHEly questionnaire was circulated to all clergy, churchwardens and PCC Secretaries across the Diocese in early 2021, with some returns to date.

Consultation is underway across the Eastern Region with a discussion about shared HR advice.

Currently the EDBF uses a professional business services company (Peninsula) for EDBF contracted staff, for their policies and legal documentation. The EDBF also contracts an independent HR company when required, and maintains an on-contract employment lawyer. Model HR policies for clergy requirements are available from the central church and are being adopted. The Interim Director of Mission and Ministry is reconstructing the Diocese of Ely Clergy Handbook which will contain the links to many such policies.

Synod Information note: Presented by the Chairs of Houses - there were no questions.

Bishop's Business: Current focus is on moving forward with the implementation of the Ely2025 Strategy and focussing on an outward facing future to build an emerging church and not reverting to the status quo.

Ely2025 Strategy Implementation Group (SIG): SIG is chaired by the Bishop of Huntingdon and will prepare strategic decisions for recommendation to Bishop's Council.

Council was advised that the main focus currently has been on Deanery Planning and a reordering in the Department of Mission and Ministry to accommodate current and future requirements. She acknowledged the leadership of Andrew Read and paid tribute to him and all the Mission and Ministry staff who have worked with him since the retirement of Revd Canon Linda Church at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Four steering groups have been created to support SIG (the pillars): leadership development, community mission, parish innovation and support/deanery planning, shared administration.

In addition, the Diocesan Environmental Task Group and the Buildings Oversight Board have been formed supported by Geoffrey Hunter, Head of Church Buildings and Pastoral Department.

Changing Market Towns Project : Revd Canon Mike Booker gave an update acknowledging the impact that Covid-19 has had on the progress of the project. Operations Manager are demonstrating resilience, working well and maintaining contact via innovative communication and ideas, online worship and the positive effects of interim ministry with Revd Phil Marsh in Whittlesey and Revd Madeleine Albert in Littleport. The Strategic Development Unit in London (who co-fund Changing Market Towns) are being realistic and practical, recognising that the original targets will necessarily have to move in the circumstances.

Adam Evans, Head of Programme Management, announced that an in-depth mid-project review will be undertaken to identify progress towards the original objectives: numerical and spiritual growth, the transformation of market towns and the future sustainability of the project through the development of people. It is planned that this should be completed for reporting to the Project Board in April, with SIG and Bishop's Council to follow, before sharing the findings more widely.

Living in Love and Faith - update from the Bishop of Ely. Dr Eeva John presented the draft Pastoral Principles to the last Bishop's Council Residential in early 2019. These were discussed at the December 2020 meeting of Diocesan Synod as a pre-cursor to *Living in Love and Faith*. Dr John will also be leading conversation at the next Bishop's Study Day on 3 March 2020.

Rural Deans will be encouraged to take discussions about the Pastoral Principles forward informally, and then introduce greater engagement with *Living in Love and Faith* later in 2021 and into 2022 when meetings can take place in person, face-to-face. The supporting publications are considered to be helpful and balanced.

Bishop's Trusts : Bishop of Huntingdon in the Chair

Ms Julie Bentley, the EDBF's contracted Trusts lawyer, was introduced to the meeting and invited to give the background to the existing 17 Bishop's Trusts.

The Diocesan Secretary presented a Summary Briefing Note following a review of the historical Bishop's Trusts carried out in 2017, and the subsequent decision in April 2019 to appoint the EDBF as Custodian Trustee.

The Briefing Note outlined the proposed restructure of the Bishop's Trusts, and included a draft of the new 'Bishop of Ely Charitable Trust Deed' for consideration, together with proposed Resolutions to approve the Deed and facilitate the staged legal process required to register the new Trust with the Charity Commission and implement the consolidation of existing trust funds and the Bishop's Discretionary Funds.

The Council considered the proposed Trust Deed and Resolutions, and unanimously resolved to approve the Trust Deed and the Resolutions required to facilitate the restructure of the Bishop's Trusts.

The process to change the Trusts over is anticipated to take approximately five months. The Trusts in their current form, will continue to exist for disbursement until the date of the approval.

Motion to accept and implement the recommended changes to the 17 existing Bishop's Trusts for submission to the Charity Commission.

Proposer: Revd Canon Simon Talbott
Agreed by the majority
Abstention: The Bishop of Ely

Secunder: Canon Tim Walters

Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee: the minutes for both Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committees were received. There were no questions.

The remaining papers on the agenda were deemed business.

Any Other Business :

The Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech was appointed as a signatory to the Rathbone's account for investments - nihil obstat.

The Resolution for Bishop's Mission Orders to be represented on Deanery Synods was returned for further work following an intervention from Dr Arvan Pritchard (Cambridge South).

General Synod elections will take place in mid-2021, following dissolution at the end of July 2021. This will coincide with the election of a new Diocesan Synod.

The meeting closed with prayer at 9.06pm

Dates of next Bishop's Council meetings:

24 March eve

22 May - all day

14 July eve

15 September eve

23 November eve