

# **DIOCESE OF WORCESTER**

## **PARSONAGES HANDBOOK**

2020 Edition

# INTRODUCTION

This handbook recognises and welcomes the *Covenant for Clergy Care and Wellbeing* recently published by General Synod and acknowledges the role that good housing and support make to clergy serving in our parishes. The covenant makes clear that the wider church should work together to “promote the welfare of our clergy and their households” and we see the role of the parsonages committee as working towards that goal.

The diocesan houses not only provide places of work for the clergy and a point of contact for the parish, but more importantly, a home for the parish clergy and their families. Because of this diversity of use, the responsibility for the care, maintenance and upkeep of the house and grounds is shared between the priest and the parsonages office, as well as the parish during a period of vacancy.

This guide seeks to provide information for parish clergy and churchwardens in carrying out these responsibilities.

The parsonages committee hope that providing this information in one place will prove to be useful and helpful to all concerned, enabling us to work together to care for the properties wisely and prudently. By doing this, our properties will be handed on to our successors in good order and will require less remedial work in the future.

## REPAIR OF BENEFICE BUILDINGS MEASURE 1972

This item of ecclesiastical legislation lays down the criteria for the care and maintenance of clergy housing and states the responsibilities of the Diocese as well as those of the occupier. The measure refers to *Parsonage Houses*, however, in practice, this diocese treats all its houses as such.

The Worcester Diocesan Parsonages Board makes every endeavour to fulfil its obligations as required by the measure, although if an occupier feels able to contribute over and above their responsibilities set out below, then such generosity is appreciated. An occupier may also wish to undertake certain larger repairs or alterations at their own cost. Discussion with the Parsonages Office is welcomed in order to gain consent for this.

This current version of the Parsonages Handbook reflects the requirements of the measure, but also provides information regarding the areas of work, currently undertaken by the Worcester Diocesan Parsonages Board, which are over and above the requirements of the measure. Due to their nature, such discretionary works may be subject to change in the future.

## HOUSE OWNERSHIP

Each benefice in the diocese has a parsonage house and where there is a team ministry there will also be at least one further vicarage.

The owner of the parsonage house is the benefice and the owner of the vicarage(s) and all other clergy houses, is the Diocesan Board of Finance. In all other respects, apart from this difference in ownership, they are to be treated the same.

During a period of vacancy, where there is no incumbent, the responsibility for the ownership of the parsonage house falls to the Diocesan Bishop although the day to day requirements

for security, maintenance and the general management of the house falls to the sequestrators of the benefice, who are the churchwardens of the whole benefice and the rural dean.

When a team vicarage or curate's house has been vacated, the ownership remains with the Diocesan Board of Finance and the responsibility for managing the house again falls to the sequestrators of the benefice, due to there being a lack of capacity for this to be carried out centrally.

## THE PARSONAGES OFFICE

The Parsonages Office that operates in the Old Palace in Worcester, is dedicated to the provision, care and maintenance of the diocesan housing stock. It can be contacted during office hours by means of telephone **(01905) 732806** or email **parsonages@cofe-worcester.org.uk**.

Your attention is drawn to Appendix 1 that provides contact telephone numbers for use in an emergency outside office hours.

***The Parsonages Office:***

Garry Kidd – Parsonages Administrator  
Ruth Beard – Property Coordinator  
Mark Wild – Diocesan Surveyor

**Diocesan Disability Advisor:**

Jo Hyrons – [jhyrons@cofe-worcester.org.uk](mailto:jhyrons@cofe-worcester.org.uk)

Jo can be contacted for issues or concerns relating to the Diocesan disability policy and further information can be found at: <https://www.cofe-worcester.org.uk/parish-support/accessibility/disability-policy.php>

Occupiers are also encouraged to raise any specific issues or concerns with the Archdeacon's office.

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# WELCOME!

## What you can expect from us:

- To keep the structure and services of the house in good and substantial repair.
- A prompt acknowledgement and response to queries.
- To keep you informed of ongoing matters concerning your home.
- To ensure that all contractors contact you in advance of their visits.
- A site visit with the diocesan surveyor prior to you moving in as well as ongoing meetings on site to discuss specific issues when they arise and at least every five years to undertake a quinquennial inspection.

## What we expect from the occupant:

- Prompt return of your completed occupancy and leaving forms following your move into and out of the property.
- To direct all queries about your home and requests for repairs to the parsonages office on 01905 732806 or [parsonages@cofe-worcester.org.uk](mailto:parsonages@cofe-worcester.org.uk)
- To take care of your home whilst you are living there to include renewing or touching up the internal decorations when they become damaged.
- To keep your garden including hedges well maintained – you may decide to employ a gardener.
- Prompt response to diocese appointed contractors seeking access to undertake annual servicing and other repair work. Being absent when a contractor calls causes unnecessary expense and you will be asked to contribute to the cost of wasted appointments.
- To avoid unnecessary callouts by carrying out basic diagnostic tests, e.g. adjusting the thermostat, checking bulbs, batteries, switches etc.
- To arrange for small non-structural repairs to be carried out on a DIY basis where possible, either by yourself, someone in the parish/local community, or by employing a local handyman. The parsonages office can always be contacted for advice.
- Not to put anything down the drains that could cause blockages such as cooking fats in the kitchen or by way of flushing cosmetic wipes or sanitary items.
- To leave the house clean and tidy and the garden in a tidy and well-maintained condition upon vacation.
- To put back upon vacation any items you may have temporarily removed and to remove all personal effects both inside and out and including the garage and roof space.
- To keep all equipment manuals and operating instructions in a clearly marked file ready to pass onto the next occupier.

# RESPONSIBILITIES & COSTS

The Diocesan Board of Finance, through the Parsonages Office, fulfils the obligations of the Diocesan Parsonages Board to maintain clergy houses under the Repair of Benefice Buildings Measure 1972 and subsequent diocesan schemes under the measure.

## Diocese Responsibilities:

- Maintaining the building's fabric (including services and fixtures).
- Maintaining the external decoration and boundary fencing.
- Undertaking specialist tree surgery work as required to large trees.
- Insuring the building but not the contents.
- Council Tax payment.
- Water Rate payment.

## Occupier Responsibilities:

- Routine maintenance:
  - Clearing gutters \*
  - Sweeping chimneys
  - Garden maintenance inc. hedge and shrub trimming and fruit tree pruning.
  - Small householder repairs\*\* e.g. fixing/securing cupboard doors, curtain poles, securing/re-fixing internal handles, locks, risen flooring, securing external gates, posts etc.
  - Internal decorations
  - Pest control (see page 8)
- Contents insurance
- Electricity and gas supply (inc other heating fuels where applicable)
- Media installations including telephone, television, broadband etc
- Ensuring the property does not drop below freezing during the coldest months.  
Occupants should ensure they know where the mains water stop tap is and turn off the water at the mains if leaving the property for more than 24 hours.

\* The parsonages office will arrange for gutters and rainwater gullies to be cleared as part of the quinquennial process but, in-between quinquennials, the periodic clearing of gutters and gullies is the responsibility of the occupant and arrangements should be made, if necessary, for their window cleaner or other contractor to undertake this. A grant for annual gutter clearance may be available, upon application to the Parsonages Office, but only where gutters are unusually inaccessible, or the house is exceptionally affected by leaf fall.

\*\* Should a small household repair turn out to be something more significant the parsonages office should be contacted straight away for an assessment to be made and the associated expenditure paid for from the parsonages budget.

***NB: The Parsonages Committee and Parsonages Office aim to serve the clergy within the professional guidelines and budgets agreed for housing. Please make any initial enquiries via the **Parsonages Office** on **01905 732806** or **parsonages@cofe-worcester.org.uk**.***

# EMERGENCY WORK

Emergency work is work that is required to be actioned immediately to ensure the continued health and safety of the occupants in and around the building.

Further work to make the repair permanent or to help prevent a future occurrence of the fault, will be dealt with subsequently. Items that are included as emergency work are gas leaks, water leaks from plumbing pipes, major power failures and instances of external impact damage where the structure is damaged.

During office hours telephone the parsonages office on **01905 732806**. Outside office hours telephone the relevant contractor specified in Appendix 1.

For ALL gas leaks telephone NATIONAL GRID GAS direct on 0800 111 999

If you think you can smell gas:

- DO NOT turn electrical switches on or off.
- DO NOT smoke.
- DO NOT use naked flames.
- DO NOT turn off the gas supply at the meter.
- DO open all windows and doors to get rid of the gas.

Outside of office hours, if you cannot contact anybody suitable from the list in Appendix 1, seek advice from the churchwardens, or other long-standing members of the parish regarding who is local, provides a good service, and will not overcharge.

In all cases when a request for emergency work has been made, the parsonages office must be notified as soon as possible afterwards (**telephone 01905 732806 or e-mail [parsonages@cofe-worcester.org.uk](mailto:parsonages@cofe-worcester.org.uk)**), and the contractor should only be requested to carry out the minimum of work to stop the immediate problem.

If you need to pay the contractor direct, the parsonages office will reimburse all reasonable costs immediately. All invoices for work should be made to The Worcester Diocesan Parsonages Committee. Please ensure that you obtain a receipt for all work done.

## ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS & FAULTS

Electrical installations will periodically be inspected as part of the quinquennial process and any necessary upgrading work will be undertaken. In between quinquennials, if the occupant is concerned with any aspect of the electrical installation, they should contact the parsonages office immediately.

### ***Incidents of Tripping***

Your consumer unit contains several Miniature Circuit Breakers (MCBs) which may from time to time trip the electrics in your house due to a slight surge in power. This does not mean that there is a fault with the electrical installation. These incidents are usually caused by a faulty appliance and it is therefore the occupier's responsibility to try to identify the potentially faulty appliance and arrange for it to be repaired or replaced. In this regard the following steps should be taken:

- Unplug all appliances.
- Reset all trip switches to ON including RCD switch if fitted. The RCD (Residual Current Device) is a sensitive safety device that switches off electricity automatically if there is a fault.
- Individually plug in each appliance and switch on. Tripping of a circuit when an appliance is switched on can indicate a fault with the appliance. If you need guidance on these switches, please ask the parsonages office.

If an electrical failure occurs that cannot be easily identified, then the householder should arrange for a qualified contractor to attend. In the event of such an occurrence out of office hours then the emergency contractor list, Appendix 1, can also be referred to. If the cause is traced to an appliance then the householder will need to cover the cost but if the cause is traced to something else within the fixed wiring, fitting or fixtures, then the invoice can be forwarded to the Parsonages Office to settle.

## **TELEPHONES**

The Parsonages Board will ensure that there are up to two incoming phone lines to each house but the provision of all associated telephone and internet equipment, is the responsibility of the occupier to provide and maintain. Where wiring is obviously redundant it will be removed as part of any incoming work.

## **QUINQUENNIAL WORKS**

Every house is inspected by the Diocesan Surveyor at intervals not exceeding five years and during a vacancy.

The resulting quinquennial survey report covers the condition of the external fabric of the house and the internal fittings – it does not include internal decorations, although it may comment on the state of these.

A specification for any necessary works will be drawn up, a copy sent to the occupant for agreement, and competitive tenders will be obtained.

The diocesan surveyor will authorise the works, subject to the overall costs being within the budget agreed by diocesan synod. When the contractor is instructed the occupant will receive a copy of the works order and the contractor will be asked to make direct contact. The occupant is expected to facilitate the contractor's visit without unnecessary delay.

Although efforts are made to visit the property whilst the work is being carried out, please do not wait for that inspection if there is any matter which causes concern. Occupants may also wish to recommend local contractors for inclusion on the tender list and the parsonages office should be notified by e-mail of any such preference at the time the survey is carried out.

Constructive comments regarding contractors' work are always helpful. Any complaints or comments on the standard of workmanship should be notified in writing to the Parsonages Office at the time the work is carried out so that any problems can be resolved quickly.

Any major structural problems that are observed should be notified to the diocesan surveyor as soon as they occur, as it may, in some circumstances, be advisable to bring forward a quinquennial inspection. Similarly, in certain situations a quinquennial inspection may

exceptionally be deferred if, for example, a vacancy is pending, or further investigations of structural problems are required.

As well as the schedule of building work the quinquennial process will also include a **tree survey** and an **electrical installation inspection** to be carried out by specialist contractors. Work resulting from these inspections will be carried out as required and in consultation with the occupant.

## VACANCIES & VACANCY WORK

When vacating a property, please ensure that the leaving information, requested by the Parsonages Office, is provided in a timely manner, and that the house is cleaned and left ready for somebody to move straight into, if required.

Detailed information about vacancy work and responsibilities can be found in **Appendix 3**.

## HEATING / BOILERS

### *Servicing*

The Parsonages Office is responsible for the servicing and the maintenance of all fixed items that provide heating in the house. A Landlord's Gas Safety Certificate will be issued annually by a suitably qualified engineer for all mains gas appliances. This is something that is carried out by either TBM Heating in the Dudley Archdeaconry or HMS in the Worcester Archdeaconry.

**Occupants are expected to respond promptly to contact from their designated heating engineer in order to keep the annual servicing up to date. A lapse in the servicing can invalidate appliance warranties and lead to avoidable problems with the boilers and heating systems.**

The Parsonages Office will not, however, be responsible for any remedial works that are required to be carried out to any mains gas appliances, which have been purchased and installed by the occupant and are subsequently found to be either installed incorrectly or of a substandard design.

### *Heating – General*

It is acknowledged that in an out of hours emergency another contractor may need to be called to make the appliance safe, even if that involves just switching the gas off. This company must be Gas Safe registered and preferably known to the occupier or members of their congregation.

If the house is left empty for more than 24 hours during the winter months, the heating system should be left running to keep the house dry and to prevent water services from freezing. In addition, under the terms of the insurance cover, they should also be visited at least 3 times a week so that any problems involving the escape of water are identified and dealt with promptly to minimise any damage that may occur.

## **Gas Fires**

The Parsonages Office will normally provide one gas fire in each house where a gas supply is present. Where there is no gas, an electric fire or other alternative will be provided as appropriate. Any requests for additional fires should be submitted to the Parsonages Office for consideration.

## **Wood Burning Stoves**

Whilst several houses in the Diocese have already been fitted with wood burning stoves it will not be the policy going forward for such appliances to be installed by the parsonages office other than in exceptional circumstances. Where there is an existing stove the occupant is responsible for burning untreated and seasoned wood only and for the day to day maintenance, chimney sweeping and cleaning of the appliance. Similarly, where an open fire is present the occupier is responsible for regular chimney sweeping.

## **Pest Control**

Householders will be required to implement their own pest control measures by way of self-sourced treatments or employing a local contractor if required.

The Parsonages Office advice in relation to wasps and bees' nest is to leave them alone as much as possible. They will leave at the end of the season when an empty nest can be removed safely and easily if desired. A beekeeper, as opposed to a pest control firm, may need to be consulted in certain situations if they are causing concern.

With rodent activity, householders can try to identify the source of the problem. Externally this may be low hanging bird feeders, compost areas etc.

# **WATER HYGIENE**

## **Legionnaires Disease**

Legionnaires disease is a pneumonia like illness caused by breathing in small droplets of water contaminated by the Legionella bacteria. The disease cannot be passed from one person to another. Legionella bacteria are found in the natural environment and may contaminate and grow in water systems, including domestic hot and cold-water systems. They survive low temperatures and thrive at temperatures between 20 - 45°C if the conditions are right. They do not appear to multiply below 20°C are killed by high temperatures at 60°C or above.

Most residential premises will be very low risk but the information below summarises the recommended precautions you can take within your home:

### **HOW TO PREVENT BACTERIA BREEDING IN STAGNANT WATER**

- If taps in the property are not used for one week or more, each tap should be run to flush them through.
- If your property is empty for long periods of time, i.e. over two weeks, then the hot and cold taps and shower should be flushed and cleaned, flushing for at least two minutes.
- Shower heads should be flushed out on a regular basis.

- Ensure any taps which are not normally used are flushed regularly i.e. outside toilets and taps.

## **HOW TO PREVENT BACTERIA BREEDING IN LIMESCALE**

- Keep tap and shower heads free from lime-scale where possible; if not, flush or use the outlets regularly.

Flushing is defined as running the tap or shower at maximum temperature for approximately three minutes. For cold water taps this cannot be done and so it is recommended that they are cleaned with lime scale remover and washed through with cold water.

## **IMPROVEMENT WORK**

Improvement work is usually undertaken during a vacancy due to the level of disturbance to the house and occupants. If, however, an occupant considers an improvement to be sufficiently important and it is needed to enable them to continue their ministry, such proposals will be considered by the parsonages committee.

Any building proposals should be directed at bringing the size and layout of the house in question, closer to the guidelines specified by the church commissioners in the Green Guide. Copies may be borrowed from the Parsonages Office.

Other improvements include the provision of double-glazing, which is again looked at as being part of quinquennial or ingoing works, thus concentrating the disturbance to a house to as short a time frame as possible. The policy is to provide double or secondary glazing as appropriate where single glazing or older less efficient double glazing exists.

The provision of additional loft insulation is also undertaken if necessary. The current industry standard is 250mm, or 10 inches of mineral fibre quilt. Existing roofs will have additional insulation to meet that standard provided wherever possible as part of the quinquennial or ingoing works.

## **OTHER WORK**

The Parsonages Office will provide fixed shelving in the room designated as the study. This will consist of up to 30m of shelves supported on a twin slot adjustable channel system screwed to the walls. Where there are existing shelving systems in the study, their suitability will be ascertained before a decision is made regarding their renewal.

### ***Kitchen Appliances***

Kitchen appliances including cookers and white goods are NOT provided by the Diocese. In cases where a house has built in appliances there may be some discretion regarding repair work but if an appliance fails it will not be replaced by the Diocese. The required alterations to the kitchen will be made at that stage to allow the Occupier to purchase their own free-standing replacement.

### ***Internal Decorating***

During a vacancy the Parsonages Office will generally decorate the hall, stairs and landing as well as one other room, usually the kitchen. In exceptional circumstances further

decoration may be considered and where repair work is carried out by the Parsonages Office, the designated contractor will include all associated re-decoration.

### ***Curtain Poles, Curtains and Flooring***

Battens will be provided above each window but the supply and fitting of curtain poles, blinds and/or curtains are the responsibility of the Occupier. Flooring will be provided to kitchens, utility rooms and bathrooms only.

Where hardwood block flooring is present, it will be the responsibility of the occupier to have it sanded and treated if so required. The Parsonages Office will assist, if requested, regarding the specification of any treatments.

## **BUILDING WORK CARRIED OUT BY THE OCCUPIER**

If an occupant wishes to carry out any form of building work in a house, they should first seek advice and permission from the parsonages office and will be responsible for obtaining all statutory approvals and completion certificates. This will apply particularly where such a certificate forms part of the statutory approval process. There will be occasions when the matter will also need to be referred to the parsonages committee for its approval. During construction, the diocesan surveyor will inspect the work and will also need to be satisfied that it has been completed in a satisfactory manner at the end of the job.

It will be assumed before commencement that all work, unless it is stated otherwise and agreed in writing with the diocesan surveyor, will form part of the fabric of the house and will remain when the occupant leaves, without any payment from the Parsonages Office.

The occupant is required to reinstate any fixtures and fittings removed from the house and make good any structure or finishes that have been disturbed during an occupancy unless it has been agreed in writing with the diocesan surveyor that this need not be done.

## **WORKS ORDERS**

Works orders are issued by the Parsonages Office for each piece of work that is carried out to every house, no matter how large or small the contract may be.

The top copy is sent to the contractor as their formal instruction and confirms who their point of contact is. The second copy is sent to the occupants to tell them what is going to be done and by whom and includes the contact details of the contractor for the occupants use if required.

On each works order the 'issued' date is shown together with a 'response' date, the latter being the date by which the contractor is to contact the occupant. This is not a completion date. If, as an occupant, you have not heard from the contractor by this date, please notify the Parsonages Office so that we can chase the matter up.

The two-week period between the two dates is preset but, where urgent repairs are required, the response should be forthcoming much earlier. The time delay for quinquennial and other routine work may be longer, as this may form part of a larger programme of work.

It is important to respond to messages from contractors and to ensure that work is booked in as efficiently as possible. It is also important that the parsonages office is advised promptly if a contractor is not reacting in a timely manner.

# STANDARD OF WORK

Suggestions of reliable contractors are always welcome and so are comments on the standard of work and the general attitude of all contractors. As payment to the contractor is usually made directly from the Parsonages Office, it is essential that any problems are notified to the Parsonages Office as soon as they become apparent.

It is not always possible for staff personally to inspect minor works, and they very much rely on occupiers notifying them of their worries about or, indeed, satisfaction with works undertaken.

## SECURITY

The Parsonages Board supports the 1998 report of the Advisory Board of Ministry and the Church Commissioners regarding clergy security.

Security of the house is only part of the answer. An awareness of "good practice" with regard to answering the door and remembering to lock all windows and doors when leaving the house - and setting the alarm if you have one - is just as important.

The Parsonages Office will generally fund the cost of installing a suitable security system (including PIR detectors internally and external lighting). Any additional security measures may be considered following consultation with occupant, the parsonages committee and the police.

Please remember that the contents of the house are the responsibility of the occupier. The diocesan building insurance policy does not cover contents.

## SECURITY SYSTEMS

All security systems will be serviced annually, at which time any faulty components will be renewed.

The batteries in these systems are designed to provide a back-up electrical supply for up to eight hours in the event of a power cut. All systems are provided with a tamper system that activates the alarm if the power is cut. This will happen when the battery becomes flat. The sounder will make a noise for 20 minutes and the system will then be dormant. The alarm company should only be called if, when the mains electricity supply has been reinstated, the system will not reset. The engineer will then check and possibly renew the battery before resetting the system.

## SMOKE ALARMS

Smoke alarms, one on each floor, are provided by the parsonages office and are installed in all parsonage houses and diocesan managed property.

Mains powered wired-in alarms will be maintained annually as part of the security system and this is organised by the parsonages office. Stand-alone battery powered alarms should be tested regularly by the occupier of the house and the batteries changed as required. They should be tested once a month and replaced every five years.

## **GARDENS, TREES & HEDGES**

Occupiers are responsible for all routine garden maintenance and they are expected to keep their garden in good order. This INCLUDES maintenance of hedges, pruning of fruit trees and similar work. Occupiers may decide to employ a local gardener in this regard.

The Parsonages Office will ensure that hedges are in a well maintained and manageable state when the occupier moves in.

The Parsonages Office will not consider the felling of a healthy tree unless it:

- a) threatens the structure of buildings;
- b) has become (or is likely to become) dangerous;
- c) has grown too large for the site.

Please contact the Parsonages Office for advice on these occasions and an arboriculturalist's report may be sought before a decision is made.

Any trees which are planted by the occupier should not be placed in a position which is likely to threaten the structure of any building, wall or path when fully grown and should be of a species recommended for the size of garden and the environment. Vines and creepers should not be planted against buildings. Fast growing evergreen trees or hedges should be avoided where possible and permission for any such tree or hedge planting must be obtained from the Parsonages Office before it is undertaken.

Where trees are subject to Tree Preservation Orders, or are within a Conservation Area, prior approval for works to trees is required from the local authority and no work should be undertaken without obtaining approval. A copy of any notice sent or received should be forwarded to the Parsonages Office. Occupiers should ensure that all regulations are followed, and they are, therefore, advised to consult the local tree preservation officer at the appropriate local planning authority.

A tax allowance can be claimed by incumbents against the cost of maintaining their gardens. Advice should be sought from a personal financial adviser about claiming this.

A contribution towards the cost of garden work, including hedge trimming, may be available by way of a grant, upon application to the Parsonages Office, but only where gardens and/or hedges are exceptionally large.

## **FENCING**

The provision and maintenance of fences to those boundaries that are the responsibility of the parsonage house to maintain, will be undertaken by the Parsonages Office. Consideration will NOT be given to additional fencing or 'dog proofing' gardens.

## **SHEDS & GREENHOUSES**

Greenhouses, garden sheds etc are not considered to be part of the building's fabric and as such will not be provided or maintained by the Parsonages Office.

## **EXTERNAL PAVING**

Paving to the main front door, and external study door where applicable, will be maintained by the Parsonages Office. The Parsonages Office will not provide any other areas of external paving and the responsibility of maintaining any existing areas of external paving will be that of the occupier.

## **INSURANCE**

All parsonage houses are insured for their replacement value on a block policy held with the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group. Occupiers are responsible for their own contents' insurance and for occupier's liability and are strongly advised to ensure that their cover is adequate. Advice can be obtained from EIG, who run a special contents insurance scheme for the clergy. Please note that, should additional security precautions be required because of the nature or value of contents, the occupier will be expected to fund them.

All claims on the building insurance policy will be dealt with by the Parsonages Office.

## **COUNCIL TAX AND WATER RATES**

The payment of council tax and water rates, for most stipendiary ministers, is the responsibility of the Parsonages Office. There are a few exceptions to this arrangement and the parishes concerned are aware of these local arrangements. The Parsonages Office has arranged for the demands to be sent to The Old Palace for payment. If a demand is received directly it should be forwarded to the Parsonages Office.

The Parsonages Office should be kept informed of moving in and moving out dates at properties and the number of adult occupants, to ensure that the correct council tax is charged.

## **SUBLETTING**

### ***Parsonages Houses***

From time to time, problems arise when incumbents sublet parts of their parsonage houses without entering into proper legal agreements. This can lead to tenants or lodgers refusing to vacate the premises when asked to do so and is particularly relevant when an incumbent leaves the parish. Not only can such a situation cause considerable inconvenience and possibly heavy legal costs, but it can also delay the appointment of a new priest.

Occupants are required to hand over their houses with vacant possession when they leave and, therefore, they are strongly advised not to allow tenants or lodgers to occupy any part of the parsonage house without entering into legally binding agreements with a clear termination process for when the main occupant vacates the property. The Diocesan Registrar will be able to provide advice on the suitable forms of agreement.

### ***Other Diocesan Property – i.e. Vicarages within a Team***

Subletting of other diocesan owned property is not permitted without specific written authority from the diocesan surveyor; this is given only in limited circumstances.

### ***Statutory Regulations***

Where an incumbent does intend to sublet part of their house, they must also familiarise themselves with the appropriate legislation relating to gas safety, smoke alarms and furniture standards. Advice in this regard can be sought from the Parsonages Office.

# APPENDIX 1

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## NOMINATED CONTRACTORS FOR DIOCESAN MANAGED PROPERTIES

Please note that the following information can change. For the latest details please see the latest Parsonages Newsletter or Diocesan Website.

## EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Security Alarm	Salamander Fire & Security Limited	<b>01527 61938</b>
Plumbing & Drainage	Drain Doctor (All Areas)	<b>01527 501700</b>
Drainage	Sandwell Drainage (North & Central)	<b>0121 559 5771 07850 704309</b>
All Other Issues	Parsonages Office (This will not be picked up until the following working day)	<b>01905 732806</b>

There is currently no 24/7 heating engineer or electrician and so it is acknowledged that in an out of hours emergency another contractor may need to be called to make a fault safe. Such a company must be Gas Safe or NICEIC registered and preferably known to the occupier or members of their congregation.

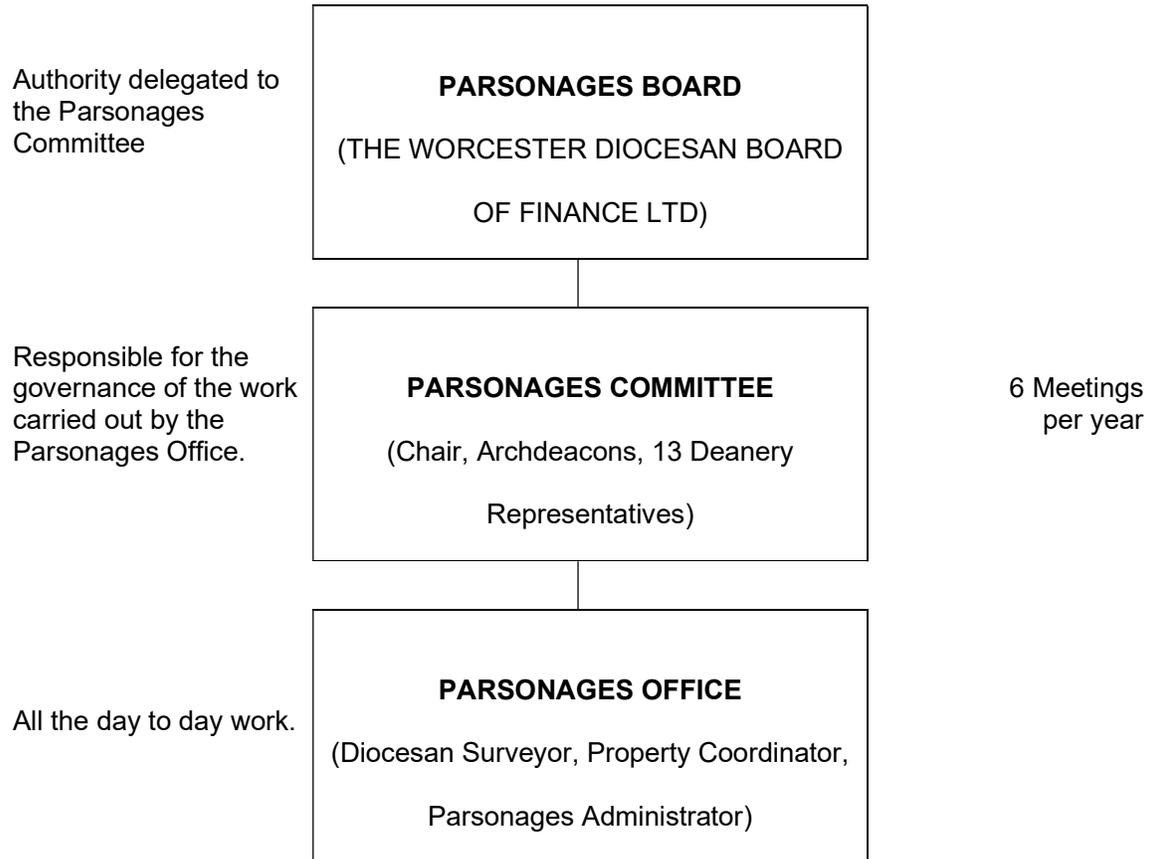
## OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS

Heating Engineers (South of Diocese)	Heating Maintenance Services (HMS)	<b>01684 892877</b>
Heating Engineers (North of Diocese)	TBM Heating (Andrew Slater)	<b>07977 452 355</b>
Odd Jobs & Plumbing (Worcester and surrounding areas)	Ken James	<b>07729 109 248</b>
Pest Control (South & Worcester area)	HWS (Darren Fellows)	<b>07778 033862</b>

# APPENDIX 2

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## COMMITTEE STRUCTURE



# APPENDIX 3

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## VACANCIES

### VACANCY WORKS

When vacating a property, please ensure that the leaving form, supplied by the Parsonages Office, is completed and returned, and that the house is cleaned and left ready for somebody to move straight into, if required.

At a vacancy, an inspection of the house will be arranged in order to establish (a) if the house is still suitable for its anticipated use; (b) if improvements, including more substantial building works or extensions are required, and what other works are required to ready the house for the new occupant. It will also be decided at this time whether the house will be rented out during the period of the vacancy.

The initial inspection will involve the diocesan surveyor and may also involve the chair of the Parsonages Committee, the relevant archdeacon and the deanery representative on the Parsonages Committee. The rural dean will be invited and may also attend. It is optional for one or both of the churchwardens to be present. A detailed survey will then be carried out, gas and electricity services tested, and a specification drawn up with a copy going to the churchwardens. The relevant archdeacon and the rural dean will be circulated as appropriate.

Where there is a team ministry serving the parish concerned, the rector will also be invited to attend the initial meeting and will be sent a copy of the agreed schedule of works.

Vacancy inspections are being treated as if they are quinquennial surveys; the next survey will then follow five years after the appointment is made.

Dependent upon the extent of work required, it will be agreed with the archdeacon and churchwardens whether work is carried out before the new appointment is made. Where only minor work is needed it will be usual to await the appointment of the new occupant, when their views can be considered. Every endeavour is made to ensure that the works are completed before the occupant moves in, but this does depend on the time scale involved and the scope of the works.

A meeting between the incoming occupant and the Diocesan Surveyor will be arranged as soon after the occupant's appointment as is practically possible.

The Parsonages Office will decorate the hall stairs and landing as well as one other room, usually the kitchen, except in exceptional circumstances where further decoration may be required. Where repair work is carried out by the Parsonages Office, the designated contractor will generally include all associated redecoration.

### ***Vacating Properties***

In addition to the outgoing occupant ensuring that ALL personal effects are removed from the property when vacating it, the churchwardens are also asked to remove all papers, files, books and furniture from the house and outbuildings at this time. This is to enable it to be let, the contractors to have an empty house to work in, and the new occupant to start as they wish to go on with no legacy from the past.

### ***Retirement/Leaving the Ministry***

In addition to the information provided in Section F14 of the Bishops' Papers, the following must also be taken into consideration when retiring or leaving the ministry.

The right of a member of the clergy to live in a house administered by the Parsonages Office ends on the final day of the licence and the house must be vacated on that date. Exceptionally, when time and all other factors permit, a tenancy agreement may be set up with the Parsonages Office, on the payment of a commercial rent, to enable a priest to stay in the house after the licence has ended. This also requires the approval of the Diocesan Bishop, which the Diocesan Surveyor will seek.

### ***Death in Post***

Should a priest die in post the following provisions have been agreed by the relevant diocesan committees to try to remove the element of uncertainty for the remaining family and parish at a very difficult time. At the point of death the right of the family to occupy the house, either by the terms of a living or licence to occupy in other cases, both of which are dependent on the priest needing to live in the house as part of their job, will be replaced by an assured shorthold tenancy agreement that will last for six months. No rent will be payable for the first three months. The next three months will be charged at a commercial rate, although this will be refunded in full, from the Clergy Widows and Orphans Fund. The archdeacon will advise on how this should be done in each case.

A tenancy for a further six months would be considered, if the house is not required to house the next priest during that period.

### ***Services***

Responsibility for gas and electricity charges pass to the Parsonages Office upon vacation by the outgoing occupant. Meter readings are to be forwarded to the Parsonages Office immediately when a house is vacated. The Parsonages Office will usually arrange with the new occupier to take over responsibility for these services from the day of occupation. It is the responsibility of the outgoing occupant to notify the Parsonages Office of the date of vacation in order that it can inform the local authority and the insurers.

Although a telephone line is normally available, the parish or occupant is responsible for the line rental and any other charges in connection with the telephone and/or internet installation. It may be that the telephone number is retained by the parish for use by the new occupant. See item 7 below.

Should a re-connection charge be levied by BT when a property is re-occupied, it should be paid by the account holder and details forwarded to the Parsonages Office for reimbursement.

Responsibility for Water Rates remains with the Parsonages Office. The arrival of a new occupant might provide the opportunity to apply for a water meter to be installed. This is a decision to be made by the Parsonages Office and will depend on local circumstances.

### ***Occupation Agreements***

No persons will be allowed to occupy a Diocesan owned house or managed property as a tenant, without the written agreement of the Diocesan Surveyor, who will consult with the archdeacon before making a decision. This is to ensure that any necessary work can be carried out and that the property will be available for the new occupant. The occupation of the house will be by means of an assured shorthold tenancy agreement and the payment of an open market rent. All legal costs will be charged to the tenant.

## ***Churchwardens***

For the reasons specified before, the responsibility for the care, security and general upkeep of a house during a vacancy falls to the churchwardens. Where there is a Team benefice it is suggested that one warden should accept the responsibility to co-ordinate these measures.

This involves:

1. Visiting the house regularly and at least 3 times per week to ensure that it has not been broken into, and if it has, to reset the alarm and liaise with the police and the Parsonages Office.
2. To clear all post.
3. Cut the grass and maintain the garden in a condition not worse than that which pertained when the occupant left.
4. To provide access for all contractors and agents. (Whilst the Parsonages Office endeavours to hold a set of keys and be aware of all alarm codes, it is aware of gaps in the information. In addition, it does not wish to compromise the level of security provided locally.)
5. To inform the Parsonages Office of the need for any repair work during the vacancy.
6. To set and monitor the heating system, particularly during the winter months with a view to preventing the water services from freezing, and all year to ensure that the pump and control valves remain operational.
7. Making the arrangements to have the telephone calls made to the house number transferred to another number in the parish and reinstated to the house when the new priest is licensed.

## ***Renting***

Wherever possible a house will be rented out by means of an agent during a vacancy. The minimum legal tenancy period is six months, and to ensure that this can be achieved it must be confirmed, during the initial site meeting, that no major works are required to be done to the house during the vacancy, and that the house will be vacated totally by all concerned, including the removal of all parish papers, books, furniture, etc.

There are several reasons why this practice is desirable:

1. It removes the need for the churchwardens to visit the house regularly.
2. It removes the responsibility to cut the grass and look after the garden from the churchwardens, and thereby, the parish.
3. It enables the Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Limited to generate an income equal to approximately 2% of parish share from a source outside the church.
4. It ensures that the house has been totally vacated ready for use by the new occupant. This includes all benefice equipment, records, books, etc.

# APPENDIX 4

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**Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd**

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