



## Bristol Diocesan Synod Notes of last Session (Draft)

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**Date:** Wednesday, 7 September 2022

**Time:** 7.00pm to 9.00pm

**Venue:** St Michael's Centre, Stoke Gifford, North Road, Stoke Gifford, Bristol, BS34 8PD

The agenda and papers for this meeting can be found on the Diocese of Bristol website at:

<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/aboutus/governance/diocesansynod/>

<b>1. Opening worship</b>	
	Laura Thomas led sung worship and prayers.
	Bruce Fynamore in the Chair
<b>2. Introductions and Welcome</b>	
	<p>Bruce welcomed Synod members, particularly Lee Coley, Diocesan Registrar, as it was his first Bristol Diocesan Synod meeting.</p> <p>He explained that the circulated notes of the last session are a brief record of proceedings which will be sent out shortly after each meeting, and then recirculated prior to the next meeting for comments and amendments. They will then be taken as agreed at the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies. Bruce noted 1 apology from the House of Bishops, 9 from the House of Clergy and 10 apologies from House of Laity.</p> <p>Bruce explained that the additional Synod had been organised so that Synod might consider and adopt the 'Transforming Church. Together' strategy, and note the draft 2023 budget before it is presented formally at the November Synod. This draft budget was prepared early due to its links to the new strategy.</p>
<b>3. Appointment of the members of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Limited</b>	
	Canon Edward Buchan, Richard Bacon and James Gardner had joined Synod since the last meeting in June. Synod formally appointed them.
<b>4. Bishop's Address – Rt Revd Viv Faull, Bishop of Bristol</b>	
	Bishop Viv gave her presidential address and focused on the title of 'Transforming Church. Together'. She emphasised how the development of the strategy had been a continuous joint venture – and making it actually happen will also need us to work 'Together'.

	<p>Bishop Viv's address is available on the Diocesan website at:  <a href="https://www.bristol.anglican.org/bishops-address-to-synod-7-september-2022.php">https://www.bristol.anglican.org/bishops-address-to-synod-7-september-2022.php</a></p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Transforming Church. Together</b>  <b>Final Strategy</b></p>
	<p>Richard Leaman introduced Jane Vause, Director of Transformation, and they presented the final 'Transforming Church. Together' strategy.</p> <p>The presentation explored the missional imperative of the strategy (missional leadership, communities, engagement and action/advocacy) and how we might build capability. Importantly, we focused on the big questions; What is needed? What does this mean at the front line? Where will we invest? How will we do this? How will this look financially?</p> <p>It was confirmed that an annual report will be presented to Synod so that it can review progress on the strategy and set it alongside the concurrently proposed expenditure plans for the following year.</p> <p>Synod was encouraged to be disciples and advocates of the strategy. It was emphasised that to bring the strategy alive, we will need to tell stories and show images of where new things are happening and going well. This will be vital to energise the parishes. Synod was asked to send any such stories and photographs to <a href="mailto:comms@bristoldiocese.org">comms@bristoldiocese.org</a>.</p> <p>Bruce then invited Synod to spend some time in tables discussing the strategy. Revd Mark Pilgrim asked how Synod might ask questions and Bruce explained that each table was encouraged to discuss and share their questions with the support of a facilitator who would make notes. Each table was asked to decide on one question it wanted to ask at Synod. Members were asked to send any additional questions and comments to <a href="mailto:comms@bristoldiocese.org">comms@bristoldiocese.org</a> and to their facilitator.</p> <p>Before asking their questions, a lot of the tables spoke positively about the strategy describing it as "excellent," "fantastic," "brave" and "generating a lot of excitement".</p> <p>Questions:</p> <p>Table 1 question: <i>What will the strategy look like and what impact will it have on resources at a local level? There was particular concern for parishes in vacancy and how we are going to deliver on the social justice outcomes.</i></p> <p>Answer: There is a keen awareness of timing. The country and the world have just come out of one of the most traumatic periods in modern history. Therefore, the strategy needs to be communicated sensitively, well and gently. This is why there is a heavy emphasis on clergy wellbeing and local leadership. If the strategy was given to a parish tomorrow without explanation or care, it could be a source of anxiety and fear. It could also be seen as too much and be viewed with disinterest. There is, therefore, significant work going into the communications plan to make the strategy accessible, easy to understand and work with.</p> <p>In addition to this, the DBF will employ more people to augment its current staff and help parishes to deliver the strategy.</p> <p>For example, Social Action needs to be a bottom-up initiative with parishes tackling local issues with local partners and the focus on local micro-</p>

campaigns. As an example, Revd David Stephenson is working on this with Citizens UK in his Deanery.

Table 2 question: *Can we unpack some of the jargon in the Strategy. For example, what will "pathways to faith" look like? How will this be communicated to parishes?*

Answer: The strategy definitely needs a glossary to unpack some of the jargon. There is a communications plan for sharing a Parish-centric version of the strategy which will explain in digestible terms what we are hoping to achieve.

Table 3 question: *Will we be brave enough to close some churches that have very small congregations?*

Answer: There are no plans to close churches. Instead, one of the first mission priorities is to ensure that the right churches are in the right places. To do this, we need to catalyse existing churches and help them to engage with the parishes (and people) who have not hitherto been reached.

Table 4 – *To what extent is the desires of the strategy been fully costed so that it can be understood what is achievable?* There were concerns that the strategy feels like a New Year's resolution. Like a New Year's resolution will it be stuck to as it relies a lot on the unpaid human resource out in the parishes?

Answer: It is an extremely difficult time to be predicting income and expenditure, but this is our best analysis. The strategy financial plan shows expected income from 'new forms of fundraising', plus sustained and slightly increasing levels of parish giving over time. This will be supported by the DBF's plan to change the way it manages investment income and capital growth. If the strategy works and we bring more people to Christ, a lot of these numbers could be bigger than shown. The DBF has also appointed a Director of External Relations, Harrison Leonard, who will be looking into new ways of generating income ('fundraising') to deploy at a parish level.

Table 5 question: *What impact will the receipt of funding from National Church have on the governance of the Diocesan Board of Finance?*

The DBF will be accountable to the National Church for how the grant money is spent, in quite a detailed way. As for the rest of the budget, the emerging National Church strategy is almost entirely aligned with the DBF's, so it is unlikely that National Church will disagree with (or indeed have any control over) what the Diocese wants to do.

Table 6 question: *At individual parish level there are many differences; this might cause different people in different contexts to engage differently with the strategy. It was asked whether the strategy can be implemented differently and how this can be facilitated.*

Answer: A comparison was made to the Gospel. It remains the same, but each church lives out the Gospel differently. The strategy is the theme but how it is "lived out" will be different. This will be facilitated through discussion within Deaneries/Parishes, and people meeting together at local levels.

Table 7 question: Reference was made to AFC Bournemouth's motto "Together, anything is possible". To work together and make the strategy happen there needs to be engagement at every level. *Therefore, how will*

*every level and context be engaged and what will it look like? There was some concern that it was primarily an urban strategy.*

Answer: It is not assumed that the best ideas of how to engage are on the stage. Synod members, clergy and local leaders are the experts in how to engage in their own churches, communities and contexts. The strategy will not be broadcast, instead it will be a series of conversations. It is a strategy for every place, urban, suburban and rural. For some, however, it may be easier to adopt than for others; therefore it will be an ongoing and supportive conversation.

Table 8 question: *how do parishes get the funding?*

Answer: It depends on the particular part of the funding that a particular parish is interested in. Some of the funding is for enabling the strategy across the diocese (e.g. the clergy/lay ministers wellbeing programme) and then there are other parts which are for where a particular focus maybe needed in a particular area. Through the discussions over the coming months, it will have to be discerned where the opportunities exist to use the funding most effectively.

Table 9 question: *How will the impact and changes be measured as the strategy progresses?*

Answer: One of Jane Vause's remit is to determine how we will monitor progress across the various work streams. This is one of the National Church's requirements of the funding, but Synod also needs a way of monitoring how the strategy is progressing.

Bruce requested permission to extend the Synod to 9pm as the discussion was important. No objections were raised.

Table 10 question: *Some skepticism and anxiety on 'engaging under 18s' was raised, given perceived failure despite a wide range of initiatives/efforts over last 10 years. Needs some detail and supporting evidence to inspire and convince.*

It was felt that a lot of the 'jargon' in the Strategy paper was necessary shorthand but that there is an inherent danger that even the well-informed and familiar inevitably hear and read these within the limits of personal (prior) experience/understanding/perception — which might be misleading and/or limit understanding of what the strategy expects/enables.

Answer: By partnering with the National Church the Diocese has had access to knowledge, case studies and data that has been used to design both our strategic activities, and the funding bid. Our under 18's work in particular, has been heavily informed by what has worked well in other Dioceses. We recognise the need to simplify and explain the language in the document for Parish consumption.

Neil Warwick then moved that 'this Synod prayerfully adopts the 'Transforming Church. Together' strategy, as the basis for the values and missional priorities of our diocese for the next 5 years'.

Motion was carried with no votes against, and two abstentions.

Bruce encouraged Synod members to use [comms@bristoldiocese.org](mailto:comms@bristoldiocese.org) to continue the discussion about *how* we will 'Transform Church. Together'.

	<p>Bruce called for a moment of prayer.</p> <p>Following the vote, it was asked whether Synod members might report back to their PCCs about the vote and document. Richard Leaman confirmed that the strategy could be shared but asked everyone to note that it is a fairly dry governance document, and more interesting material will follow shortly to help parishes unpack and understand what the document means for them.</p>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Draft Bristol DBF Budget 2023</b>
	<p>Andrew Lucas introduced Richard Bacon, Vice Chair of Finance Committee, who, in Andrew's absence, will present the final budget for approval at the Diocesan Synod in November.</p> <p>Andrew and Richard Bacon presented the draft Bristol DBF Budget for 2023. Andrew thanked Jeff Loo, Interim Director of Finance, and his team for putting together an early draft. It was noted that the draft budget would inevitably change over time, but the purpose of the draft was to give Synod an early indication of numbers, especially as it is so closely related to the first year of the Strategy.</p> <p>The presentation focused on the expected income and expenditure for 2022 and 2023, and the work to reduce the deficit to get to a balanced budget by 2029.</p> <p>It was noted that the quantum of the grant from the National Church, and the impact of the increased cost of living and energy crisis weren't yet known. However, this will be better understood in November as the details of the grant will have been received and the Government and National Church will have announced their plans for tackling the energy crisis.</p> <p>If income is lower than expected, the strategy will be delivered at a slower rate.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <p><i>Concerns were raised about the rising energy costs and how this will impact the budget. Had this been taken into consideration?</i></p> <p>Answer: It was acknowledged that there were a large number of unknowns. The increasing cost of energy needs to be taken into account, but it is not something that can be assessed with any accuracy at this point. Need to wait and see what action is taken by the Government and the National Church.</p> <p><i>It was queried how the prioritisation of slippages would be handled. In particular, where would the decision about priorities be made?</i></p> <p>Answer: Jane Vause is developing a plan for the Governance of the change programme. We will have to decide at what level different decisions are made. Many are best made at a local level, but some will need to be made at Bishop's Council – in their role as your Standing Committee. Certain aspects of the strategy are foundational – e.g. Ministers wellbeing, and so these activities will almost certainly be prioritised in the early years.</p>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Blessing and close - Rt Revd Viv Faull</b>
	<p>Bishop Viv concluded the meeting with thanks to all Synod members and staff for contributing to a good and fruitful meeting. She also thanked St Michael's and its staff for hosting Synod before closing with a blessing.</p>