

**Proposal: To form a Synodically elected sub-committee of the Diocesan Synod called:**

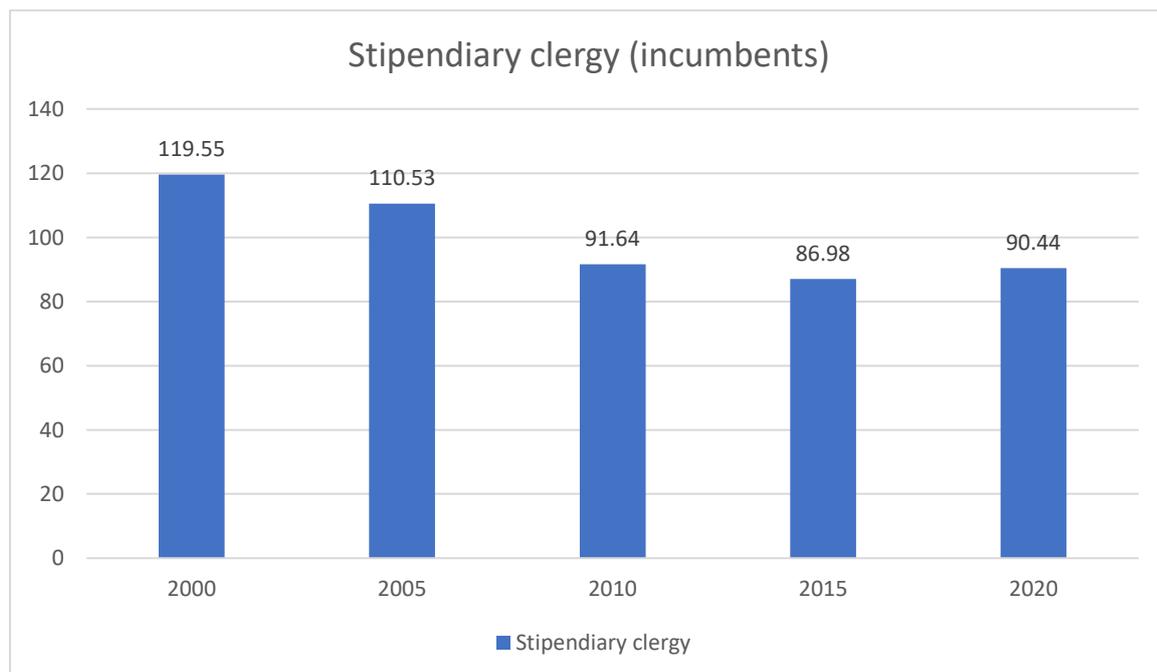
**The Budget Steering Committee. (BSC)**

**Reason I: Scrutiny.**

a/ As per the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Limited section 47: “The Council shall in every year prepare for submission to the Annual General Meeting a proper income and expenditure account for the period since the last preceding account” and from section 48: “and shall also once or more often in each year submit to the Synod an estimate or estimates of necessary Diocesan expenditure for the ensuing year.” e.g. the Budget. The proposed BSC will ensure the proper accounts and budget are presented to the Synod in a full manner which is understandable. Synod has a duty to fully scrutinise and scrutiny is not opposition.

b/ The proposed BSC will report back the Synod (at least) bi-annually to receive its view and input. It will liaise with the executive; Bishops Council and the Finance committee to ensure these legal requirements are fulfilled.

c/ The proposed BSC will further allow Diocesan Synod to Scrutinise past Budgets and accounts to allow Synod members to discern trajectories of expenditure regarding various budget lines. The following graph supplied in reply to Synod Question indicates a quarter drop over 20 years in Stipended clergy (in South Bristol it is a third). This level of transparency is essential to our decision making.



The proposed BSC will clearly and annually allow Synod to study a range of key indicators/budget lines across a number of years. For example:

- Funds Carried Forward
- Operating Surplus
- Net Income
- Unrestricted Funds
- General Reserve
- Investment Income
- Total Income
- Parish Share Income
- Stipends.
- Diocesan Office Wage Costs
- Number of Curates / cost of Clergy Training Dept
- Costs of Projects.

## **Reason 2: Prioritisation**

a/ The proposed BSC will permit Diocesan Synod to Prioritise Budget Lines.

b/ Following on from Reason 1 – **Scrutiny**: The proposed BSC will clearly allow Synod to ask the Bishops Council and Finance Committee to move available resource toward (or away from) certain budget lines.

c/ The proposed BSC will permit Synod to create Core and Ancillary priorities: That we are that which we are legally required to do and that which we would (if we can afford it) like to do. Or put another way; that which we have statutory obligations to fulfil and that which is part of an aspiration or non-statutorily required project.

It is worth understanding whatever Ancillary priority the Synod agrees on it will have to agree the level of resource to be applied. This resource is finite and must be budgeted accordingly. It is also worth noting that The Synod and the Diocese holds within it in great giftedness, experience and calling to voluntarily fulfil some of its aspirations.

## **Reason 3: To clarify and strengthen the relationship between the Synod and the Executive.**

Within most democratic governance systems there must be firstly an elected membership (Synod/Parliament) and an executive body (Bishops Council/Cabinet). The Synod does not meet often enough and is a large body therefore it devolves some its power to an executive to act on its behalf on a day-to-day basis. However, the seat of decision making within the Church of England is - The Bishop in Synod.

Synods need to be clear in our understanding - The executive functions to enact the will of the Synod. The executive must concurrently:

a/ Report back regularly.

b/ Not exceed given parameters.

c/ Not promulgate strategy (and therefore resource) outside the will of Synod.

The clearest way to keep abreast of all three of these is to clearly understand where resource is being deployed where and which body is authorising it. The proposed BSC would act to ensure clarity and regularity in reporting between the Synod and the executive.

The primary permission for all activity/expenditure must come from the Bishop in Synod. Such Core and Ancillary activity/expenditure must be readily scrutinised, prioritised and understood.

### **Proposed Next Step:**

This proposal is intended to, through debate, seek the will of the Synod.

If it is the will of the Synod that such a sub-committee be formed, I suggest a small group of (5) interested parties be nominated from this Synod and tasked to return to the next Synod with a range of options for such a sub- committee be laid out and further discussed.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter,

Rev'd Canon Gwyn Owen, Vicar of Stockwood. Palm Sunday 2021.