



Diocesan Property Guidance and Policy

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Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd (The Board)

The Finance Committee of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd, referred to as “the Board” throughout this document, is responsible for dealing with questions of policy, decisions with major budgetary implications, and work resulting from the Board’s decisions to sell or purchase property. The Board is the “Parsonages Board” for this Diocese but has delegated its responsibilities in this respect to the Finance Committee.

Day to day management is the responsibility of the Head of Governance and Property, who may refer matters with policy/major budgetary implications to regular meetings with the Archdeacons.

Property Team

This is the small team of diocesan staff based in Hillside House who deal with the routine management of parsonages and glebe. Queries regarding all types of repair, planning applications, sales, purchases, housing policy and related matters should be referred to this Team.

Callers reporting matters requiring urgent repair are advised to ask for the Property Team rather than a named individual, as this reduces the risk of delay. Detailed queries about current quinquennials should normally be referred to the Board’s Surveyors, The Hookway Partnership, on Tel: 0117 955 4545.



Financial responsibilities of clergy

This document attempts to answer most specific queries regarding responsibility for repair costs and the provision of services. Stipendiary clergy in houses managed by the Board should not pay any bills received for Council Tax, water or sewage – if received at the property these bills should be forwarded to the Diocesan Office, Hillside House. Annual maintenance charges (e.g. for alarm systems, sewage pumps, Gas Safety and boiler servicing) are also a Diocesan responsibility and, if in doubt, clergy should consult the Property Team.

Service	Installation	Running costs
Gas	Board	Clergy
Electricity	Board	Clergy
Telephone	Board	Clergy
Water & sewage	Board	Board
Council Tax	n/a	Board
TV/Cable/Broadband	Clergy	Clergy

Use of Properties

Lodgers

Incumbents (having the freehold) are entitled to let rooms to lodgers and other clergy may do so with the consent of the Board. A standard form of agreement is available for this purpose from the Property Team and this provides protection for clergy, lodgers and the Board. A charge may be made by clergy under the heading of “board and lodging” without affecting stipend or tax liability.

Multiple occupation

If a house is classified by the local authority as being a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) because of arrangements made by the resident clergy person, he/she will be responsible for any fee charged by the authority. HMOs are identified by the separate use of facilities (eg separate bathrooms, kitchens, meal times) and by the number of unrelated persons in occupation. Classification of a house as a HMO can prove very expensive for the Board and clergy are asked to consult the Property Team before making any arrangements which might lead to this. Fire safety matters are a priority and there are very specific requirements for HMOs.

Business use

If a member of a clergy household wishes to carry on a trade or business of any type from within the property, he/she must first obtain the written consent of the Board. This is because some activities may be detrimental to the state of the house, or relationships with neighbours, or the work of the Church. In some houses, the options may be restricted by covenants which prohibit



business activity, in which case the Board is not at liberty to grant permission. If any form of business activity increases the Board's expenditure on the house (eg Business Rates), the occupier will be expected to pay the difference.

The following guidelines apply to all clergy who live in benefice, glebe, DBF or parochial trust properties, and whose homes are used by any person (eg a spouse) to carry out business or other non-domestic activities. Such activities may be as various as professional counselling, manufacturing, or retail trading.

- a. The Board seeks neither to encourage nor discourage such use, but is concerned that clergy should be aware of the possible implications and that the wider interests of the Diocese and parishes should be protected.
- b. No alterations may be made to any house without the agreement of the Board. In the case of benefice houses, this entails using the normal consents procedure.
- c. Clergy should be mindful of the possible effect on the building insurance cover arranged by the Board. This is particularly true if the business activity involves retailing, manufacturing, or the storage of potentially harmful materials. (NB Household contents insurance, which is not the concern of the Board, may also be affected.)
- d. Council Tax is paid by the Board. So if a business use results in the imposition of a standard business rate, the occupier will be liable.
- e. The possible effects on neighbours (eg through increase in traffic volume) or on the normal functioning of the house in church/parish use (eg through the inappropriate storage of large quantities of material) should be considered.
- f. The deeds for some houses contain restrictive covenants which prohibit business use or any use other than residential. This must be checked in each case.
- g. Some forms of non-domestic use may require planning consent for change of use.
- h. The Board must be informed in writing of all business use and such use should not begin until the Board's written consent is received. In the case of parochial trust properties, the consent of the PCC will also be necessary. This should be done retrospectively for existing businesses.
- i. It is important that no third party is able to acquire a protected interest in the property, eg a business tenancy of the property, or part of it, under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. If in doubt, it is important that clergy contact the Property Team.
- j. The Board has legally defined responsibilities for clergy houses, covering such matters as maintenance, insurance, alteration and disposal. The Board cannot accept any additional cost or liability (including all taxes) arising from the use of a house as a place of business; these must be borne by the occupier.

Glebe

Glebe is the responsibility of the Board under the Church Property Measure 2018 (formerly the Endowments and Glebe Measure 1976). It is not the policy of the Board to let glebe to clergy for garden extensions or grazing. The Measure requires investment glebe to provide income through lettings or sales, for the benefit of the Diocesan Stipends Fund (DSF). Some clergy



housing is owned as glebe and, as long as it is occupied by qualifying clergy, does not have to generate income for the DSF.

Animals

Pets may be kept in the house or garden, but clergy are expected to show common sense in their choice of animals, particularly with regard to the maintenance of the house and garden or relations with neighbours. The Board does not let glebe to clergy for grazing. The Board is not responsible for providing additional fencing, or other improvements to the boundaries of the garden, that may be required to prevent domestic animals escaping.

Curates

Some Curates and other assistant parochial staff are housed in parochial trust properties, and the maintenance responsibility for these properties normally rests with the PCCs. The Board arranges the servicing of gas appliances and oil fired boilers in all properties, and conducts a quinquennial inspection, including an electrical test. Most Curate houses are owned and maintained by the Board. It should be noted that it is not necessary for houses occupied by assistant staff to meet the Church Commissioners' guidance on standards for a parsonage, in terms of layout, room size and number of bedrooms.

Listed Buildings

Some parsonages and other Diocesan properties are listed by the DCMS as being of architectural or historical interest. This restricts the Board's freedom to make alterations to both the interior and exterior of the property and clergy should seek advice from the Board if they are in doubt.

Parish Use

The parsonage is the home and study of the incumbent. Clergy may sometimes choose to make arrangements with the PCC to allow parish activities to take place within the parsonage. This might involve regular meetings, such as PCC meetings, forms of worship or, exceptionally, the presence of a parish office. It must be understood, however, that such arrangements happen by grace and favour of the current clergy person, and that they cannot be imposed on their successors. The circumstances of parish clergy vary greatly and so, for example, an incumbent with a young family will have different requirements from a single person.

The parish must understand that during a vacancy such activities have to be removed elsewhere. It should also be understood that their continued presence in the property could constitute a serious deterrent to candidates for the vacant post. Where a parish office has been established in a parsonage, the PCC will be asked during a vacancy period to vacate the premises and the decision whether to re-establish a parish office in the parsonage rests with the new incumbent.

Planning applications

The Board will investigate the implications of planning applications concerning neighbouring properties and object if the proposed changes could be detrimental to the the parsonage. It is often necessary for clergy to advise the Board that an application has been submitted as statutory notices are not normally sent by the planning authority to the Board. The notice period is usually only twenty-one days, so it is important that the Property Team is contacted as soon as a notice is received.



Value Linked Loan

Also known as an Equity Sharing Loan and usually abbreviated to VLL or ESL. This is a loan made by the Church Commissioners to the Board to assist in the purchase of a property in certain circumstances. This has been used most commonly to provide funds for a PCC to purchase a curate's house; in such instances the PCC is normally responsible for maintenance and the Board is charged with ensuring that the PCC carries out the quinquennial repairs. The Church Commissioners receive all or part of the proceeds in the event of the sale, their share of the proceeds being determined by their percentage contribution to the purchase price. A VLL can only continue when the property is occupied by a qualifying person, eg a curate. If this usage is not to be continued the loan has to be repaid to make the monies available elsewhere.

Maintenance

Legal obligations of clergy

The Repair of Benefice Buildings Measure 1972 gives the Board a responsibility to ensure that essential work is carried out at a parsonage and to seek compensation from the incumbent if it considers repairs to be "necessary by reason of damage caused or aggravated by any deliberate act of the incumbent or any default in his duties under (the Measure)" Section 13(4).

Consultation

Clergy of incumbent status must be consulted before improvements or major repairs can be carried out at the property they occupy. Incumbents have a legal right to refuse alterations, though not essential repairs recommended by the surveyor with which they do not agree, and they cannot impose their alternative preferences on the Board. The rights of other clergy vary according to the legal ownership of their house, but every attempt is made to reach a consensus.

Major repairs:

Cracks

Cracks in plaster are usually due to shrinkage and should be dealt with as part of internal decorations. Cracks which appear to be structural (eg in brick or stonework, or of a greater than normal width, usually appearing on both the inner and outer faces of the wall) may be due to subsidence and should be reported to the Property Team without delay.

Quinquennial inspections

A survey will be made every five years by a surveyor acting for the Board, to ensure that the property is fully maintained and repairs and maintenance are carried out as necessary. Clergy of incumbent status are invited to comment on the survey report before it is put out to tender, and the cost of the proposed works is approved by the Finance Committee before being ordered. Incumbent status clergy may make representations to the Head of Governance and Property if they consider that the approved report does not cover all necessary work.

Windows

Windows may from time to time be replaced on grounds of security, disrepair or heat loss. Locks are provided as standard to ground floor windows and windows overlooking flat roofs.



Minor repairs:

Gutters

Repairs and maintenance are the responsibility of the Board, usually at the time of the quinquennial, but clergy are asked to assist by reporting cases to the Property Team when leaves and other debris need to be removed, particularly each autumn.

Maintenance and Restrictions on DIY

Clergy are expected to carry out minor repairs, maintenance and cleaning tasks to help protect their houses and keep the Board's costs to a minimum.

However, there are two exceptions:

- 1) Any work that involves Oil, Gas or Electricity, including Central Heating systems;
- 2) Trees.

These are the responsibility of the Board and must ONLY be dealt with by an approved electrician, "Gas Safe" registered plumber and qualified heating engineer, or tree surgeon. Please contact the Property Team if such work is required.

Infestation & Rot:

Infestation

Infestation by rats, mice, wasps or other pests should be reported to the local authority and the Property Team as quickly as possible. Where infestation is caused by an action of the occupier, eg fleas from a domestic pet, treatment of the problem is the responsibility of the occupier.

Rot

Fungal growth or other signs of suspected rot should be reported without delay to the Property Team. Bad smells within the house can sometimes be due to rot.

Decoration

External decoration

This is the responsibility of the Board and is normally carried out at the time of the quinquennial. White or light coloured paint will normally be used unless, at the discretion of the surveyors and the Head of Governance and Property, darker colours are deemed more appropriate to the appearance and age of the property.

Internal decoration

Internal decoration is normally the responsibility of the clergy, but a grant of up to £1,000 over a five year period is available on receipt by the Property Team of appropriate invoices for materials. In addition, a grant of up to £250 is available to clergy, on receipt of appropriate invoices, during or just after a vacancy to assist their move; this must be claimed within three months of arrival. Clergy are urged to adopt a programme for internal decorations and to use neutral colours which avoid their successors having to use several coats of paint to obscure strong shades.

Decoration of Hall, Stairs and Landing

Although all internal decoration generally remains the responsibility of the clergy, the Board will undertake the decoration of the hall, stairs and landing where the work involves a health and safety risk or where the area involved is of exceptional size. The Board will also consider assistance with rooms that have very high ceilings, or during a vacancy where the quality of decoration is very poor as a result of previous occupancies.



Emergency repairs

Clergy should call the Property Team in an emergency and a suitable contractor will normally be dispatched promptly. If an emergency occurs outside office hours and cannot wait until the office is next open, a call should be made to a contractor from the “Emergency Call-Out List”, available from the Property Team particularly for the period over Christmas and New Year. Clergy are asked to advise the Property Team of what has occurred at the earliest opportunity. Contractors called out by the clergy should be asked to send their invoice to the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd at the Diocesan Office, Hillside House.

The contractors listed for call-outs have been authorised by the Board to do the following:

- deal immediately with the emergency aspects of any work (eg stopping water pouring through the roof, or re-glazing a window broken by a burglar);
- in some circumstances to carry out temporary repairs;
- send a quotation to the Property Team for any more extensive repairs which might be found to be necessary.

Clergy should not arrange improvements or alterations to their homes without obtaining prior authorisation from the Head of Governance and Property.

Safety & Security

Alarms

Alarms may be provided on request, at the Board’s expense and where possible during a vacancy period. The installation can involve a grant application to an appropriate Trust, but the delay is usually minimal. The Board will only use approved alarm installers. Alarm systems are maintained by the Board under a contract with an approved firm. The Board does not maintain alarms installed at the expense of the clergy or PCC, unless this has been agreed prior to the installation.

Door Locks

Five lever security locks will be provided as standard to all external doors in new parsonages (to comply with BS 3621). Three lever locks in existing houses will be replaced with five lever locks if required by the occupiers’ contents insurance policy, if the lock requires replacement for maintenance reasons, or if recommended by Ecclesiastical Insurance’s surveyor.

Window Locks

Locks are provided as standard to ground floor windows and windows overlooking flat roofs.

Burglaries

The responsibility of the clergy is to notify the Police without delay and to advise the Property Team at the earliest opportunity. If a burglary is discovered during a period when the Diocesan Office is closed, it might also be necessary for clergy to arrange urgent repairs such as boarding up or re-glazing. A list of suitable contractors can be provided for these emergency repairs.

Unwelcome callers

From time to time there have been unpleasant or alarming incidents at front doors involving callers. The Board provides spy-holes and chains as a matter of routine. Clergy who are



concerned about their safety, or the safety of other members of the household, should consult the Property Team.

Security

Clergy are expected to exercise care in order to minimise the risk of burglary by locking doors and windows, and perhaps by joining Neighbourhood Watch schemes where these exist.

Fire safety

The Board provides (as standard) smoke detectors, fire blankets and fire extinguishers. Where battery operated smoke detectors are supplied, clergy are responsible for replacing the batteries and are advised to test all smoke detectors weekly. Clergy are asked to alert the Property Team if any of these items are missing. Equipment provided by the Board remains the property of the Board and should not be removed.

Accommodation and fixtures/fittings

Unsuitable Parsonages

Some benefice houses and team vicarages are considered as “unsuitable” because of inadequate accommodation, unsuitable location, or high maintenance costs. Some unsuitable houses will be replaced at the earliest opportunity, but others will be retained because of local pastoral needs or the lack of suitable alternatives within the parish.

Green Book Guidelines

The Church Commissioners’ “Green Book” is a design guide for new parsonage houses. It sets a standard for newly built houses, and, where appropriate, the Board tries to bring existing houses up to that standard. It must be recognised, however, that financial constraints and the nature of some houses restrict the ability of the Board to achieve this aim. Green Book guidelines should therefore be regarded as ideal, rather than mandatory or even normal, and cannot be regarded as an entitlement

The following sections include sub-sections which describe the ideal accommodation as suggested in the Green Book Guide. Items listed in this paper as “provided as standard” are included in new properties or added during quinquennials or at vacancies where possible. In some cases they may be provided as extra items on request.

Entrance

As far as possible, the main entrance will give direct access to the study without going through the family accommodation. A back door to the garden is provided, preferably from the utility room if there is one.

Door bells/door knockers

The Board will provide either a door bell or a door knocker if neither is yet fitted. “Musical” door bells are not provided. CCTV may be provided in certain circumstances where security is a particular concern.

Access

As far as possible, the arrangement of the house should allow maximum flexibility, with rooms used by parish visitors separated as far as possible from those used only by the family. New



parsonages will be designed with appropriate disabled access, but it is often difficult to adapt older properties.

Study

A parsonage study is a space set aside for the clergy person's private work and reflection. There should be a reasonable provision of space for books and private office equipment and, ideally, some storage space for robes. A study is also a room where clergy can interview individuals or couples, and can, if they choose, hold small meetings. It is not designed to be a parish office or a venue for PCC meetings.

Floor area

The Green Book Guide for a Study is 220 square feet (20 sq meters), or 200 square feet (18 sq meters) if alternative storage for equipment and vestments is provided elsewhere. The standard is applied to all new parsonages, but existing studies are often too small or poorly designed. It is not usually possible to rectify such deficiencies.

Shelves

The Board will provide fitted shelves in the Study to a maximum of 30 meters, or to a shorter length by agreement, or according to the size and shape of the study. The clergy may add shelving at their own expense, but should take care when fitting shelves not to damage features, electrical cables etc.

Kitchen/Utility Room

The kitchen should ideally provide adequate space so that it can be used for breakfast and occasional meals. Utility Rooms are provided in houses built to Green Book standard but are not necessarily provided in all properties.

Free-standing Cookers

Provision and repair of cookers is the responsibility of clergy. Cookers must only be installed by suitably qualified contractors. This means gas cookers will only be installed by "Gas Safe" registered fitters and electric cookers will be installed by NICEIC registered electricians. The cost of installation is the responsibility of the Board, and some Removal firms provide qualified personnel to do this work as part of the removal costs.

Fitted Ovens and Hobs

Fitted ovens and hobs are regarded as part of the building. In recent times, the Board now provides fitted ovens and hobs when new kitchens are installed, and may purchase a house in which these are already fitted. If a fitted oven or hob is uneconomical to repair, it will generally be replaced by the Board.

Dishwashers

Connections and space for dishwashers will be provided where possible.

Extractor fans

Extractor Fans or Extractor Hoods are usually provided in kitchens, and may be supplied on request, particularly if there are condensation problems.

Kitchen Units

Kitchen units are replaced only when they are considered to be no longer usable. The Board has identified mid-range units that are considered economic and sound. If kitchen fittings are replaced, clergy are given a choice within this range.



Washing machines

Plumbing for washing machines is provided as standard.

Tumble Driers

Vent points for tumble driers will only be provided where reasonably practicable. Clergy are encouraged to consider condensing appliances where possible.

Reception rooms

A parsonage will normally have three reception rooms comprising lounge, dining room and study.

Bedrooms

A parsonage will ideally have four bedrooms, two of which will be doubles.

Fitted wardrobes

The Board does not normally supply fitted wardrobes, though they may occasionally be provided as a result of being already fitted when the house was acquired.

Bathroom/WCs

In addition to a bathroom, parsonages should also have a ground floor WC with washbasin. This should be easily accessible from the study without intruding into the family accommodation.

Bathroom suites

An existing bathroom suite is replaced when it is considered unusable, or may be more sensibly replaced than reinstated after repairs or other work. Replacement suites are white to make future matching easier.

Extractor fans

Light-operated Extractor fans (with isolators) are normally provided in shower rooms and bathrooms, to combat condensation. Clergy are encouraged to refrain from using the isolator switch. It is also important to keep trickle vents in double glazed windows open at all times. It is also important to open a bathroom or en suite window whenever possible, so as to prevent condensation, from which mould develops and causes expensive damage the property.

Showers

A shower is normally provided in the bathroom or separate shower room. Electrically heated showers are not normally replaced with mains showers unless they are beyond repair and a mains shower is recommended because of the local water pressure quality.

Tiles (bathroom/kitchen)

The Board encourages the use of tiles in neutral colours for kitchens and bathrooms when replacement is required. Clergy may be offered a choice within these guidelines. Neutral colours avoid problems caused by widely differing tastes, which might otherwise lead to expensive retiling and difficulties in matching other fixtures and fittings.

Storage:

Lofts

Items may be stored in the loft if flooring is provided. It is important that the loft is not overloaded and that the weight of stored items is spread as evenly as possible. Loft lighting is normally provided together with a loft ladder where possible.



Fixtures & fittings:

Carpets

The Board does not routinely provide carpets at the time of a vacancy, although the Resettlement Grant is provided primarily for the purpose of clergy purchasing their carpets and curtains when moving into a property. The Board does provide vinyl floor covering for the kitchen, utility room, bathroom and ground floor WC. Carpets are sometimes left by outgoing clergy or acquired with a newly purchased house and these will be left for incoming clergy if they are considered to be in a reasonable condition. Clergy are asked not to stick carpet to the floor or allow foam-backed carpet to become stuck over a period of years. This may result in the carpet being irreparably damaged in the course of routine repairs and the Board will not accept liability. A fibrous membrane or other barrier material must be used as underlay for foam backed carpets.

Curtain track

Provided as standard. The Board does not provide curtain poles, curtains, or blinds, but clergy are welcome to provide these at their own expense, or it is a legitimate use of their Resettlement Grant..

Services Provision, trees and boundaries

Heating:

Boilers/central heating

Central heating fuelled by either gas or oil is provided as standard. Annual servicing and repairs are arranged and funded by the Board. When it is necessary to replace a boiler, consideration will be given to running costs and other factors before it is decided whether a gas or oil fired boiler is substituted. Attention is paid to the condition and performance of the system during quinquennials and at times of vacancy.

Chimneys

Sweeping open fire chimneys and removing obstructions such as birds' nests is the responsibility of the clergy. This should be done annually. Gas flues are checked during the annual service of gas appliances and arrangements are made for the chimney to be swept when necessary in order to comply with gas safety requirements.

Gas fires

A basic gas fire may be provided in a Study or Living Room. Annual maintenance is the responsibility of the Board. Clergy are at liberty to contribute to the cost of a new fire if a particular style is preferred.

Insulation

Loft insulation and lagging is provided as standard and checked at each quinquennial.

Electrical

Electrical tests and rewiring are the responsibility of the Board and examination of the electrical installation is undertaken at the time of the quinquennial. Clergy must not undertake their own DIY electrical work under any circumstances. Electricity fuel bills are the responsibility of the clergy.



Gas

Gas safety checks are carried out annually at the time of the boiler service and are the responsibility of the Board. CO detectors are also provided by the Board. Clergy must not undertake their own DIY work which involves any type of gas appliance or supply under any circumstances. A new gas connection may be installed when an opportunity arises. Gas fuel bills are the responsibility of the clergy.

Gas leaks

If a gas leak or a carbon monoxide leak are suspected, clergy should immediately turn off the gas at the mains, open windows and telephone 0800 111 999 for the Emergency Call-Out service. Do not turn electric switches on or off. After these steps have been taken, report the problem to the Property Team.

Water:

Lead pipes

Lead water pipes can be unacceptable and may need to be replaced by the Board. The necessity and urgency of this task depends on the condition of the pipes and the nature of the local water supply, and tests will be carried out to determine the level of lead salts in the drinking water. The water company may also be requested to ascertain the nature of the communicating pipes.

Drainage:

Cesspits/septic tanks

Most parsonages and other diocesan properties have mains drainage, but a few drain to cesspits or septic tanks. In all cases, the Board is responsible for maintenance and emptying.

Sewage pumps

If a sewage pump is in use, its maintenance is the responsibility of the Board.

Telephones

A telephone point is provided as standard in the Study together with a second point for family use elsewhere on the ground floor if required. The Board will pay for these two points.

Telephone handsets are not provided by the Board. Quarterly bills are the responsibility of the clergy, although PCCs may be prepared to contribute. Clergy may change their supplier provided this does not involve the Board in any expense.

Cable and Broadband connections

Cable and Broadband connections are not provided by the Board. Clergy wishing to connect to a cable network may do so without consulting the Board, provided the cable does not cross other properties after leaving the public highway. Requests by cable companies or others for permission to connect across parsonage, glebe or Board property should be referred to the Head of Governance and Property. Broadband provision is the responsibility of the clergy.

Television aerials

TV aerials are not provided or maintained by the Board. Some properties have restrictive covenants which prevent siting a satellite dish, particularly at the front of the property. Clergy wishing to site a satellite dish on the outside of their house should first consult the Property Team, particularly if the property is a listed building.



Garden

General maintenance of the Garden is the responsibility of the clergy.

Trees and hedges:

Trees

Clergy are expected to prune small trees and shrubs to prevent excessive growth and to consult the Board before planting any kind of tree as some may cause subsidence or other problems because of their type or proximity to buildings.

The Board will pollard or fell problem trees during quinquennial works but may do so at other times if a tree is considered to present an immediate danger to people or property. Clergy are asked not to undertake work which may be dangerous or require specialist knowledge and to avoid major work to any tree which might be the subject of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). If in doubt, the Property Team should be consulted for advice. Self-sown seedlings should normally be uprooted as weeds during the course of general gardening, particularly if they are close to the house.

Clergy should notify the Property Team if they receive notice from their Local Authority that trees within their garden are to be covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO).

Hedges

Hedges are the responsibility of the clergy. The Board may deal with some species of tall beech or coniferous hedges as trees, during a quinquennial or vacancy, but clergy are expected to trim them sufficiently to make this unnecessary.

Hedges should not be allowed to grow above a height of 6 feet and the Board reserves the right to charge clergy for neglect which leads to additional costs for hedge cutting.

Outbuildings

Conservatories, greenhouses and garden sheds are not provided or maintained by the Board.

Walls and fences:

Boundary walls/fences

Structural maintenance and repair is the responsibility of the Board unless the boundary belongs to a neighbouring property or is a party structure. The minimum standard to be achieved is a fence capable of keeping small children within the garden under normal supervision and providing suitable security for the occupiers. Fences do not need to be designed to keep domestic animals in the garden.

Boundary fences of houses bordering agricultural fields will need to be stock proof, and, under common law, the Board will require the adjoining owner to provide the necessary fencing.

Clergy are requested not to plant trees and shrubs in such a position that they are likely to damage fences or drains or obstruct access for maintenance purposes.

Fences within boundaries

Fencing within the boundaries of the garden, e.g. to divide the front from the rear garden, may be erected at the discretion and expense of the Board, if it is deemed necessary for the safety of children or the security of the property and its occupants.



Drives/paths

Although clergy are responsible for the maintenance of their gardens, the Board checks the conditions of drives and paths as part of the quinquennial works and carries out repairs as necessary. The clergy are expected to help control costs by keeping drives and paths free from weeds.

Rights of Way

Clergy are asked to ensure that members of the public are not able to cross their gardens regularly over a period of years, other than in using the appointed route to the front door. Long term use may establish rights of way by prescription.

Garages/parking

A parsonage will normally have a single garage, but this is not possible in all cases. The Board does not seek to provide parking for second cars, caravans or boats.

Insurance

Buildings insurance

The Board insures its properties against a wide range of perils and for public liability, and the possibility of a claim should be considered whenever damage to a property is reported. Diocesan policies have a variety of excesses, and it is not considered worth submitting a claim unless the amount claimed is £500 more than the relevant policy excess.

Longer than normal absences by clergy do not affect the cover, but it is usually impossible to maintain full cover during a vacancy unless the property is occupied by a tenant. If a house is left inadequately furnished for occupation for more than 60 consecutive days then insurance cover is automatically restricted in the following areas: escape of water/oil, malicious damage or vandalism, theft or attempted theft, glass breakage, water & heating installations.

Contents insurance

Contents insurance is the responsibility of the clergy.

Vacancies

Leaving

Clergy are expected to ensure that their homes are handed over in good order. Houses should not be in urgent need of internal decoration or left dirty. All personal possessions should be removed.

Keys should be left with the churchwardens unless otherwise directed by the Head of Governance and Property, who will visit or write to the clergy prior to vacation to discuss and agree any work that may be needed before the property is handed back to the Diocese and any other arrangements.

Electricity and Gas meters should be read and arrangements made for payment of final gas, electricity and telephone bills up to the date of leaving.

The PCC may choose to have telephone calls re-directed to a Parish Officer, in which event the PCC is responsible for payments relating to the property's line rental and divert-call charges. Nowadays this is not considered necessary in most cases.



Rubbish

It is the responsibility of departing clergy to ensure that rubbish and unwanted possessions are removed from all parts of the house and garden. Rubbish, soil and other material piled against the wall of the house may allow damp to bridge above the damp proof course, and this must be avoided.

Inspections

The Surveyor, Head of Governance and Property and others carry out inspections of empty houses and assess the extent of necessary repairs and any improvements needed to comply with Diocesan policy. Priority is given to checking gas equipment, electrical fittings, the structure of the building, the condition of the roof, and signs of rot or other problems affecting timber. Incoming clergy are not normally invited to amend or add to the schedule of works.

Lettings

The Board will usually arrange a tenancy during a vacancy. Rent collected is received by the Board as a contribution towards maintenance costs of the properties. In all cases, the Board acts as the landlord and makes all arrangements.

Churchwardens' responsibilities

The Churchwardens of the parish in which the property is situated are asked to keep an eye on the property during a vacancy and to report any matters of concern to the Property Team without delay..