

Note of a meeting held on 6th October 2015 at St John's Church, Percy Main at 18:00. The meeting was called to enable members of the Diocesan Synod to engage with the draft budget.

This consultation meeting was recorded and the soundtrack is available at:
<https://soundcloud.com/diocese-of-newcastle>

51 Members of the Diocesan Synod and 4 supporting staff were present.

Introductory Discussion

Canon Simon Harper provided an overview of the proposed budget (paper DS15 17) within which the following points were discussed:

- The need to have strategy to increase investment income
- A need to seek out new streams of income. Invest funds in mission to increase attendances
- Aspiration to spend more on mission: difficult to measure – holding clergy numbers has been an investment for us (numbers could have declined faster)
- Poorer communities' money: we have to justify how we will use this through a peer review. Therefore, we need to plan where this is spent.
- Question about our investments: they are ethical and there is a spread of investments around the globe via CCLA.
- We should maintain or preferably increase our assets: you can only sell the 'family silver' once.

Those present then worked in groups to consider four questions

1. Is the budget reasonable, achievable or should it be more challenging?

Comments made in response to question one

- +1.75% increase & 95.0% collection: Should it be 95% or 100%?
- Is surplus high enough at £100k?
- Is this enough funding to be strategic?
- Collection rate is an accommodation not a target. Some deaneries might interpret the message that the Diocese only needs 92.0% or 93.0%. There is a need to get message to deaneries that to resource our mission needs we need a 100.0% contribution to Parish Share.

2. Is the budget presented for 2016 pertinent to the Diocesan Aims and Priorities?

Comments made in response to question two

- We need fresh ideas / innovation
- Task Groups have been very valuable, much achieved for relatively small amount of money Task Groups have made good connections.
- We need to take risks and address concerns
- Parishes are doing a lot but that is not recognised in budget

- There is a strong team of Supporting Ministers.
- There are other resources as well as financial resources.
- Risk / action / funding. We should celebrate confident change.
- Where is there provision in the budget to increase the capacity of the laity.

3. Are there any areas not included in the budget that are important to realizing our aims and priorities?

Comments made in response to question three

- Budget too similar to last year
- We need to act soon to meet new challenges
- Provide plenty of training and support
- Remember that Ministry is not restricted to mean clergy.
- We need training posts / bidding posts / strategic roles.
- We must put money aside for Strategic Development bids.
- Need to train clergy and laity.

4. How can we better support poorer areas of our diocese and where might that resource be found?

Comments made in response to question four

- Clergy working in poor areas: Build up self-esteem in these poorer areas
- Long interregnum leads to drop in confidence: Interim ministry to ensure continuity.
- Sharing skills: wealthy and poor working in partnership
- Mentoring for treasurers within deanery.
- Creative use of and development of readers. Quantification of investment.
- Clarity round strategic funding. Diocese has to join up with parishes to make bids for pots of strategic money.
- Definition of poor areas. Borderline poor / mixed areas.
- Does poor always mean money? Could it be poor attendance?
- We need to ask poorer areas what they need and understand them.
- Good conversations.

5. Questions - Concluding the session

- Those present were broadly content with the discussion
- Members encouraged to communicate back to deaneries, in particular that the aim was to achieve the Parish Share request
- Some present felt the budget was too similar to previous budgets and not risky enough while others offered caution about risk, especially if resources were wasted
- Comments arising from the discussions should be passed to the Diocesan Secretary