

Buckingham Financial Briefing – 9th October 2021

SUMMARY OF WRITTEN FEEDBACK

Which aspects of the existing Diocesan system of allocating Parish Share need reviewing?

- Review what is charged during an interregnum
- Scheme is complicated and is a constant source of contention
- Seek a way of avoiding paying fees to the Diocese and getting them back two years later
- Resentment of rental on vicarages going to the Diocese during an interregnum
- The foundational principle of ‘paying clergy costs’ sounds like fair starting point to many - but in particular this is unachievable by rural deaneries. Is there an alternative in a principle that looks more like ‘from each according to their means; to each according to their need’?
- Is October attendance still relevant for small churches with limited number of services. Parishes with poor attendance in a wealthy area really struggle
- Better communication from the diocese
- Parish share calculation does not take into account pensioners who may not have disposable income, or young families who may also not have disposable income. But the parish is seen as wealthy.
- The cost of running and repairing the church building should be included in the calculation of parish share.

Which aspects of the existing Diocesan system of allocating Parish Share do we need to hold on to?

- Principle of working together and helping each other out
- Retain allocation at deanery level. Deanery level of determination of the share allocation is a strength
- Allocation by minister does encourage discussion about clergy deployment.

DETAILED WRITTEN FEEDBACK

Email

Comment:-

- Scheme is complicated and is a constant source of contention.
- Levels of giving are low.
- Allocation from Deanery to Parish.

What needs to change?

- Is October attendance still relevant for small churches with limited number of services.
- PGS – application is varied. Where it has been adopted it is effective. Why is it not promoted more?
- Joshua Townson, Diocesan Generous Giving Adviser – well worth engaging with him.

Return post Covid:

- Return is 75% plus, but it is at the older end of the congregation.
- The giving is predominantly at the older end and by definition will decline.
- Is average attendance still a good yardstick?

Things to hold on to:

- Allocation by minister does encourage discussion about clergy deployment.
- Two stage allocation.

Comment:

- Most issues do seem to be on the allocation by Deanery to Parishes which the Review will not address.
- Raising money for specific causes is easier than increasing regular giving. Guidance on how this might change.

Verbal Questions

See video recording

Chat box

Questions:

Is the ability to pay is as disparate as the parish share cost per average attendee which varies from #457 in #1263

Breakout Groups:

Which aspects of the system do we need to review?

What do we have in the system at the moment which we need to hold on to?

Aspects to be reviewed: share allocation seems to be based on a few assumptions which need to be more realistic. for example a parish deemed wealthy with congregates being assets rich but cash poor (e.g. pensioners) this would affect the contribution ability of the local parish

To review:

Can we break down the £1.9m cost of DoMM by area (or even deanery)?

Advice is needed for parishes on best investment opportunities (financial and ethical)

Some parishes are using all their income on parish share and have nothing remaining to spend on local mission. This devalues local mission.

What is the optimum level of income that should be contributed to parish share?

What priority should be given to local mission? And what are the ethics of spending on buildings?

It's difficult for treasurers to challenge parishes that aren't paying the full parish share allocation.

Can the diocese do more to encourage parishes to pay something

Period of consultation on the review of mission and pastoral measure 2011 (GS2222?) elapsed before an incumbent was aware of the consultation – communication is a problem.

To hold on to:

Principle of working together and helping each other out

We also had a particular comment about the huge difference between rural and urban deaneries – rural deaneries are beset continually by difficulties in meeting share requests

The allocation needs to be more structured. The cost of ministry is not fair nor realistic

Review what is charged during an interregnum; seek a way of avoiding paying fees to the Diocese and getting them back two years later; resentment of rental on vicarages going to the Diocese during an interregnum; parishes with poor attendance in a wealthy area really struggle; better communication needed - esp re costs of the Department of Mission; costs of maintaining buildings not adequately reflected. Please retain allocation at deanery level.

I fully support the comments on the unsustainability and unaffordability of the Parish Share

Review the communication between diocese and deanery office. Also communication needs to be customised based on the circumstances of Parishes and Deaneries. Review of more ways to encourage donation, for example performing better services.

We had some differing opinions about the foundational principle of 'paying clergy costs' – It sounds like fair starting point to many - but in particular this is unachievable by rural deaneries. Is there an alternative in a principle that looks more like 'from each according to their means; to each according to their need'? Does there need to be more attention to the comparison between deaneries when setting share allocation between them?

Although 75% may have returned to the church post Covid, most are elderly (in rural parishes at least) so they and their planned giving will be soon lost to the church, and are not being replaced by young folk. Most villagers do not realise that the church and congregation pay week in week out for their vicar. They expect a vicar to be there to marry their children, but think that the vicar is paid for centrally out of some magic pot!

Particular question: How does a parish who is expected to pay 92+% of their income on parish share consider their sustainability – any support or advice to those parishes? Beyond the payment of the share there is little potential for any further outgoings.

On aspects on areas to hold on to- deanery level of determination of the share allocation is a strength; putting up the original principles in the share system is also a good practice.

We had an interesting reflection about how 'it's not just about the money' – the spiritual principles at play – of generosity and mutual support for example – but in discussions at local parish and deanery level it often ends up basically being about self-preservation.

Hard to comment on diocesan allocation [communication issue?] but where it's working shouldn't be broken. Averages per attendee very wide range £457-£1238 in our parish. Some very poor people and parishes are very generous indeed. Most charities have "S shaped curve" and are dependent on very few large givers. Has diocese ever surveyed ability to pay of congregation members? Many people travel into churches from outside parish — 60% Age of congregation is also an issue. Who will pay in 5-10 years? Deanery unfairly allocating... 44% increase to us and nothing to others when we are out church planting across deanery. Deanery may be too focused on formula when Diocesan stay 1 should be, but Deanery decision should reflect local missional realities. Another deanery is

applying an 80/120 principle to ministry cost. No parish should pay less than 80 or more than 120% of its costs. Every church plant will take a while to pay, because people come in and then pay more later when the church has matured more

I think there should be clarity about the scope of this review - my assumption is that it WILL look at how the diocesan budget is shared amongst deaneries/parishes. And that it WILL NOT look at reducing diocesan spend nor at alternative funding sources, is that correct??

From Mark Humphriss : You are correct, this is a group to look at the formula for sharing out costs, not those costs (which are the responsibility of Bishop's Council and the Finance Committee and Dio Synod)

We have had to reduce to a house for duty vicar as the parish is not prepared to fund a full time vicar - as the costs are seen as too high. As someone else has said, the parish share calculation does not take into account pensioners who may not have disposable income, or young families who may also not have disposable income. But the parish is seen as wealthy. It is hard to encourage more generous giving when there is no vicar during long vacancies, or when the vicar is HfD. The parish contributors are happy to fund the parish, but not the deanery or Diocese. They are seen as overheads, not contributing to the local parish.

There is an important difference which no one has mentioned namely cost of running and repairing the church building. In my parish the building has cost £750k over the last 20 years to repair/restore. Modern churches do not have this cost. Should this not be included in some way in the calculation of parish share. For a parish with attendance at approx. 20 each week this is a lot.

From Mark Humphriss : Thank you, we do recognise that, sometimes a huge cost.

Isn't there something wrong that the money is sitting in the centre for people to apply for, rather than leaving some of the money at the parish level for them to decide where they want to spend it.

The issue is not how better to allocate the costs, the issue is how to raise income from non-church members. Declining numbers of church members are insufficient to cover the regular costs. The population as a whole is willing to raise money as a one-off to repair the church roof but are not aware that local parishes have to pay the salary of the local vicar. If they did know then they might make regular donations to cover business as usual costs as well as one-off appeals.

Just a thought about the clergy; A hfd priest will be expected to provide the same level of service as a stipendiary priest; when they cannot do this, there may well be congregational dissatisfaction and therefore a reduction in giving!

Verbal comments from Breakout Groups

See video recording