



Board of Directors, Bishop's Council and Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee Report 11 July and 15 October 2024

1. The Bishop's Council, Board of Directors and Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee met in person and via Zoom on 11 July and 15 October 2024.

Governance

2. In the light of recent events, Council have asked for a governance refresh, and have approved a plan for undertaking the work over the next year, starting in October. The review will be led by Richard Leaman, supported by Emma Bakewell and the relevant Senior Leadership Team/Bishops Staff Meeting members, and will review the Terms of Reference of all the various committees/teams in our complex structure.

3. Discussions took place about the Synod elections, and the Vacancy-in-See Committee election process, in preparation for the next Triennium. Council also discussed the key messages and briefings for the new Diocesan Synod.

4. Council and the Board of Directors undertook their routine business of overseeing the Finance, Audit + Risk, and Diocesan Mission & Pastoral committees' activities and decisions. They also discussed what has gone well, and not so well, for Bishop's Council over the last 3 years, so we can prepare better for the next Triennium.

5. Council were briefed by Harrison Leonard on the External Relations strategy, and the proposal to establish a separate charitable entity. There is more work to be done on the latter (see para 13 below) and this will be discussed at the upcoming Bishop's Staff Team residential.

TC.T

6. Council have continued to monitor progress with Transforming Church Together (TC.T) and were briefed on progress to date, notably;

- overall, the project remains on track, with shortfalls in the volunteering project, income generation, and the essential underpinning parish share.
- continuing effort being applied to a number of engagement activities and events, attempting to encourage our clergy and parishes to engage with, and draw on, the resources and funding for the TC.T strategy.

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- the launch of the Clergy Wellbeing/Coaching project and the Growing Faith project.
- the approval of the Racial Justice Strategy, albeit National Church funding support is still awaited. Recruitment for a Racial Justice Lead (who will attend Bishop's Council in rotation with the Racial Justice Officer) is underway. Council were briefed on the impending comprehensive stakeholder engagement exercise on the future of All Saints Corn Street.
- recent changes to the CofE's Strategic Mission & Ministry Investment Board funding profile, agreed with the Diocesan Support Unit, to reflect pragmatic modifications to the project/programme activity profile.
- An ongoing and wide-ranging external attitude survey, to help us understand how the 'general public' view the Diocese/CofE.

Education

7. +Neil and the Director of Education have kept Council informed of progress with, and outcomes from, the 'DBAT Lessons Learned' investigation. The investigating officer reported that:

'...in summary, there was a breakdown in Governance which was not principally the fault of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) or Diocesan Board of Education (DBE), but the Department for Education (DfE) who should have recognised that whilst DBAT cared for many primary schools it did not have the experience to set up and run a secondary school. Many of the problems encountered were sector-wide, not just DBAT challenges....'

8. Diocesan Synod will be briefed on the final outcomes by +Neil at this meeting.

Safeguarding

9. Adam Bond has briefed Council on the recent independent Safeguarding Audit. Whilst there are a number of recommendations we will need to consider or take action on, the audit team stated our practices, relationship with parishes, and processes are amongst the best they have seen. Synod will be briefed on the key findings and actions in 2025 once the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel have reviewed and discerned the various ways forward.

DBF

Financial Audit and IT

10. Richard Bacon briefed Council on the current financial situation and the ongoing audit. Parish Share continues to be a very serious cause for concern, but otherwise we are where we expected to be financially. Council oversaw the annual audit – which was challenging, but easier than last year - and signed off the 2023 accounts in July.

11. Council endorsed the 2025 budget in October, which is presented for approval at this Diocesan Synod. At the same meeting, after considering the options, the Board of Directors agreed to appoint [Haysmacintyre](#) as our auditors for the year ending 31 December 2024.

12. Council were briefed on the recent migration of the DSS IT support services from the National Church to a local provider. Notwithstanding a number of obstacles put in place by the National Church, the migration has been remarkably smooth.

13. Council have been briefed on the need for a separate charitable entity to support new fundraising initiatives. The aim is to create a separate charity that does not have any reserves which are judged to be a barrier to fundraising. The Board of Directors (with Finance Committee advice) will be asked to approve the Articles of Association before the end of the year.

Mission and Pastoral Committee work

Overview

14. In addition to noting several matters that are currently in progress, the Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee recommended four suspensions, two Pastoral Schemes (West Swindon and Lydiard Tregoze Scheme; Swindon Villages Scheme), the extension of Shine Pinehurst BMO for five years and a Local Ecumenical Co-operative Scheme for Dorcan.