



DIOCESE of
WINCHESTER

BISHOP'S COUNCIL & STANDING COMMITTEE

Update for Diocesan Synod June 2024

This note summarises the recent work and decisions of the Bishop's Council & Standing Committee (BCSC) since March 2024 and is shared with the Diocesan Synod for information. **This update does not include Council business that will be covered elsewhere on the Synod agenda.**

Synod will be invited to raise questions at the meeting.

Walking the Wessex Way

In April, Bishop Philip presented his first draft of Walking the Wessex Way: A Story and Vision for the Diocese of Winchester.

It is hoped that this will be valued resource for discussion, reflection and prayer in parishes, deaneries, PCCs, synods and worshipping communities as we seek to develop a framework for our future mission and ministry. More information will be shared in due course.

Launchpad Social Enterprise

LSE is a separate Charity founded by the WDBF some years ago which aims to use social entrepreneurship to address challenges around our diocese. It is funded by a loan from the WDBF.

In April we received a presentation on the work of Launchpad Social enterprise (LSE) and its subsidiary company Paint Pots Nurseries.

There are now 13 Paint Points settings providing nursery and preschools to communities in Southampton with a couple in other parts of the Diocese. Despite the challenges in the sector around recruitment, retention and funding, all settings remain viable and sustainable offering a high quality of care and support to children and their families.

Winchester School of Mission review

In March we received a report from a Group that had been tasked with reviewing the Winchester School of Mission. We commissioned this review back in December 2023. Due to the very sensitive nature of the work and the potential negative impact on potential student recruitment in the future, we decided that this work needed to be kept strictly confidential.

The Group was led by Revd Dr Jonathan Rowe, and supported by Revd Rachel Noel, Revd Professor Liz Stuart, Revd Ian Dighe' and Professor Keith Fox. We are incredibly grateful for the huge amount of time, expertise, and pastoral care that they brought to this process. The Group's Report was presented to us in March, where it was unanimously approved.

The Group concluded the following:

'We found a great deal to commend in WSM. The diocese is blessed with a very highly qualified, experienced and capable staff. They are an exceptionally talented team, which has been working hard in very difficult circumstances.

The review concludes that four issues, in particular, require attention. First, the absence of strategic direction for the diocese as a whole has had a negative effect upon the work of WSM, causing systemic uncertainty and lack of direction. Second, the governance of WSM has been weak. Third, there is no direct episcopal strategic leadership for mission and ministry. Fourth, the sustainability of the current Licensed Ministry Training hub is uncertain due to the national context for funding theological education, the requirement to provide a diverse learning context, and the need to retain excellent staff.'

There were 13 recommendations arising from the report, some of a technical operational nature. We would however like to draw Synods attention to the following:

- The WSM will be renamed the Diocesan Mission & Ministry Team
- The Bishop of Southampton be designated as the strategic episcopal lead for mission and ministry within the diocese, to include oversight of the Team.
- A new Diocesan Mission and Ministry Council (DMCC) be created to provide governance and oversight of the work of mission, training, formation and ministerial development in the diocese.
- The role of Director of Ministry cease to exist. The post of Head of Mission & Ministry be created to coordinate the Department for Mission & Ministry.
- Investigate with partner Theological Training Institutes the potential for establishing a Local Licensed Ministry Training hub within the Diocesan Team.

These recommendations are now being actioned. We would like to record our sincere gratitude to the members of the Team for the professional and gracious manner in which they have engaged in this process despite the inherent risks and uncertainties for them personally.

We are also delighted to share that our former Dean of Licensed Ministry Training, Amy Roche, has accepted the post of Head of Mission & Ministry. She will be working closely with the new Bishop of Southampton (once appointed) and the Diocesan Secretary in implementing these changes and helping to shape the culture and vision of the Team. Further details will be shared in due course, including a slot at the next Clergy Breakfast Briefings.

Diocesan Office Move to Old Alresford Place

On 3 June, Old Alresford Place will reopen as the home of our Diocesan Team. The renovations and improvement work to the building have been a substantial yet important project. We would like to record our sincere thanks to the Project Group who have overseen all the works and office move arrangements.

There will inevitably be some disruption for members of the Diocesan Team during this period of relocation. We are grateful to all the staff for their understanding and professionalism in ensuring this move will be a success.

It remains our hope that Old Alresford Place will become a welcoming centre for diocesan life, with accessible facilities for all.

Housing Review

Work on implementing our decision to outsource clergy housing to a third party has been continuing at pace. After significant detailed work, it has been agreed that we will be partnering with Savills for an initial 3-year period. Contracts are currently being reviewed by our legal advisers and we anticipate the work will transfer in early July.

We are aware that implementing a change of this magnitude in an area of such importance to our clergy and their families inevitable comes with a level of risk. A significant communications plan is place to help all our clergy households adapt to this change as easily as possible.

We would however ask that everyone approaches the next few months with a degree of understanding and pragmatism as we work through any initial challenges in process and communication.

That aside, we remain excited for this new way of working which we hope and pray will ensure we can invest in our clergy homes to the level they require.

Winchester Deanery Motion on Rest Periods for Office Holders

In March 2023, Synod will recall that Winchester Deanery proposed a motion seeking to amend clergy terms of service to clarify and encourage the weekly rest periods for all clergy. We have just been informed that this motion will now appear as business for the July 2024 General Synod session.

Routine Business & Financial Monitoring

The Bishop's Council has continued to address more routine and operational business as well during this period. This has included mission & pastoral work and monitoring our finances.

We have been concerned to note that our Common Mission Fund contributions for 2024 in both percentage and cash terms are significantly behind 2023 year to date. When we recommended to Synod that CMF for 2024 should be reduced by £700k it was on the understanding and expectation that all our parishes would prioritise CMF contributions to help fund our shared ministry. At the end of April, over 40 PCC had given nothing towards the CMF.

Cost control within the Diocesan Team is very strong, but this cannot mitigate the substantial shortfall in our income. We have therefore scheduled time for our September meeting to look at this in more detail and consider if contingency plans and changes to our 3 Year Financial Plan need to be proposed.

We remain of the view that further cuts will not lead to growth, but without all our PCCs striving to meet their commitment to one another we may face some difficult choices in the future.

May 2024