



QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDERS

Diocesan Synod November 2024

Each questioner is entitled to ask two supplementary questions at the meeting. These will all be recorded and shared with Synod members.

Michael Minton, Christchurch Deanery

1. To the Diocesan Secretary

Further to the response to my question at the June Synod concerning the possibility of amending the Mem & Arts of the WDBF and the intention to bring proposals to the synod that would make Diocesan Synod members of the Company, I recognize your caveat that bringing this to the November meeting could not be guaranteed due to other priorities. Is there still an intention to bring it forward to the March meeting? Would that enable a special AGM in time for the annual report and accounts in June?

Response from the Diocesan Secretary:

As returning members of Synod will recall following the discussion and vote in November 2023, the Diocesan Synod has now approved this change in principle. It is therefore for the Directors of the WDBF to approve the amended Mem & Arts. I hope to achieve this in the first quarter of 2025.

2. To the Diocesan Secretary

Response to Diocesan Budget Challenges.

In September 2023 at the Zoom meeting on the three-year budget, I drew attention to paragraph 44 of the background paper and the call to action. Three years ago, the Christchurch Deanery asked for a concerted publicity campaign to develop a program for income generation other than looking to pew members to be more generous. Walking the Wessex Way encourages all parishes/ benefices to develop growth plans. I believe The Church must look to develop greater awareness in our communities of the positive benefits that their local church brings.

Now that there is a new communications team in the Diocese, can we work together to develop a campaign, both internally and externally focused, to share all the good work in our parishes and present this to our communities, showing what would be missed if their church had to close? There is also a great potential for daily use of our church buildings by the wider community to bring in revenue, particularly to offset maintenance and utility bills. Some churches have become Community Centres for activities all week. Can we gather together information to help other churches do the same?

Some churches also have antennae in their towers for broadband and mobile phone companies. With good internet connections, streaming services for baptisms, weddings, and funerals can bring in extra revenue as well as connecting more closely with their areas.

The paper calls for action to achieve growth. This will come when the local community is involved with us in developing fellowship and common purpose. Our churches should seek to be part of neighbourhood and local district plans.

Response from the Diocesan Secretary:

I am grateful to Michael for his engagement with this issue and the need for creative thinking in how to respond to our financial challenges.

The difficulty with launching a diocesan wide fundraising and marketing campaign of the nature you propose is that the Church of England operates a dispersed fundraising model, where each local community (benefice or parish) is supported in generating funds and income. This means that we do not have a large, centralised fundraising and marketing team at a Diocesan level that most charities of our size would expect to have. Most Charities in the UK will spend substantial percentages of their annual budget on fundraising initiatives (between 12% and 39% depending on which study you read). To launch a fundraising campaign of the nature you suggest would require significant investment and resource to do to a standard that would have any sort of impact.

Any marketing and fundraising campaign of this nature would need to start with a monumental programme of education to our wider communities to explain why our parishes needed money. For those outside the Church, we are viewed as an exceptionally wealthy institution. Regular reports around the Church Commissioners £10.6bn of funds, images of all our Cathedrals, Palaces and Churches give the relentless message to the general population that the CofE is wealthy. Trying to explain to people that parishes and dioceses do not receive funding from the Commissioners (or even the government) would be a never-ending task.

Michael has identified that there are many excellent examples of PCCs using their facilities and buildings to reach out into their communities both to serve the Common Good and to generate some income. Our Parish Support Team continues to highlight these ideas encouraging others to engage wherever possible. The recent pilot for installing EV Charing points in Church car parks is an excellent example of this. With all these however, our Team are very careful to help identify which opportunities will work best in which context. My sense is that parishes that are not using their facilities and buildings to generate income and are not engaging in community life and plans are now likely to be a minority across our diocese and the wider country.

These are of course only my views and reflections, and Synod may feel differently. I would therefore encourage Michael to bring this proposal to synod as either a Deanery Synod motion or a Private Members Motion so that Synod's mind on this can be tested.

Simon Butler, Odiham Deanery

3. To the Diocesan Secretary

In the minutes of the June synod meeting it was noted that a relatively small proportion of diocesan spend in the 23/24 budget was focussed around Children and Young People, but that an aspiration was made to see this begin to increase in the 24/25 budget. Can the Diocesan secretary comment on whether this increase has been achieved and if so in what particular ways will this additional money be spent to develop ministry with and to children and young people.

Response from the Diocesan Secretary:

Earlier this year the Bishop's Staff Team commissioned a Working Party to generate proposals for a diocesan strategy for children and young people. This has been coordinated by the Director of Education, Jeff Williams. We are deeply grateful for those practitioners, volunteers and clergy who have fed into this process so far.

As Simon and other members of Synod will be aware due to other items on this agenda, diocesan finances since June have not been in a good position due to the substantial shortfalls in CMF income. As such our capacity to start investing in new work is limited to non-existent.

As such, we are clear that new investment in this vital area, will need to come from new sources of funding. Early next year, we hope to start a programme of major consultation across our diocese to discern and design our next application to the Strategic Mission & Ministry Investment Board. We fully expect that a large percentage of this funding application will need to be focused on resourcing our benefices and parishes to engage with children, families and young people.

I should also note (as it was mentioned at the June Synod meeting), that we should not forget the £500k we spend each year on our work with our 100 Church of England schools, and the 30k+ children who attend them.

David Josey, Basingstoke Deanery

4. To the Diocesan Secretary

What are your performance statistics for the DAC for the previous year? The statistics I am looking for include:

- Number of outstanding applications at start of year
- Ditto end of year
- Number of previous applications not resolved during the year
- Average time to resolve all applications

I would expect you to also have these stats for specific headings, such as church heating applications.

Response from the Diocesan Secretary:

The last annual written report from the DAC to Diocesan Synod was shared in March this year and is still available to download from our website.

<https://winchester.anglican.org/governance/resources-from-previous-meetings-of-diocesan-synod/>

As the report notes, providing statistics for this area of work is not an easy task. All applications to the DAC (just under 300 a year) are submitted through the Online Faculty Portal operated by the national Church. This is now a legal requirement. This system does not include much functionality for reporting and monitoring the sort of performance data David has requested.

The average time to resolve applications is dependent on many factors many of which are beyond the control of the DAC Secretary or the DAC itself. A parish may start uploading a new case on the system but not actually finalise it for many months. Applications for List B permission (minor works) can sometimes be turned around in a week. Large applications for major rebuild or highly complex projects rightly and necessarily will take many months or even years to complete as the DAC Team work with the PCC to refine proposals.

Often a single faculty application will cover multiple types of work at once so separating them into specific headings is again not a functionality that is easy to assess.

If PCCs ever have concerns over the processing of their application, please do encourage them to raise this with the Team, their Archdeacon, or the Assistant Diocesan Secretary (Parish Support).

Sarah Yetman, Bournemouth Deanery

5. To the Bishop of Winchester

What is your vision and hope for Diocesan Synod over the next term? What does a meaningful contribution look like?

Response from the Bishop of Winchester

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to this invitation at the beginning of the new Synod's term of office.

Since my arrival in Winchester last year, I have been developing a vision for the future of the Diocese in "Walking the Wessex Way." This document is deliberately invitational, seeking to recognise the exceptional work that is already happening across the whole Diocese, and offering a framework within which we might all – at every 'level' of the Diocese - recognise and develop our own distinct contribution.

It has long been my belief that the most important work of ministry takes place in our parishes, chaplaincies and schools. Synod cannot do that work in their stead, but has a key role in ensuring that they are properly supported in all that they do.

Equally, Synod has a role that is distinct from Bishop's Council, whose members, as the Trustees of the Winchester Diocesan Board of Finance (WDBF), have specific and significant responsibilities in law as charity trustees.

Nonetheless, Diocesan Synod has a very significant role to play in its own right in:

- **Legislation, handling matters that come down from General Synod (and indeed taking matters to Synod: see below)**
- **Approving the budget of the WDBF**
- **Acting as a forum for shaping and developing the mission and ministry of the Diocese.**

It is this last that I particularly wish to stress. Diocesan Synod has a wonderful opportunity to collaborate wisely and prayerfully in helping the Diocese of Winchester to be the best it can be, and I hope in this next season we will take full advantage of that, eschewing the politicisation and polarisation that characterises much of public life (including the Church, sadly) and seeking instead to make common cause together for the common good and for the Kingdom of God.

We already have a perfect example of how that might happen. Earlier this year, General Synod passed a motion about clergy working hours, which was initiated by this Synod. This is Synodical Governance working at its best, with local clergy and lay people finding practical ways to ensure that a commitment to clergy wellbeing is not just about words, but action too.

My invitation to this new Synod is to be prepared to contribute positively and to work together, recognising that we are all part of a bigger picture as we share the good news of God's kingdom with those who most need it.

6. To the Diocesan Secretary

At the recent Southern breakfast briefing, Archdeacon Jean mentioned that the Diocesan maternity policy could be improved. Who is responsible for keeping policies up to date and fit for purpose – and where does this sit within our Diocesan governance responsibilities? Are there any other policies which are falling through the gaps like this one?

Response from the Diocesan Secretary:

Our clergy maternity policy is actually one of the most generous in the country, offering full stipend for 12 months. This has been in place for at least 11 years.

What needed improvement is the information on our website. Unfortunately, when our new site was launched a draft of an old document was inadvertently added to the page. When the recent 'Clergy Babies Maternity Policy Audit' of all diocesan websites was undertaken by an independent group this mistake came to light. We have now taken steps to correct it on the site.

It may interest Synod to know that last month I wrote to national colleagues expressing my personal view that the current approach of 'guidance' being issued to all Dioceses for these types of welfare and support policies for clergy and lay ministers is outdated and unhelpful.

Whilst giving each diocese and bishop power to decide their own interpretation of these policies might seem permissive and open, in practice it leads to a confused postcode lottery across the country. Maintaining and reviewing 42 separate versions of such policies feels like a waste of resource at a time when all dioceses are struggling.

The responsibility and governance for Diocesan and WDBF policies depends on the nature and content of the policy, and where the ‘authority’ comes from i.e. secular legislation, Charity Commission, Ecclesiastical Legislation, National Church Guidance etc.

Most ‘operational’ policies for the WDBF are ultimately my responsibility as Chief Operating Officer (delegated from the Board of Directors), although I rely on the expertise and specialist knowledge on my Heads of Department to advise on changes and adaptations.

Educational policies fall under the remit of the Portsmouth & Winchester Diocesan Board of Education. Safeguarding Policies are reviewed by the Independent Safeguarding Board in light of guidance and legislation issued by the national Church. Financial management policies (including investments, risk management etc.) are kept under review by the Diocesan Finance Committee and Directors of the Board of Finance.

Ministry policies (i.e. those relating to clergy and lay ministers’ wellbeing, support, training etc.) are less clear cut. They fall between the episcopal authority of the bishop, national church ‘guidance’ but with the WDBF having to approve the financial/resource impact. At present some of these policies are ‘owned’ by our HR Team, others by the Bishop’s Office, and others by the Mission & Ministry Team.

The remit of the new *Mission & Ministry Council* includes keeping all such policies under review, making recommendations to the appropriate parties for changes and improvements as deemed necessary. It is our hope that this innovation will provide a consistent and robust approach to reviewing all policies in a coherent manner.

Whilst writing, it is also worth advising Synod that I have recently requested the HR & Safeguarding Director to review our maternity policy for WDBF employees. This has historically been far from generous and does not, I believe, align with our values as an organisation. The Team is currently researching options for us to present to the Bishop’s Council in the New Year.