

BISHOP'S COUNCIL & STANDING COMMITTEE

Update for Diocesan Synod March 2025

This note summarises the recent work and decisions of the Bishop's Council & Standing Committee (BCSC) since November 2024 and is shared with the Diocesan Synod for information. Synod will be invited to raise questions at the meeting.

The new Bishop's Council took up their roles in January 2025, and have met twice since then.

New Triennium

A key element of the Bishop's Council's role is to nominate and appoint people to the range of sub-committees, boards and panels that make up the diocesan governance structures. These are vital roles for ensuring appropriate expertise, experience, insight, and oversight is provided across all that we do.

The BCSC are deeply grateful to all those who have volunteered their time and wisdom to support our ministry and mission in this way. For some of our groups, we have been overwhelmed with qualified candidates – 17 people stood for the Racial Justice forum for example. In other areas we would benefit from more volunteers being willing to offer their time. In particular, we are keen to appoint a beneficed member of clergy to our Diocesan Finance Committee. We feel it is vital to have the perspective of an incumbent/PiC when looking at our diocesan finances. If anyone is interested please do speak with any member of the Committee, the Diocesan Secretary or your Archdeacon.

Mem & Arts of the WDBF

In January the Directors of the WDBF approved changes to the Mem & Arts of the WDBF. The main change was to make the membership of Diocesan Synod the 'Company Members' of the WDBF. This means that from now on the Annual General Meeting of the WDBF will be held at a Diocesan Synod meeting, giving members the chance to review the accounts formally, and be responsible for appointing our auditors etc.

These changes have previously been shared with Diocesan Synod with overwhelming support for the change. It is hoped that this approach will help ensure our different strands of governance remain united.

Strategic Mission & ministry Investment Bid

Those members of Synod who were able to attend the meetings of the Houses last month, will have seen the early ideas for our next bid to the national Strategic Mission & Ministry Investment Board.

The BCSC spent some time considering these proposals and, whilst noting that all the ideas are still at a very early stage, gave their support to a diocesan wide consultation process to begin.

This was subsequently launched last week, and we are grateful for all those who are engaging in the process.

Dioceses Commission: Consultation on post of Bishop of Basingstoke

With the up coming departure of Bishop David, the future of the See of Basingstoke is automatically reviewed by the Dioceses Commission – a national committee tasked with reviewing the structure and number of Dioceses and associated number of bishops.

If a diocese wishes to replace a vacant suffragan post, an application has to be submitted to the Commission for consideration. Due to the timings of the announcements and the Commissions meetings, it was not possible to bring this application to Diocesan Synod. It was therefore reviewed and considered by the BCSC in their capacity as Standing Committee of Diocesan Synod instead.

The BCSC gave their full support to the request for the role to be retained, and an application was submitted last month. We now await the decision of the Commission.

Finance Consultations

At their November meeting, Diocesan Synod approved the Diocesan Finance consultation process, including a request to begin a diocesan wide consultation with our 13 deaneries.

This process began last month, with volunteer from the Diocesan Finance Committee giving presentations across our deaneries. At the time of writing, 6 deaneries have held consultation meetings providing comments, feedback and reflections. These are being collated and will be reviewed by the Finance Committee, Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod later this year.

We are deeply grateful to all members of the Finance Committee for their time in leading this process, and to our Deanery Synods for making space for us to join them.

Clergy Stipends 2025

In March, the BCSC considered proposals for the annual increase in clergy stipends (that comes in to effect from 1 April each year). In our three-year financial plan, it was agreed that we should always aspire to align with the national recommended increase in Clergy Stipends Benchmark. This was set at 3% of 2025 and was therefore adopted by the BCSC for our diocese.