

Walking the Wessex Way

Diocesan Strategic Mission & Ministry Development Plan 2025

Motion

Diocesan Synod will be invited to vote for the following motion at our meeting on 1 July 2025:

*This Synod, in taking note of Bishop Philip's invitational vision for our diocesan community:
'Walking the Wessex Way,' commends the Diocesan Strategic Mission & Ministry Development Plan, as summarised in paper DS 25/13*

Introduction

1. This report is offered to update Diocesan Synod on the development and design of our Strategic Mission and Ministry Development Plan (development plan) following the last 4 months of consultation, discernment, prayer and research. *Members are encouraged to remind themselves of the last update to Synod – paper DS 25/05.*
2. At its meeting on the 9 June the Bishop Council & Standing Committee passed the following resolution unanimously:

'The BCSC commends the Strategic Mission & Ministry Development Plan to Diocesan Synod, and requests that the Diocesan Secretary and the Bishop's Staff Team work with national colleagues in the Vision & Strategy Team to finalise plans and proposals.

The Bishop's Council request that if any significant changes are required that would substantially change the nature of the draft proposals, that these be brought back to them for further consideration.'

3. In light of this decision, we are now seeking a similar commendation and endorsement from Diocesan Synod to enable us to proceed in submitting a formal application for around £10.8m of funding from the CofE's Diocesan Investment Programme for the first 4 years of our Development Plan. This application will need to be submitted in 'final draft' form by September, in advance of the Board meeting in December.

Changes following Feedback

4. Back in February when we opened the consultation process for our next bid, we said the following:

"We do this in a spirit of openness and humility, with the only certainty being that our plans will develop and improve because of this process of consultation and shared discernment."

5. As we approach the end of this process, we are delighted that this prediction has been correct. Our plans have been tested, challenged, improved and affirmed – growing in detail, depth and focus due to the comments and responses we have received. We are so grateful for all those that have taken time to engage and prayerfully reflect on how we can improve.

6. Since BCSC last reviewed these plans, the following changes and amendments have been made in light of feedback received through BCSC, BST and Synod.
7. First BST recommend that the **names of the Health & Vitality Categories** are changed as follows. The BST reviewed a number of suggested category names submitted by various people but ultimately felt the following gave a simple and sensitive summary:

Original	Proposed
Flourishing	Flourishing
Healthy but...	Steady
Struggling	Vulnerable
In need of review	Fragile

8. Second, we have begun conversations with The Interim Dean to consider how the **Cathedral** can play a full part in the process going forward, acting as both a resource and participant in the development plan. Details are yet to be worked through, but the desire for engagement is clear. We are hoping to bring an item to a future Diocesan Synod on the role of the Mother Church in our diocese.
9. Third, our plans have been adapted to make '**growing younger**' a much clearer and more intentional priority throughout all our plans, projects and processes. Due to the nature of the bid, we are not seeking to be prescriptive for how this will be delivered, but to ensure it is a constant consideration in all discussions, objectives and planning. We are also currently exploring suitable models and funding for some form of strategic youth, children & families lead role for our diocese.
10. Fourth, we have chosen to change the name of the Serving Southampton project to '**Believing in Southampton**'. This will have the dual purpose of showing the strong link and shared framework with the two urban projects, whilst also avoiding some unfortunate initials.
11. Next, we need to be clearer about the potential role for those parishes and benefices in our diocese that already have significant missional strength - including our network of **resource churches**. We are actively engaging with such parishes to consider examples and options for how they might support both Believing in Southampton & Bournemouth (BiS&B), and The Benefice Development Programme. Thanks to previous funding from SDF to grow and develop our Resource Churches, their missional strength is high, and they are eager to engage and support our wider diocesan mission. As always, any partnership interventions from our Resource Churches or other large parishes will be offered in the spirit of partnership not imposition.
12. Finally, the BST have reviewed the size and nature of the **Mission Teams for BiS&B** seeking to balance capacity with funding constraints. As such we are recommending that each project should be led by a full-time project lead (possibly an area deans in each deanery with additional support).

Decision Making Process

13. Due to the iterative way we must design these plans with national colleagues, we wish to be transparent that some of the detailed elements will need to adapt in light of feedback and direction from the Vision & Strategy Team (wording of targets, timescales, budget allocations etc.) As the Bishop's Council's resolution makes clear, if this feedback requires substantial and significant changes that impact on the nature and design of the Development Plan then we will return the proposals to them for further consideration.
14. We therefore wish to be clear that we are not asking (and cannot ask) Diocesan Synod to approve the full detail of the bid and application. Instead, we are seeking Synod's endorsement and commendation for the approach and overarching design of the Development Plan. A strong vote in favour of the plans from our Synod will be a vital for our application to be considered positively.
15. It is likely that the full submission to the Strategic Mission & Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) will be over 80 pages of documents, spreadsheets and slides. These will be formatted inline with their required framework and processes.
16. As we work through the drafts of these plans with national colleagues, we need to retain the ability to adapt some details

Key elements of the Development plan

17. In recognition of this somewhat nuanced role of Synod in this process, we invite members to read the (current draft) of **Appendix 1** which offers an overview of our Development Plan and its links to our wider strategy. This is still in draft form, and will continue to be refined and developed but we believe it offers a clear overview of the plans we have been discussing and refining together over the last 4 months.
18. This is the first of 11 separate appendices to our application that the SMMIB requires us to complete. The full list of these is as follows:
 - a. Appendix 1: Mission Strategy
 - b. Appendix 2: Missional Design
 - c. Appendix 3: Health & Vitality Analysis
 - d. Appendix 4: Strategic People Plan
 - e. Appendix 5: Programme Budget
 - f. Appendix 6: Strategic Financial Plan
 - g. Appendix 7: Stakeholder Engagement & Communication Plan
 - h. Appendix 8: Outcome Framework
 - i. Appendix 9: Programme Risk Register
 - j. Appendix 10: Programme Governance Structure
 - k. Appendix 11: Programme Delivery Plan
19. The current draft of **Appendix 6** has also been shared with Synod for information and context.

20. At present, we believe our total bid will be in the region of £10.8m for 4 years, with further funding expected to be sought to be provided through other external fundraising and use of DBF funds. It is our intention, that we would then seek to return to the SMMIB in 2028 for further funding to support the next 6 years of the plan – adapting and updating our plans in light of all that we will learn over the first 4 years.

Proposal

21. In light of the commendation from Bishop's Council we invite Diocesan Synod to vote on the following motion, enabling the Diocesan Secretary and Bishop's Staff Team to submit our bid to the Strategic Mission & Ministry Investment Board:

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June 25