

Bishop's Council & Standing Committee

Update to Diocesan Synod October 2025

This note summarises the recent work and decisions of the Bishop's Council & Standing Committee (BCSC) since June 2025 and is shared with the Diocesan Synod for information. Synod will be invited to raise questions at the meeting.

The Bishop's Council has met twice since their last update.

This paper does not include reference to items on the Synod's agenda that have come through the Bishop's Council.

Appointment of new Auditors

1. The DBFs of Winchester and Portsmouth agree to appoint the same auditors for our respective charitable companies due to our shared finance function. Our practice has been to carry out a full review and tender process every three years. Our current Auditors, HaysMac were reappointed at the last tender process, completing audits for the 2022, 2023 and 2024 year ends.
2. Over the last few months we have therefore been working with our colleagues in Portsmouth to run a full audit tender process for the two DBFs. A joint working party of employees and trustees ran this process, before reporting back to their respective Finance Committees and Boards of Directors.
3. 6 firms were invited to tender, and 3 applications were received. Each firm submitted an audit proposal in advance, and then attended Old Alresford Place to meet with the Working Group. They each gave a 15 minute presentation before responding to questions from the group for around 30 minutes.
4. Following this process a unanimous recommendation was made that the two DBFs appoint Crowe UK as their new auditors for three years, commencing with the 2026 Year End.
<https://www.crowe.com/uk>
5. The Directors of the DBF hope that this change of auditors will provide a chance for a fresh perspective in assessing our financial management processes and operations. Crowe have a number of other DBF clients already and are therefore well versed in Church accounting and finances.

Safeguarding Update

6. In November the BCSC received their annual update from the Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Panel, Mr David Pryde.

7. Mr Pryde updated members on the current work of the Safeguarding Panel and Team. In particular he noted the Panels gratitude for the increased staffing resource provided to the Safeguarding Team in the last 12 months, and the work to prepare for our next Safeguarding Audit (with the Cathedral) due in 2027.
8. The Safeguarding context remains challenging with constantly evolving needs and priorities across the country. Ongoing national discussions around the future of Church Safeguarding

St Luke's Stanmore

9. In September, the Board reviewed proposals for the redevelopment of the site of St Luke's Church in Stanmore (Winchester Deanery) and the rebuild of the Church at a new location more central to the parish and community.
10. This project has been under discussion for many years due to major structural defects within the current Church building that make ongoing repairs economically unviable.
11. The Board were excited to see the plans that were developing that had grown out of a combination of local vision, supported by expertise from the national CofE team, and a trusted developer. As well as the rigour of the technical, architectural and financial proposals, the depth of a clear theological vision and rationale for the proposals was inspiring and encouraging.
12. Due to the structure of the development deal, the project is expected to be fully funded without any need to call on wider diocesan funds. Members of the Diocesan Team are working with the PCC and wider Project Team to provide support as the exciting plans start to become a reality over the coming years.

BCSC
October 2025