

DS XXX

**Minutes of a meeting
of
Blackburn Diocesan Synod**

15 July 2017

Present

3 Members of the House of Bishops
34 Members of the House of Clergy
36 Members of the House of Laity

Apologies

13 Members of the House of Clergy
7 Members of the House of Laity

Welcome

Canon Simon Cox, Chair of the House of Clergy welcomed members of Diocesan Synod to the meeting.

Opening Prayer and General Synod Report

Opening prayer was conducted by Bishop Julian with a reading from St Paul's Letter to the Romans.

Bishop Julian then updated Diocesan Synod on the following recent events within the Diocese.

Bishops House hosted a week of events within a marquee in the garden during June. Just over 500 people were welcomed as a thank you for their work in the Diocese including clergy, clergy families, retired PTOs, head teachers and Mothers' Union members.

The Bishop's Leadership Team attended a fun evening at Whalley Abbey on Thursday 13 July to celebrate Bishop Geoff's retirement which included dinner and present giving.

Commendation has been received for Stage 1 of our Outer Estates Part 1 application for funding to the Church Commissioners and Bishop Julian thanked Mr Champness for his hard work. Stage 2 of the application will be submitted in November and will include greater detail. If this is successful, funding will be made available for the project early in 2018. Two further applications are also in progress.

The Dioceses Commission has granted permission for a new Bishop of Lancaster. It is hoped that expressions of interest will be invited in September followed by shortlisting in October and interviews in November. Potentially, the successful applicant could be consecrated in February 2018 and take up post at Easter, although the timetable is a draft and may change.

The motion which emerged from Blackburn Diocesan Synod regarding greater provision for transgender people was presented by Rev Chris Newlands at General Synod in early July. An amendment was tabled to remove the word 'liturgy' and a report was requested but the amendment fell in all three houses. The original motion was approved on individuals voting and the outcome will be made public in a few weeks' time.

Mrs Sue Taylor, ^{of the voting} who has worked as Bishop's Secretary for 14 years has announced she will be retiring at the end of October. Bishop Julian gave thanks for her service.

Following the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London, a dinner with Muslim and Christian leaders took place at Bishop's House. The group will aim to continue to meet three times a year.

Bishop Geoff attended a church planting conference in June. Vision 2026 is nurturing new growth which is encouraging.

A workshop led by Bishop Philip with estate churches has taken place in Lower Darwen. This was attended by a significant number of people and was a good opportunity for networking and sharing of best practice.

Senior staff have been involved in three difficult meetings to help produce the proposed 2018 budget which will be presented at the next Synod. Finances are still an uphill struggle and Bishop Julian stressed the importance of prayer.

The new diocesan website is now live. It is more user friendly and a huge improvement in comparison with the old one. It can be found at the same web address as previously.

Standing orders were suspended.

Diocesan Synod meeting as members of the Blackburn Diocesan Board of Finance Limited

The Annual General Meeting of the Blackburn Diocesan Board of Finance followed.

Annual General Meeting

1. To Review the Report and Accounts of the Company to 31 December 2016 (DS 950)

Canon John Dell, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance presented the Report and Accounts for the year to 31 December 2016.

The new auditors had given the accounts an unqualified report and he thanked Mrs Ruth McGaughey, Mrs Mila Farnhill and the Finance Team for their support not only in preparing the accounts but also for their support throughout the year. He also thanked Mr Nick Aves, the Vice Chair of the Board and Chair of the Finance Committee, Canon Graeme Pollard and all the members of the DBF and its Sub-Committees for their contribution towards the financial management and financial security of the Diocese.

The accounts and Trustees' Report had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee as well as the Finance Committee and had been approved by the Directors. The headline figures in the Statement of Financial Activity (SOFA) on page 22 of the Annual Report included:

- An increase in income by £152,000.

The movements were in Parish Share income which increased by £230,000 and Investment Income which increased by £105,000. These were offset by a reduction in Other Income of £126,000, which relates to a reduced gains on disposal of fixed assets and increased insurance recoveries (mainly related to the flood at Whalley Abbey).

- An increase in expenditure by £600,000.

The increase in the costs of raising funds of £106,000 mainly relates to expenditure following the flood at Whalley Abbey allocated to the business use of the Abbey.

The increase in charitable activities of £494,000, is split between:

- contributions to the Archbishop's Council of £57,000,
 - parish ministry costs of £180,000 (the notable figure being Community Centre Impairment of £262,000 and £257,000 in proceeds from the sale of fixed assets received last year),
 - support for ministry (which includes the departments) at £128,000 (this includes the remainder of the costs of the Whalley Abbey flooding, again covered by insurance),
 - the grant to the DBE which increased by £48,000 and
 - an increase in expenditure on diocesan projects by £81,000 relating to grants to parishes.
- The unrealised gain in investments across all the funds was £1.024m and on land £74,000; a significant amount of this was within the endowment funds.
 - The defined benefit pension schemes showed a gain of £734,000.
 - The net movement of funds showed an increased figure of £2.8m as reflected on the Balance Sheet.
 - The funds remaining at the end of the year in excess of the 3 to 6 months' reserves policy have been designated to be used in support of Vision 2026. The funds should assist in attracting significant funding from the Church Commissioners towards high priority initiatives over the next few years.
 - There was a slight decrease in Parish Share collection in 2016, with a collection rate of 89.8% compared with 90.0% in 2015. This level of collection remains the greatest financial challenge facing the Diocese, linking to the still fragile financial state of many of the parishes.

Canon Dell then highlighted some of the DBF's achievements during the year. Fuller details of the achievements can be found on pages 10 and 11 of the Annual Report.

During 2016 the DBF planned to:

- meet existing commitments to support the ministry of the Diocese of Blackburn and to respond to any new needs as they arose,
- finish the consultation on Vision 2026, receive approval from Diocesan Synod and develop the concepts of the 13 strategic priorities of the Vision and
- give a call to prayer to the Diocese for Vision 2026.

During the year, the DBF:

- paid clergy stipends and provided for the housing requirements of the clergy,
- continued to meet with and offer support to parishes which are not paying their allocated quota of share,
- supported parishes in their mission aspirations by offering grant and loan support towards appropriate mission-based projects,
- allocated to each of the Vision 2026 key initiatives a sponsoring bishop and key members of the Bishop's Leadership Team to lead the work with volunteers and other diocesan officers. In January 2016, they appointed a Vision 2026 Co-ordinator part funded by Church Commissioners,
- undertook six Call to Prayer events across the Diocese which were attended by almost 900 people in order to engage directly with Vision 2026,
- participated in the National Church Peer Review initiative.

The Annual Report also sets out the many ways in which the Diocesan Departments supported the Vision 2026 Strategies during the year.

Questions were then invited from Synod but none were received.

Canon Dell moved that "the summary Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Diocesan Board of Finance for the year ending 31 December 2016 be received".

Members of Synod voted **unanimously in favour** and the motion was **carried**.

2. Appointment of Auditors

Canon Dell moved that "haysmacintyre be appointed as auditors to the company".

Members of Synod voted **unanimously in favour** and the motion was **carried**.

Bishop Julian announced that Canon Dell plans to step down in 2018 following the July Diocesan Synod after serving on the Board for 14 years. It is hoped that a successor can be found and be in position in time to participate in the 2019 budget formation process. More details will be circulated in due course.

Mrs Jaqueline Stamper (General Synod and Blackpool and Morecambe Deanery) explained that she had been involved in the national peer review process as a panel member. She thanked the Finance Team for the quality of the accounts and support provided.

Standing orders were reinstated

Meeting as Synod

3. The Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education Annual Report and Accounts (DS 951)

Mr Stephen Whittaker, Director of Education, presented the Report and Accounts for the year to 31 December 2016.

The auditors had given an unqualified report on the accounts. Mr Whittaker thanked the Finance Team for their hard work.

The work undertaken by the Board of Education during 2016 included the following:

Schools

- The Understanding Christianity new curriculum resource was launched nationally. As a result, a review and update of the DBE RE syllabus began in 2016 and is continuing. This also affects Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.
- Appointments of Head Teacher and Deputy Head Teacher are still made with references from churches.
- Governor vacancies exist and governor training has been delivered to improve the effectiveness of governors in church schools. There are plans for 2017 to further develop this work and to develop appeals work.
- The Service Level Agreement continues to be bought by the vast majority of church schools although there are approximately eight schools within the Diocese that have chosen not to.

Standards

- The current OFSTED grade in CE Schools within the Diocese at Good and Outstanding is 95.26%.
- The current SIAMS grade in CE Schools within the Diocese at Good and Outstanding is 97.37%.

School Buildings

- Work on place planning and basic need has continued, supporting expansions of church schools.
- £3,854,690 in government funding has been deployed in capital work. The majority of the amount within Blackburn with Darwen was spent on a major dry rot project, leaving the rest of the estate in the borough without support. It is hoped there will be further funding going forward to help.
- The Deputy Director appointment has helped to develop the work in education property significantly following a period of vacancy.

Youth

- For much of the year the Diocesan Youth Advisor role was in vacancy. Mr Ben Green was appointed in January 2017.
- The Youth Committee met and planned the strategic direction of the Youth Advisor role and accountability measures to tie in with the overall strategy of the DBE.
- Confirmation camp was successful with Young Leaders taking a stronger role in the camp than in previous years. This is a model of success that will continue into 2017.

Children

- Under 5s ministry support was significantly developed through the creation of a specific adviser role for the 0-5 age range, paid for by voluntary reduction in time from the children's adviser role.
- Several training days took place as usual, covering items such as puppet ministry.
- The Child Friendly Church Award was revised to match with Vision 2026 priorities.
- The baptism resource pack was produced with Bishop Geoff.

Youth Worker Chaplains

- Following the announcement of an end of funding in March 2018, a number of chaplains have left their role for new employment opportunities. Schools have re-evaluated how they will work to support students, and many have sought to link in with local clergy and developed a chaplaincy coordinator role from within the existing staff.

Higher Education Chaplains

- Work has continued to develop the role on each campus.
- Pastoral ministry remains a key part of the work.
- Some structural advice is given by the chaplains and on some campuses chaplains offer pastoral support for staff as well as students.
- Chaplaincy centres are developing and improving on campus and the profile of the work is increasing.

Finance

- Generally, the Board continued to make reductions to costs.
- DBF funding continues to support the parish work with children and young people.
- None of the Parish Share money goes towards paying for schools. Schools work remains entirely funded through the Service Level Agreement but with statutory duties on admission and governance as yet have no funding stream. This aspect of the business continues to run at a loss that has been reducing over time.
- The implementation of the reserves policy and the reduction in the value of capital work through the Barchester Scheme has led to a surplus in general reserves. This will need careful management given the ongoing revenue shortfall in income over expenditure. The Board will work closely with the Finance Team to ensure the best possible outcome for the extra reserves.

Mr Whittaker then invited questions from Diocesan Synod but none were received.

Mr Whittaker moved that "the summary Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Diocesan Board of Education for the year ending 31 December 2017 be received".

Diocesan Synod voted **unanimously in favour** and the motion was **carried**.

4. Vacancies on Boards and Committees (DS 952)

Diocesan Synod were asked to submit any expressions of interest in the current committee vacancies to Canon Graeme Pollard before 31 August 2017.

Canon Cox encouraged all present to be giving of their time generously in relation to the vacancies.

5. Proclamation of Canons

None.

6. Questions submitted in accordance with Diocesan Synod Standing Orders

None.

7. Motions submitted in accordance with Diocesan Synod Standing Orders

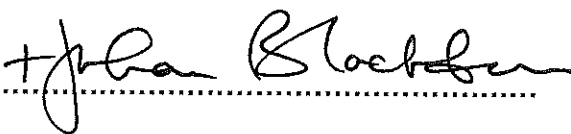
None.

8. Closing Prayer

Bishop Geoff reminded Synod that schools are inspiring places that are hugely important to our kingdom work. He urged all present to ensure efforts are made to make schools feel welcome in local churches. He thanked Mr Whittaker for all his hard work.

The meeting concluded with a blessing and prayers by Bishop Geoff.

The next Diocesan Synod will be held on Saturday 14 October at Preston St Cuthbert, Fulwood.

Signed 

Dated 