

**Minutes of a Meeting
of
Blackburn Diocesan Synod**

held on Saturday 16 October 2021

Present

3 Members of the House of Bishops
48 Members of the House of Clergy
46 Members of the House of Laity

Apologies

6 Members of the House of Clergy
9 Members of the House of Laity

1. Introduction and Welcome

The meeting was chaired by **Bishop Julian**, who welcomed Synod members to the meeting. Mrs Lisa Moncur, the new Registrar, and The Hon David Hodge, the new Chancellor, were also welcomed to the meeting.

Bishop Julian announced that Canon Graeme Pollard, Diocesan Secretary, would be retiring after 16 years. The Synod thanked Canon Pollard for his significant contribution over the years.

2. Eucharist

The Eucharist followed with **Bishop Julian** presiding.

3. 2022 Budget

Mr David Barlow, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, presented the proposed Parish Share Budget for 2022.

He explained that any budget includes an element of risk and that risk equals trust and faith. The budget had been prepared in the trust and faith that we are working in partnership with God.

For the past three years the budget had been produced with the future 3-5 years in mind. The Board agreed in 2019 that the maximum increase in the annual budget for the Diocese

as a whole would be restricted to 3% and with the impact of the pandemic, this has been extended to 2024. There would be no increase in budgeted costs for the current year.

It is intended that the Diocese works towards a balanced parish share budget for 2025, without large increases in the parish share request overall, although the impact on individual parishes could be different. The budget is an integral part of this Vision 2026 and the work on Missional and Financial Flourishing.

The budget was produced by the Bishop's Budget Team and was subject to independent scrutiny from the Budget Scrutiny Committee, before it was agreed by the Finance Committee and then approved by the Board for submission to Synod.

Whilst the increase in budget overall was limited to 3% due to the runoff of LICF funding changes introduced in 2019, and changes in the Regular Weekly Attendance figures, plus in some cases a fall in DBF fees paid, a number of parishes received share requests in excess of 3%. Parishes that believe their share request for 2022 is unachievable were invited to contact Mrs Kim Wilkinson at Clayton House to arrange a Parish Share meeting.

The key elements of the budget are:

1. The budget deficit, estimated at some £490k will increase by £300k or so if the Parish Share collection rate stays at circa 89%. However, over the past few years the actual outturn for the year had generally been better than estimated due to cost control and investment growth.
2. The budget is prepared taking into account forecasts over a 3-5-year period and the Board anticipates using some £3.55 million of reserves reducing the unrestricted free reserves by some 30% to the level in the DBF's reserves policy.
3. The Board is working towards a balanced Parish Share Budget in 2025, without recourse to significant increases in share request year on year and had again agreed to limit the overall increase in budget to 3% a year for the next three years.
4. To assist parishes the Board also anticipates that the Share Support Fund, used to help parishes who engage with the Board, will be reduced by 1% a year from 2023 from its current level of 8% to 5% in 2025.
5. Our position has been helped by a robust investment performance over a number of years and investments will be reviewed regularly to ensure that we are able to continue supporting parish ministry and if necessary, maintain the successful initiatives enabled by National Church Strategic Funding.
6. Following a discussion at the last Board meeting it was felt helpful to allocate £150,000 from DBF reserves to provide transitional relief to help recovering parishes, when a new incumbent is appointed, to a position of being able to pay their parish share request in full. This is in addition to the Parish Share Relief fund and will be found from DBF reserves with no impact on the Parish Share request.
7. The Board had signed up to the national Parish Giving Scheme and a good number of PCCs had already joined the scheme. There will be a formal launch of the Scheme in March 2022.

Mr Barlow thanked the Bishops Budget Team, the Budget Scrutiny Team, Mrs Ruth McGaughey and the Finance Team for their involvement in preparing the budget.

Questions were invited.

Rev Carol Backhouse (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) asked what consideration had been given towards increased repair and fuel costs in parishes.

Mr Barlow replied that this is a deficit budget and without the 3% increase the deficit would grow. He felt it was still appropriate to ask for the increase but to use all resources available to help parishes. The DBF is unable to take into account the circumstances of each individual parish, but struggling parishes should arrange to attend a Parish Share meeting.

Rev Rebecca Aechtner (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) asked why the RWA figures from 2019 were used twice.

Mr Barlow explained that this was because the figures for 2020 had a bigger variance than usual. A formal return was not requested in 2020 because there would be gaps. He again asked parishes with concerns to arrange a Parish Share meeting with representatives from the DBF Board.

Mr David Barlow moved:

“This Synod accepts:

- The 2022 parish share budget with expenditure of £13,200,981 and a projected budget deficit of £493,479 based on a support fund of 8% being sufficient to adjust requested shares.

And is aware the parish share requested has been adjusted by:

- a maximum 3% for those parishes who were capped in 2020 due to the change in allocation of LICF
- changes in the cost of ministry
- the decrease of 1.8% in total Diocesan regular weekly attendance rolling average used in the share calculation using 2019 RWA figures in place of 2020
- individual parish changes of regular weekly attendance.”

Synod voted **in favour** of the motion with the exception of one vote against and no abstentions.

Mr Barlow introduced his paper regarding the Budget Scrutiny Committee and their proposed Terms of Reference.

Questions on the paper were invited.

Mr Tim Cox (Leyland Deanery) commented that members would be appointed rather than elected.

Mr Barlow explained that it had been difficult to obtain members via nominations. Provided that individuals are independent of the budget process, this will strengthen the committee.

Mr David Barlow moved:

“This Synod approves the continuation of the Budget Scrutiny Committee, with the attached Terms of Reference”

Synod voted **unanimously in favour** of the motion.

4. New Education Measure

Canon Stephen Whittaker, Director of Education, presented his report on the New Education Measure.

A new Education Measure had been passed in the summer and as a result, there was a need for a new Charity Scheme. Since the last meeting, a number of amendments had been made to the draft scheme by the Archbishops Council and the final scheme was now presented to Synod for approval.

Questions were invited but none were asked.

Archdeacon David Picken moved:

"Conditional on the proposed scheme being certified by the Archbishop's Council in accordance with s.23(1), the Scheme will be made on the date on the certificate on which the Scheme comes into operation."

The motion was **unanimously approved** by Diocesan Synod.

5. Vision 2026 Update

Mrs Carolyn Barton, Director of Vision Delivery, updated Synod on the latest developments towards Vision 2026 and what would be available over the coming months, and on Missional and Financial Flourishing.

Her presentation is attached.

Questions were invited.

Mrs Joan Kirkwood (Chorley Deanery) asked what is being put in place to help people deal with the management of change and commented on the importance of involving the congregation to ensure sustainability.

Mrs Barton agreed that consultation is vital within our church and community. A 'Change Team' is being drawn together with funding from the National Church to take this forward.

Rev Chris Scargill (Kirkham Deanery) asked how church leaders would be trained.

Bishop Phillip responded that at Emmanuel Theological College, clergy and lay leaders are being trained collaboratively and the aim is to pull lay and clergy leaders together.

Rev James Nash (Preston Deanery) asked who would fund the Change Team when the Central Church funding ceases.

Mrs Barton stressed that the roles are needed now to instigate change. The funding for each role is between 3 and 5 years. However this is just the first phase of the application; there is a bigger question around what the application will look like to National Church next year. It is hoped the next phase will be more focussed on what is happening out in the field.

Mr Barlow stated the posts would be continually reviewed to ensure they are needed and do not impact on parish ministry.

Mr Alan Roadley (Burnley Deanery) commented on the importance of consultation but asked for reassurance that there will be an incentive towards actions.

Mrs Barton explained the first meeting will be with Archdeacons and Area Deans followed by meetings with deaneries and then with parishes. There will not be a full scale deanery review as this takes too long. Whilst other dioceses are cutting clergy numbers, Blackburn Diocese had decided not taken this approach which creates a sense of importance in making a start.

Rev Stephen Cooper (Garstang Deanery) felt that the letter sent out by Bishop Julian did not accord with Mrs Barton's presentation.

Mrs Barton confirmed that this was not the intention and that further information will be available on the Diocesan website shortly.

Bishop Julian confirmed that the direction of travel within Blackburn Diocese is to increase stipendiary clergy and not to reduce them.

6. New Local Congregations

Bishop Jill and Miss Joy Rushton, Being Witness Manager, gave an update on New Local Congregations. The rationale behind this is to bring new life and hope to our parishes. Their presentation is attached.

Bishop Philip spoke about the #BeaconCourse which is aimed at inspiring new local congregations.

Synod then split into small groups to discuss the question: "In your parish, chaplaincy, school, who might be reached with a New Local Congregation?"

Feedback from the discussions was invited.

Prof Richard Carter (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) spoke about the importance of the initiative and how it fits in with everyday faith. There are a lot of resources and examples on the CofE website that can be found by searching for 'everyday faith'.

Rev Paul Bye (Kirkham Deanery) was supportive and asked how the whole church could be included.

Bishop Jill felt that it was important to connect the leaders of smaller groups to ensure they are represented at PCC level.

Canon Andrew Sage (Blackpool Deanery) pointed out that we are already doing many things that are relevant to this through our everyday parish life.

Rev Hugh Scriven (Accrington Deanery) asked how New Local Congregations will tie in with the budget if parishes are assessed on numbers in their community.

Bishop Jill confirmed this is not a tax on growth and that the new communities would not count towards numbers in parishes.

Mrs Joan Kirkwood (Chorley Deanery) spoke about the pop up coffee morning she had set up for young mothers and the opportunity this could present.

Rev Carol Backhouse (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) pointed out that although it doesn't matter if attempts to encourage new congregations don't work out, communities can feel wounded. She highlighted the importance of pastoral care.

Bishop Jill agreed with this.

Bishop Jill moved that:

“Post lockdown, Diocesan Synod is committed to reaching new people, new demographics, new generations in Lancashire with New Local Congregations”.

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

7. Notification of Diocesan Synod Election Results and Introduction of New Members

Archdeacon Mark welcomed all 33 new members to Synod and welcomed back the 3 new returning members.

Some deaneries currently have a larger representation on the Synod than others because there are a number of unfilled places. Members of under-represented deaneries were asked to consider how the casual vacancies could be filled and speak with their Area Dean/Lay Chair.

There had not been a contested election for any of the deanery places on Diocesan Synod.

Synod members wanting to make a difference can do so by submitting questions and submitting deanery motions for debate at meetings.

8. Notification of General Synod Election Results

Canon Graeme Pollard announced that over 52% of the electorate had voted in the election. The new General Synod members are:

- Rev Paul Benfield
- Rev Stephen Corbett
- Rev Alex Frost
- Ven Mark Ireland
- Rev Tom Woolford
- Mr Stephen Boyall
- Mrs Vivienne Goddard
- Mrs Rosemary Lyon
- Dr Laura Oliver
- Mr Paul Ronson
- Mrs Jaqueline Stamper

Rev Carol Backhouse (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) would like to see more nominations from female clergy at future General Synod elections

Rev Caitlin Carmichael-Davis (Lancaster and Morecambe Deanery) asked if there were any plans to encourage women to formal leadership within the Diocese.

Bishop Julian confirmed that Bishop Jill was looking at this.

Mr David Barlow encouraged members to submit nominations for the board and committee elections. He would like to see a more diverse Board of Directors.

Canon Andrew Sage (Blackpool Deanery) also encouraged nominations and pointed out that the Property Committee has never had a full membership.

Rev Emma Swarbrick (Blackpool Deanery) asked for more information about what being on the different boards and committees involves.

This will be circulated to the Synod.

9. Proclamation of Canons

None.

10. Questions

The following question had been received from **Canon Simon Cox (Blackpool Deanery)**:

How many retired clergy hold PTO in the Diocese, how many PTO retired clergy are on Deanery Synods and how many on the Diocesan Synod?

Canon Graeme Pollard replied:

There are 79 retired clergy with PTO in the Diocese, 9 retired clergy with PTO on Deanery Synods and 1 retired clergy with PTO on the Diocesan Synod.

The following question had been received from **Mrs Lyndsey Simpson (Leyland Deanery)**:

Please can Synod be informed how the Coronavirus Task Group has been formed and specifically, how the members were selected, the group's terms of reference and its accountability structure?

Bishop Philip replied:

The Coronavirus Task Group was formed by the Bishop's Appointments Team on March 16th 2020. It's task was identified as follows:

- Accessing professional medical advice
- Assessing the national and local situation
- Monitoring, interpreting and passing on Government and CofE advice and guidance
- Producing risk assessments for (eg) buildings and worship
- Overseeing clergy ring-round
- Liaison with LRF and Directors of Public Health
- Production of email briefings
- Answering queries made through the coronavirus email address.

It's current membership is:

Bishop Philip (Chair)
Archdeacon David Picken
Canon Graeme Pollard
Rev Susan Salt
Rev Andy Meeson

Rev Sam Cheesman
Mr Dave Champness

This includes two medical doctors.

11. Motions

None.

The meeting closed with a prayer.

Signed:

Dated: