

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

Saturday 16 July 2022 at Blackburn Cathedral

Present

3 Members of the House of Bishops
40 Members of the House of Clergy
33 Members of the House of Laity

Apologies

14 Member of the House of Clergy
15 Members of the House of Laity

1. Opening Worship

Mr Bob Collins (Chair of the House of Laity) chaired the meeting. Mr Collins introduced **The Honourable David Hodge (Diocesan Chancellor)**, and welcomed him to the meeting.

The meeting commenced with worship led by **Rev Munawar Din (Vice-Chair of the House of Clergy)**.

2. Parish Share Budget

Mr David Barlow (Chair, Diocesan Board of Finance) introduced the proposed Parish Share budget for 2023. The key elements of the budget are included in his presentation (attached).

Mr Barlow explained that the budget had been produced under extremely difficult circumstances this year. There would be a maximum increase in the overall parish share request of 3% until the end of 2024. The aim is to move from a deficit budget to a balanced budget in 2026.

The budget had been produced by the Bishop's Budget Team, scrutinised by the Budget Scrutiny Committee and approved by the Board of Directors prior to presentation at Synod.

Parishes struggling to meet their share contributions were encouraged to contact the Diocesan Offices to request a meeting with members of the Board.

Mr Barlow thanked the Bishop's Budget Team, the Budget Scrutiny Committee, Mrs Ruth McGaughey and the Finance Team for helping to produce the budget.

Questions were invited.

Rev Paul Benfield (General Synod) asked if the grant available to Lowest Income Community parishes was applied automatically to reduce parish share.

Mr Barlow explained that these parishes can decide if they want to use the funding towards their parish share or use it for other purposes in the parish.

Rev James Nash (Preston Deanery) asked about RWA and if parish growth is penalised financially.

Mr Barlow explained it is possible that growing parishes may see a disproportionate increase in Parish Share due to using two rather than three years of RWA figures. He reminded parishes who are struggling to ask for a Parish Share meeting. It is recognised that where there is growth, giving often comes later and everything will be done to mitigate the impact of this.

Mrs Jacqueline Stamper (General Synod) pointed out that many dioceses are struggling financially and expressed gratitude for the way in which the finances within our Diocese are managed.

Rev Anne Beverley (Kirkham Deanery and Dean of Women's Ministry) asked about the Diocese's commitment to Women's Ministry as it is not mentioned in the summary budget.

Bishop Jill stated that she has allocated £2k from her Church Commissioners bishop's funding towards Women's Ministry.

Mr Tim Cox (Leyland Deanery) asked for clarification regarding expected free reserves.

Mr Barlow stated that current free reserves are approximately £6m. The intention is to spend half of this to get us to the position of a balanced budget in 2026 but this will depend on the current climate and parish share collection rate.

Rev Martin Keighley (Poulton Deanery) asked about the funds from the DBE.

Mr Barlow explained that the DBE had previously agreed to contribute funding from their reserves to support the DBF's budget if needed. As this was not required at the time, they agreed to extend this forward to future years should it be needed.

Mr David Barlow moved that:

"This Synod accepts,

- the 2023 parish share budget with expenditure of £13,787,600 and a projected budget deficit of £50,550 based on a support fund of 7% being sufficient to adjust requested shares.

And is aware

- That if the contribution rate is the same as 2021 of 91.76% after the support fund has been allocated, the deficit will be **£876,249**.
- For those parishes who were still capped in 2022 due to the change in allocation of LICF, that the cap period has finished, and the balance of the cap will increase their share.
- The total Diocesan regular weekly attendance rolling average used in the share calculation is likely to be significantly lower and subsequently the amount per RWA will increase.
- Individual parish changes of regular weekly attendance and amount of ministry will affect the allocation of costs.
- The Directors do not consider a 1% variance on budget expenditure significant and may vary the expenditure during the year to meet the needs of the organisation."

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

3. Changes to Parish Share Formula

Mr Nick Aves (Deputy Chair, Diocesan Board of Finance and Chair, DBF Finance Committee) introduced his paper.

The Board of Directors recommended making the following two changes to the Parish Share formula in order to make it as fair as possible:

- To change the cost of clergy housing from a regular attender cost to a cost of ministry. On average, housing costs work out at around £7,000 per house per annum on average. This would be added to the cost of ministry and an equivalent figure removed from the cost per regular attender section of the formula.
- To use the average of 2019 and 2021 attendance figures for calculating share requests in 2023 and to use the average of 2021 and 2022 attendance figures for calculating share requests in 2024. This is due to the lack of data collected in 2020. The average of the three most recent year's figures will be used for 2025 onwards, as per usual practice.

The detail is provided in paper DS 2042.

The aim was to send out parish share requests to parishes by the end of September. Mr Aves urged parishes struggling to meet their 2023 Share request to book a meeting with the Parish Share Team.

Questions were invited.

Rev Canon Simon Cox (Blackpool Deanery) pointed out that housing for some groups of clergy were not included in the paper.

Mr Aves explained that curates' housing falls within the training budget, £7k of costs are already allocated for House for Duty clergy and housing for part-time clergy would be allocated on the basis of a percentage of the cost of ministry.

Mr Tim Cox (Vice-Chair of the House of Clergy and Leyland Deanery) asked if data for 2019 could be used twice to provide three years of RWA figures.

Mr Aves explained that placing too much weight on historic data would place too much strain on parishes.

Rev Roger Parker (Burnley Deanery) felt that allocating the housing figure differently would be unfair to poorer parishes.

Mr Aves stated that the overall figure within the formula would not change nor would it impact any differently on lower income parishes.

Rev James Nash (Preston Deanery) pointed out that nationally the cost of a vicar is higher in most other dioceses.

Mr Aves stated that our ministry costs have been reducing as our pension deficit has been reducing.

Rev Jonny Lee (Blackpool Deanery) asked about the democratic process for bringing this to Synod as the Parish Share formula had been discussed previously.

Mr Aves clarified that the motion previously brought to Synod was related to capping the Parish Share request due to changes in the distribution of LICF funding.

Rev Canon Andrew Holliday (Chorley Deanery) asked for the pensions deficit issue to be explained.

Mr Aves stated that the Pensions Board has been recovering the deficit on pensions for several years. Because of this, the Diocese can now reduce its pensions contribution.

Rev James Nash (Preston Deanery) proposed that the housing cost sentence be removed from the first motion..

Mr Bob Collins (Chair of the House of Laity) declined the proposal.

Mr Nick Aves moved:

"This Synod approves,

- That the ministry cost be expanded to include a housing cost equal to the housing allowance. The ministry cost will be assigned in line with the percentage of allocated ministry."

In the vote:

Members voting in favour – 62

Members voting against - 11

Absentions – 3

The motion was carried.

"This Synod approves,

- That the rolling average for 2023 be a two-year average of 2019 and 2021
- That the rolling average for 2024 to be a two-year average of 2021 and 2022."

In the vote:

Members voting In favour - 72

Members voting against - 3

Abstentions – 1

The motion was carried.

4. DAC Constitution

Rev Canon Andrew Holliday (Chair of the DAC) and **Mrs Jen Read (Senior Church Buildings Officer)** presented the paper.

The Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) for Care of Churches is an advisory body on any works that affect church buildings, halls and churchyards. Its role is to advise PCCs, the Registrar and the Chancellor.

Rev Canon Holliday explained that a lay person and an ordained person are sought to two Diocesan Synod nominated vacancies on the DAC. The roles would suit people interested in building and how they can be transformed to enable today's ministry. He urged Synod members to contact Mrs Read if interested.

5. Delegation to Suffragan Bishops During the Vacancy in See

Bishop Julian explained the delegation to the two suffragan bishops would ensure a smooth vacancy. Delegations for both Bishop Philip and Bishop Jill had previously been agreed and Synod were asked to affirm these delegations.

Bishop Julian moved:

“This Synod approves the delegation of Diocesan Bishop’s powers and responsibilities, to both Suffragan Bishops to ensure business can continue during the vacancy in See, the delegations ensure the Suffragans can act in the Diocesan Bishop’s place.”

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

6. Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education Accounts

Canon Stephen Whittaker (Interim Diocesan Secretary and Director of Education) presented the Diocesan Board of Education Accounts for 2021. His presentation is attached to the minutes.

Questions were invited but none were asked. The accounts were received by the Synod.

Archdeacon David Picken expressed his thanks to Canon Whittaker for his hard work.

7. General Synod Verbal Report (July 2022)

Mrs Rosemary Lyon (General Synod) provided a summary of items covered at the July Group of Sessions in York:

Apportionments for the 2023 budget were agreed including training for ministry, the operations budget and for clergy retirement housing. The diocesan apportionment is to be held at the same figure as 2022, ie £31.3m.

The Archbishops’ Council spending plans for the next three years were discussed. Sums included £400m to be distributed to local ministry, through dioceses, £190m over nine years to support the transition to net zero carbon emissions and £20m to racial justice work.

The Route Map to Net Zero by 2030 was endorsed. General Synod requested every Diocesan Synod to debate the Route Map in accordance with their structures and to agree a plan of action. It also requested high energy users such as Cathedrals, TElS and schools and the top 20% of large churches to draw up a programme of action.

The situation in Ukraine was debated. Each diocese and parish are asked to work towards providing long term hospitality to refugees and make contributions to the DEC Appeal.

A motion was passed committing the Church to work towards removing any remaining barriers to full participation of disabled people in the life and ministry of the church. Key developments to come from this will include looking at more inclusive liturgies, more research on how many disabled people are represented among clergy and lay ministers and those working in the NClS etc. In addition, dioceses are encouraged to cluster together for a lead person on disability issues. It is planned to introduce legislation to request every DAC appoints someone who has direct experience of accessibility issues.

The Synod voted that the current law on Assisted Suicide 1961 be unchanged and called on the Government to adequately fund palliative care.

A motion was carried which asked HM Government to introduce legislation requiring pornographic websites to have in place age verification systems to prevent under 18s accessing these sites.

There was a report from the Clergy Conduct Measure Implementation Group asking for legislation to be brought forward at the earliest opportunity. The new proposals would separate conduct into three categories: minor grievances, misconduct and serious misconduct.

There was an update from the lead Bishop for Safeguarding and the Independent Safeguarding Board. The failures of the past were acknowledged and the need for culture change was endorsed.

Changes to how a future Archbishop of Canterbury will be chosen were approved. There will now only be three representatives of Canterbury Diocese but five representatives from the Anglican Communion included.

The Business Committee were asked to review the requirements for PCC members and entry on an Electoral Roll.

A Loyal Address had been sent to the Queen on the occasion of her Platinum Jubilee.

The Archbishop of York gave a tribute to the Bishop of Blackburn, commenting on his recent visit to the Diocese.

8. Proclamation of Vacancy in See Regulations Act of Synod

Canon Stephen Whittaker proclaimed:

“At the Group of Sessions of the General Synod held at Westminster in November 2021 the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation 1993 in the form it takes following its amendment in July 2021 was formally affirmed and proclaimed as an Act of Synod. An Act of Synod is the embodiment of the will or opinion of the Church of England as expressed by the whole body of the General Synod. Copies of the Instrument proclaiming and affirming the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation as an Act of Synod will be sent to members of this Synod.”

9 Questions (if any) submitted in accordance with Diocesan Synod Standing Orders

Mr Joseph Brookfield (Preston Deanery) asked:

At the Diocesan Synod meeting held on 17 October 2020, in response to my question regarding measuring progress towards meeting the Church of England's commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2030 the Synod was told more details would be brought to a future synod meeting. When is it planned for this to happen?

Canon Stephen Whittaker explained that work was currently underway looking at theology, mission and plans of action for schools, parsonages and Clayton House along with the Diocesan Environmental Officer. Bishop Jill had picked up the work on the care of creation under “Being Witnesses”.

It was hoped that the Route Map would be brought to Diocesan Synod in March 2023 for debate and initial responses.

Canon Simon Cox (Blackpool Deanery) asked:

When was the 2021 revision of RACSC Supporting the ministry of clergy after retirement from office: guidance for bishops and archdeacons considered by the Bishop's Leadership Team, who was consulted in its delivery and what was the outcome of their deliberation?

Bishop Philip responded:

The support of clergy who have retired from office is discussed frequently and at different meetings within the diocesan leadership structures. Finances are made available so that grants can be given each December, and these will be reviewed this year to make sure the amount given acknowledges inflation.

We have appointed two retired clergy officers who will offer pastoral care and feedback concerns from retired clergy and those with PTO in the Diocese. The Ven Anne Dawtry and Revd David Ward attended gatherings for all retired clergy and clergy with PTO at Bishop's House last month. These were a great success.

The Guidance referred to in the question is for Bishops and Archdeacons and not necessarily for the wider Leadership Structures of the diocese but our support of retired clergy does involve input from Bishop's House, the Safeguarding Team, Property Team and Finance Team among others. We also offer and pay for life membership of the Retired Clergy Association.

Our pastoral and financial support also extends to widows and widowers.

Bishop Philip had not been particularly familiar with the document prior to the question and would be bringing it back to the BLT for discussion.

10 Motions (if any) submitted in accordance with Diocesan Synod Standing Orders

None.

Mr Bob Collins thanked Bishop Julian for his leadership and ministry within the Diocese and wished him a happy retirement.

The meeting closed with prayers led by Bishop Julian and a blessing.

Signed: *+ Philip Burnley*

Date: *19.11.22*

