

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

a) **Revd Andrew Sweeney (Ospringe Deanery)** asks the following questions:

Implementation of diocesan strategy

Will the strategic leadership team revise our diocesan strategy to include the following, now and in regular reporting to Synod:

- *A clear statement about the future of stipendiary ministry, with a commitment to its funding and resourcing, explaining what part the classic model of parish church and community play in our strategy alongside our planned bold outcomes, and how the bold outcomes will enable a more secure future for the parish system, providing "A Christian Presence in Every Community"?*
 - *A risk assessment detailing the risks so far recognised to the success of our strategy, and their mitigations?*
 - *A statement of progress in engaging the deanery M&M committees, including a report on the success of the resourcing and training of Area Deans and M&M committees, given that most of the people in those posts are being asked to take on a significant management load to deliver our strategy?*
 - *Data that reports on how many of our deaneries are confident about delivering (a) at least one, and (b) more than one of our proposed bold outcomes?*
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Colin Evans, Strategic Programme Manager responds to the points raised:

- We have asked deaneries, through the deanery planning process, to set out what they think they will need to become "flourishing and sustainable." We would envisage that this would include stipendiary ministry to support the growth that is implicit in "flourishing," but it will be for deaneries to determine what they believe the local mix of lay and ordained ministry will need to be over the coming years.
- The Bishop is committed to stipendiary ministry having a vital role in the parish system; however, there needs to be a realism about the cost of this and, where necessary, thinking about other ways of making priestly ministry available. The bold outcomes will aid discussion about the reality of each situation.
- We have a corporate risk management policy and guide that sets out our risk management arrangements. The normal process would be that significant risks would be reported to Archbishop's Council and, through the minutes of that meeting, to Synod. Our strategy is still in a developmental phase and deanery planning is a critical part of that. As the development of the strategy progresses it is envisaged that there would be regular reports to Synod on our collective progress, which would incorporate any key risks. The key risks and mitigations that have been/are being worked on are:

Key Risk	Key Mitigations
Deaneries not having robust plans to become flourishing and sustainable.	<p>Regular meetings with Area Deans & Lay Chairs collectively, by archdeaconry and individually, with a focus on trying to understand what support would be helpful.</p> <p>Establishment of Action Learning Sets for groupings of Area Deans & Lay Chairs to provide mutual support.</p> <p>Alignment of diocesan resources to support deaneries in developing plans.</p> <p>Inclusion of additional support capacity for deaneries in our first investment requests to the Strategic Mission & Ministry Board</p>
Not being able to attract investment from the Strategic Mission & Ministry Board (i.e. funding from the Church Commissioners)	<p>Articulating the alignment of our diocesan strategy to the national vision & strategy (a condition for investment)</p> <p>Articulating our Bold Outcomes for 2030 to make our aspirations clear and to ensure that they are “fundable”.</p> <p>Encouraging deanery planning to support our aspirations.</p>
Strategy seen as being “top down” and consequently not owned across our diocese	<p>Deanery planning process and offers of support.</p> <p>Regular messaging to emphasise mutuality and the importance of deanery planning.</p> <p>Deanery roadshows.</p>

- We are encouraging deaneries to think of their plans as live, iterative documents. They have been requested to have a next iteration by September. Area Deans & Lay Chairs were asked at a residential in January how confident they were of producing drafts by September. Roughly a third were very confident and a third were not confident at all with the remaining third being in the middle. To date we have received 6 out of 15 but we are aware of several in various stages of drafting. Archdeacons have been, and will continue to work, with deaneries to determine what support they need to help them.
- The process for this is covered elsewhere in this agenda when we consider the revised third bold outcome.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

b) **Revd Andrew Sweeney (Ospringe Deanery)** asks the following question:

Diocesan unity

Is the Bishop aware of any threat to our unity in our diocese regarding the introduction of Prayers of Love and Faith, and what does she feel is necessary for us to maintain our unity?

Bishop Rose responds:

There is something bigger calling us to unity – and this is Christ’s call. I am committed to that call and will walk and journey with everyone and my prayer is that as a diocese we can hear Christ’s call together.

In the Anglican Church we follow Jesus’ command to work together for unity. Unity is not uniformity and we need to understand and acknowledge that there is difference. If we commit ourselves to journeying together, even when we hold different views, then there needs to be no threat to our unity.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

c) **Revd Andrew Sweeney (Ospringe Deanery)** asks the following question:

Diocesan finances and future risks

Has the DBF conducted a risk assessment for parishes deliberately withholding parish share payments (as opposed to parishes being unable to pay them) and what steps are being taken to mitigate the risk?

Doug Gibb, Director of Finance responds:

We are aware of one parish that has withheld an element of Parish Share using theological principle as the justification. The Board knows the potential impact of such action. Communication is ongoing to explain that if a parish does not intend to pay Parish Share (or an element thereof) then other parishes will need to pay a higher Parish Share in the following year to compensate.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

d) **Revd Andrew Sweeney (Ospringe Deanery)** asks the following questions:

Funding for Stipendiary Ministry

- *Will the DBF provide a brief explanation of the factors that determine the funding of stipendiary ministry for the benefit of Synod, including the following in their answer? The headline policy, legal and technical factors;*
 - *The relationship between the Diocesan Stipendiary Fund (DSF) and the amount spent on stipendiary ministry?*
 - *The current return on investment (ROI) from our DSF?*
 - *Whether the use of Total Return Accounting for our Diocesan Stipends Fund is appropriate, and what benefits this practice brings?*
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Doug Gibb, Director of Finance responds:

- The aim of the DBF is to provide ministry in every parish within the diocese. Such provision must necessarily take into account the ability of parishes to pay and also the need to have an attractive offering to attract clergy. The diocese receives a grant in the form of Lowest Income Community Funding from Archbishops' Council which provides funding for those parishes who would otherwise be unable to pay for stipendiary ministry. The level of stipend is determined by balancing affordability with the clergy cost of living of clergy and is guided by the Central Stipends Authority of Archbishops' Council – we must in any case pay the National Minimum Stipend. The level of pension contribution is again a factor without our control. We are required to provide for council tax and water rates and we determine the amount we require to maintain our property portfolio.
- The income from the DSF is applied to shared costs but the DSF can also be used for the maintenance of benefice houses.
- The expected dividend return for 2023 is 3.88%.
- It may be appropriate but as the fund can be used to provide for the maintenance of benefice houses this is a much simpler approach which is our preferred option.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

e) **Revd Andrew Sweeney (Ospringe Deanery)** asks the following question:

National Safeguarding

Can the Bishop give us any comfort that the Church of England will one day have a truly independent safeguarding service so that in our ministry and mission we can confidently proclaim that our church can be trusted?

Bishop Rose responds:

Members of Synod will be aware of the recent announcement from the Archbishops' Council that since it has not been possible to put the Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB) on a more sustainable footing, the Council has agreed a reset. As the statement from the Archbishops' Council states 'This will involve ending the contracts of two of the members of the Board, Jasvinder Sanghera and Steve Reeves, and of the acting Chair, Meg Munn. The Council will be putting in place interim arrangements to continue the independent oversight of existing case reviews. Those reviews will be carried out by independent experts qualified to conduct case reviews, just as at present, and they will be independently commissioned.' (21/06/2023)

As a Church, both national and local, we are absolutely committed to developing fully independent scrutiny of safeguarding and from my personal experience this is a vital part of good safeguarding. We need to ensure the Church of England is a safer place for everyone, to be transparent and accountable and to hear the voices of victims and survivors.

While I am not across the full details of this week's decision, I know the Archbishops' Council would not have taken this decision lightly, as their statement shows and I am pleased that members of the Archbishops' Council will be arranging an opportunity to meet with victims and survivors to hear concerns and discuss the situation.

The intention for truly independent scrutiny of safeguarding practices is the aim of the Archbishops' Council and I believe that steps are in place to ensure that this is the case.