**DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting of the Diocesan Synod held on Saturday 15 November 2025**

Diocese of Canterbury
CHANGED LIVES ⊛ CHANGING LIVES

## 1. THE MEETING OPENED WITH A EUCHARIST

## 2. APOLOGIES AND NOTICES

Apologies received, House of Clergy 14, House of Laity 15.

Young Vocations Day

Samuel Keeler-Walker, on behalf of Jen Tobin, announced that there was to be a Young Vocations Day at St Paul's Church, Canterbury on Saturday 28 March 2026, emphasising the importance in championing young people in ministry. There will be workshops, young people leading worship, and sessions for clergy and church leaders. Registration for this event is via the Diocesan website.

Safeguarding Update

Fiona Coombs provided updates on the recent appointment of a new Deputy Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, and new Cathedral Safeguarding Officer, as well as highlighting key events for 2026 including the audit taking place in early November.

## 3. FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Chair of the Board of Finance briefed Synod on the key figures from the financial proposals document:

- There would be a 10.7% stipend increase and 3.5% salaries increase
- The DBF would receive "Cliff Edge" funding of £2.1 million which would be spread evenly over the nine years it was intended to cover, at £222,000 a year.
- £250k from property sales in 2026 would be reserved the deficit with the balance set aside to create a property ring fenced fund which would aim to provide income from which improvements to clergy homes would begun
- Cost cutting and income initiatives amounting to £92k had been achieved
- A flat 1.25% increase in parish share of £99k was proposed
- Lowest Income Community ("LInC") funding would increase by almost £1m in the Canterbury Diocese for the next three years

It is hoped to deliver a balanced budget before the 2030 target.

Budget holder meetings had taken place with the Finance C Assets Committee having introduced an additional meeting in October to focus purely on budgets.

It was reported that the Board was seeing success in the collection of Parish Share, emphasising that effective communication played a key role in this. The DBF had received more Parish Share contributions compared to the same time in 2024.

The following questions were raised concerning the budget:

Harry Macdonald, Canterbury Deanery asked what were the underlying assumptions of clergy numbers for 2030?

There were currently around 85 stipendiary posts, but one hope from the strategy was to increase clergy numbers in parishes.

Sally Ann Marks, Weald Deanery asked bearing in mind that the property market is flat lining, would it not better be increasing our rental income compared to sales?

Rental income had held up extremely well, but the properties being sold were in poorer states of repair with limited potential and were not required to house clergy. Sale proceeds would be used, in part, to create a fund to enable the Board to carry out improvements to clergy homes. Yields on rented property were less predictable than interest, especially with repairs factored in.

Revd Seth Cooper, Sandwich Deanery acknowledged the work undertaken but expressed that he could not approve the budget.

Julian Hills, Thanet Deanery commented that looking at the projections for the next five years he was disappointed to note that the £800k of unpaid parish share is still at the same level as when he was Diocesan Secretary and he wanted to know whether MAP/Three Things should be strengthened to accelerate parishes ability to pay parish share, as it is a disincentive to grow if parish share is increased by 5% in 2027.

The Chair put the forward the following motion to Synod:

*For Synod to consider proposals for the annual budget for the diocese and to approve*

Proposer: Revd Simon Tillotson, Reculver Deanery, Seconder Revd Susan Manners, Ashford Deanery

Motion carried unanimously.

The Chair thanked the Finance Team for their work on the 2026 budget.

4. **AN UPDATE ON THE DIOCESAN STRATEGY**

The Archdeacon of Canterbury and Colin Evans provided an update on the Diocesan strategy, focusing on the strategic funding and timetable. The Archdeacon of Canterbury highlighted the importance of strengthening the local church and the impact of national funding.

The Archdeacon of Canterbury explained the strategic plan's focus on local church growth, mentioning the **Three Bold Outcomes**: revitalization, doubling the number of children and young disciples, and 200 new Christian communities. He discussed the financial support and grants available for various initiatives. He encouraged

mission action planning, emphasising the importance of focusing on missional growth and prioritising local initiatives.

Net Zero Action Plan:

Colin Evans apologised for the delay in circulating the Net Zero Action Plan report and provided highlights. He mentioned the completion rate for the Energy Footprint tool and the importance of energy audits for high-emitting churches. Colin discussed the availability of half-price energy audits and the success of St. Luke's, Maidstone as a demonstrator church. Colin mentioned various national funding streams available for quick wins and boiler hardship schemes. He also noted the appointment of a Regional Fundraising Officer to help attract larger grants for net zero activities. Colin provided practical tips for achieving net zero, such as switching to LED lighting, applying for energy audits, and considering green tariffs. He encouraged parishes to seek support from the Net Zero team for further information and assistance.

Judith Andrews, Lay Chair, Thanet Deanery asked "What is the connection between the Three Things and the Deanery Plan?"

The Archdeacon of Canterbury responded:

The relationship between the **Three Things** and **Deanery Plans** is going to be different wherever you are but the Deanery Plan could be an aggregation of Mission Actions Plans, so MAPs inform Deanery Planning or a Deanery Plan could be something different which is appropriate for the Deanery at that level. There are some things you can achieve as a Deanery that you cannot do as individual benefices, just as there are things you do as a benefice that you cannot do as individual parishes. Deanery Plans are not replaced by the Three Things, they inform one another.

5. **THE CANONS ON MARRIAGE AND THE MARRIAGE ACT 1GG4**

The Revd Andy Bawtree, Area Dean Dover Deanery, introduced the proposal to amend the Marriage Act, allowing clergy to solemnize marriages outside traditional hours and in various locations without requiring an Archbishop's special license.
Revd Andy Bawtree put forward the following motion:

*That this Synod by referral to General Synod requests that the Archbishops' Council commences the legislative process to amend the provisions of Canons B34 and B35 and other relevant Church and secular legislation to allow clergy to:*

1. *solemnise marriages outside of the hours 8.00 am to c.00 pm.*
2. *solemnise marriages according to the rites of the Church of England in registered premises and places other than parish churches, parish centres of worship and authorised chapels, subject to the consent of the incumbent of the*

*parish in which the registered premises or place is situated, but without the granting of an Archbishop of Canterbury's special licence.*

*Noting that such amendments should not affect the legal preliminaries currently required for church weddings which, including the qualifying connections, now provide a much greater flexibility to clergy to solemnise marriages than in the past.*

The following comments were made:

Concerns were raised about the timing of the motion given the information received from the House of Bishops on LLF/PLF.

The Chair asked Synod to vote on the motion, 4 against, 8 abstentions, the rest in favour, the motion was carried.

The Chair invited the Diocesan Registrar to explain the next steps for this motion. Once this motion has been referred to General Synod it will sit on their agenda until there is space for it to be debated. It is unclear how long this process takes. If passed by General Synod it is likely that a Review Group will be set up to look at legislation before bringing it back to General Synod.

**6. FORMAL BUSINESS**

**To Approve the Minutes of the meeting of Synod held on 2 July 2025 and 6 September 2025**

The Chair asked Synod to approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 July 2025 and the Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 September. Proposer: The Revd Rachel Webbley, Seconder: The Revd Simon Tillotson. There were 2 abstentions with the majority in favour.

**Matters arising from the Minutes of the meeting of Synod held on 2 July 2025 and 6 September 2025**

The Revd Rachel Webbley, General Synod, Reculver Deanery asked for information on elections to the Lay vacancies on the 2024-2027 Vacancy in See Committee. The Diocesan Secretary confirmed that the closing date for nominations was on Wednesday 19 November.

Amanda Boucherat, Reculver Deanery, commented that at the recent House of Laity meeting there had been the request to receive an update on what will be happening with the feedback from the LLF meeting held in September. The Diocesan Secretary confirmed that this will be provided with these minutes.

**Draft Minutes of the Archbishop's Council held on 14 October 2025**

The draft Minutes of the Archbishop's Council held on 14 October 2025 were received.

**Draft Agenda Diocesan Synod Agenda for 14 March 2026**

The draft agenda for the Diocesan Synod meeting to be held on 14 March 2026 was noted.

The dates of the **2026 Diocesan Synod Meetings**:

- Saturday 14 March
- Wednesday 1 July
- Saturday 14 November

A question was raised concerning the dates for the services around the installation 106th Archbishop of Canterbury. The Archdeacon of Canterbury confirmed that the College of Canons was to meet in November, the Confirmation of Election would take place on 28 January 2026 in London and the Installation service at Canterbury Cathedral was on 25 March 2026. The Diocesan Service of Welcome would take place on Saturday 28 March.

Bishop Rose closed the meeting with a prayer. The

meeting closed at 12:44