

Archbishop's Council/Standing Committee of Diocesan Synod and Diocesan Synod

02 March 2026 and 14 March 2026

GOVERNANCE REVIEW



Purpose of this paper

A diocese is episcopally led and synodically governed. In accepting the proposals to review governance in the Diocese of Canterbury, Archbishop's Council stated the following requirements of any new structure(s):

- A clearer, transparent structure to hold all DBF activity together, pulling in the same direction
- A single group overseeing strategy delivery
- Alignment of BAU ('business as usual') activity and change projects
- A clear role of each group, separating decision making from consultation/championing roles
- Separation of groups between strategic or operational focus
- Clarity of delegated authority for groups and staff
- Transparency and clarity around decision making

Background

Governance arrangements for the Diocese are substantially determined by Measures. Church of England measures are laws with the same force and effect as Acts of Parliament, but which relate to the administration and organisation of the Church. They are made by the General Synod and require Parliament's approval to come into force.

Further definitions of governance arrangements are made through Standing Orders adopted by Diocesan Synod and Constitutions approved by the Diocesan Board of Finance.

These Measures, Standing Orders and Constitutions determine the role and powers of the Boards and Committees of the Diocese. They also determine how these bodies are populated; typically through elections, appointments, nominations and co-options; and ex officio by virtue of roles held.

It is only the aspects of governance within the DBF that are in scope of the review.

Consultations

At the heart of all we do is a vision of transformation for ourselves and our communities: no one can encounter God and remain unchanged. As a diocese, we are called together to further God's Kingdom, and having the appropriate support structures in place is key to developing this.

The purpose of diocesan-level governance is to enable the flourishing of local mission and ministry within the diocese, by having effective and efficient decision-making processes, such that the allocation of resources and co-ordination of activities allows us all to work together.

A review, begun in 2025, found that the current structure is unclear and complex.

Reporting lines are not always clear, with some overlapping remit and several groups lacking Terms of Reference working alongside those that are out of date.

A DBF Staff survey indicated concerns over effectiveness, efficiency and transparency of governance. Although staff generally understood their role and authority, they saw lack of good cross working and communication and did not think governance overall was sufficiently effective and efficient or clear on how decisions were made.

Identified Problems

The governance, leadership and operations/staff associated with the DBF is there to support and enable the local mission and ministry of the Church of England in the diocese. Although this review focuses just on the aspects of DBF governance, that is not to diminish or discard any of the other critical elements of the diocese.

In setting up the Governance Review it was felt appropriate to review periodically the appropriateness of governance arrangements. The initial focus has been on the following aspects:

- Clarity of authority – which groups/people make decisions over exactly what areas is not clear
- Communication & transparency - leading from confusion of decision making, unclear to many what groups exist and what remit of each is
- Clarity of purpose - some groups themselves unclear what their role was exactly and how fitted together with other groups. Some groups straddle multiple roles.
- Alignment of purpose - Lack of sense of all pulling in the same direction, joined-up under common aim or strategy
- Strategic oversight - lack of clarity of overall strategic direction (particularly felt by ABC members) and ability for oversight
- Efficiency - given the above challenges, unsurprising that sense of groups not being as efficient as they could be

Approval sought

Approval of the sense of direction was received from the meeting of trustees at the Archbishop's Council meeting on 27 January 2026 and a further discussion tabled for 2 March.

This paper provides the cover note for both Diocesan Synod and Archbishop's Council and is, therefore, subject to change.

APPROVAL once more of the sense of direction is requested from Archbishop's Council with Synod asked to **NOTE** that decision and any changes arising.

Iain Blythe
February 2026