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# Bishops Council Briefing for Candidates

BC Members’ Role Description 2025 – 2027

What do members of the Bishop’s Council do?The Bishop’s Council is responsible for considering matters of policy, for advising the Diocesan Bishop, and for determining how matters should be taken forward to the Diocesan Synod for further consideration. To do this, the Bishop’s Council handles a wide range of financial and strategic business, and considers issues raised by the Diocesan Secretary, Diocesan Staff, the PDBF’s sub-committees, the deaneries and the national church.

The Bishop’s Council (BC) comprises three distinct legal entities:

* the Standing Committee of the Diocesan Synod,
* the Trustees of the Diocesan Board of Finance and
* the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee)

that Diocesan Synod has decided shall operate with the same membership and meet at the same time. The role of BC members at any given moment in time is therefore coloured by the nature of the business in hand and the constitution of the ‘lead’ body under which they are operating.

# Standing Committee of the Diocesan Synod

The Standing Committee of the Diocesan Synod is a statutory committee of the Diocesan Synod, established under Church Representation Rule 44 (2) (h), which discharges some of the advisory and consultative functions of the Synod (cf. Section 4 of the Synodical Government Measure 1969). Its functions in relation to the Diocesan Synod are as set out in Diocesan Synod’s Standing Order 90 (reproduced below):

The functions of the Bishops Council shall be:

1. to plan the business of the synod, to prepare the agenda for its sessions, and to circulate to members information about matters for discussion;
2. to initiate proposals for action by the synod and to advise it on matters of policy which are placed before it;
3. to advise the president on any matters which he or she may refer to the council;
4. to transact the business of the synod when it is not in session;
5. to be the trustees of the Portsmouth Diocesan Board of Finance (further details below) (the agenda should clearly indicate when that body is acting in its statutory role);
6. to nominate members for election to Councils, Boards, Committees and Working Groups;
7. to receive the reports of the Councils, Boards, Committees and Working Groups, on action taken and, subject to any direction from the Synod, to give policy guidelines to any of them;
8. to carry out such other functions as the Synod may delegate to it

# Trustees of the Diocesan Board of Finance

Bishops Council Members act as Directors and Trustees of the Diocesan Board of Finance, a limited company and registered charity, and are responsible for the management of finance subject to the direction of the Synod.

The role broadly encompasses:

* To fulfil the legal obligations of trusteeship (fiduciary obligations as trustees and directors of the Diocesan Board of Finance)
* To discuss and approve the vision, priorities and financial limitations of the diocese
* To monitor budget spends and achievements against strategic objectives
* To discuss and approve Diocesan policies

The membership of the Diocesan Board of Finance is associated with the membership of the Diocesan Synod and elections are held after the first sitting of a new Synod.

Typical Agenda items for Bishops Council are Safeguarding, Net Zero Carbon, Strategy and Vision, Risk Management and Risk Register, Finance (incl. Management accounts, Parish Share collection and Budget planning and approval), HR Policies.

There are a number of Diocesan committees with specific external expertise, and it is intended to have a suitably qualified member of Bishops Council on each of these as follows:

* HR Advisory Board – staff remuneration and policies, parish HR support
* Audit Committee – detailed financial oversight and risk register
* Investment Advisory Group – diocesan investments, parish loans, fund management
* Property sub-committee – support to Property team – Vicarages and Glebe

The Board also has an Executive Committee, which is the Bishops Staff Team (see below), whose members are involved in the day-to-day running of the PDBF.

# Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee

Members of Bishops Council are also members of the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, which operates under the provisions of the ‘Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011’.

Some of the functions of the Mission and Pastoral Committee, as set out in section 3 of the Measure, are to “review the arrangements for pastoral supervision and care in the diocese [and] to make recommendations to the bishop [for] matters for which provision may be made […] by a pastoral scheme or order.”

Within that remit, the Mission and Pastoral Committee is to have particular regard to “the making of provision for the cure of souls in the diocese as a whole” and “the traditions, needs and characteristics of individual parishes”.

The Committee is enjoined to “have regard to worship, mission and community as central to the life and work of the Church of England” as well as to the “financial implications” of the way in which it carries out its functions.

Typical agenda items for the DMPC are Pastoral re-organisations and requests for the Suspension of Presentation

# Bishops Staff Team

This is the Executive of the Diocese, consisting of Senior Staff with operational responsibilities.

The membership consists of the Bishop and Archdeacons, the Bishops Chaplain, the Dean of Portsmouth Cathedral, the Head of Mission and Social Transformation, the Director of Education, the Director of Mission and Ministry, the Dean of Planting, the Diocesan Secretary, the Head of Finance, the Head of Safeguarding and the Director of Communications.

Most members are also ex-officio members of Bishops Council.