

## Paper 1 - Bishop's Council Update

Since Synod last met on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2021, Bishop's Council has met 3 times (22<sup>nd</sup> September, 18<sup>th</sup> October and 27<sup>th</sup> October). The last meeting of Bishop's Council for this year and indeed this triennium will take place on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021. This is therefore a good opportunity as part of synod to thank Bishop's Council for its dedication and hard work over this triennium which has been quite unprecedented. The work on Resourcing Growth in 2018 through into 2019 which led to significant change in Newport and Gosport was a demanding time for Bishop's Council both in its capacity as trustees and directors but also as the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee. That was quickly followed by all that 2020 and the pandemic brought. This meant that Bishop's Council members committed to a much higher number of meetings during 2020 and 2021. Those meetings have involved challenging and difficult decisions. The next triennium will hopefully revert to a more normal pattern of meetings, but the decision making is likely to be equally demanding.

This is also an opportunity to echo the thanks of Bishop's Council to the General Synod representatives who served through the last quinquennium (Rev Canon Bob White, Venerable Peter Leonard, Venerable Gavin Collins, Lucy Docherty, Emily Bagg and Mark Emerton). Each member played an active role in Synod and have had some weighty issues to consider. Our thanks go to them. We now welcome our new General Synod members (Rev Paul Chamberlain, Rev Andrew Hargreaves, Rev Canon Bob White, Lucy Docherty, Rebecca Hunt and Ian Johnstone) following the conclusion of the General Synod elections earlier this month.

### Standing Agenda Items

#### Safeguarding

Council has been updated that the Past Cases Review 2 continues with the external reviewers and a working group has been set up to discuss emerging themes so that we are able to address any emerging themes and recommendations on an ongoing basis rather than waiting for the end of the review process.

#### Risk Management

The Risk Register is formally reviewed at least annually by Bishop's Council through the executive Finance Committee but is reviewed regularly by the owners of the different sections and it is placed before Council at each meeting. This not only keeps Council abreast of the risk 'heat map' but also gives opportunity for any additional risks to be raised.

At the meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> October Bishop's Council were updated as to the risk assessment for the use of Peninsular House and the return of the staff team to that working environment. The team are gradually returning with the expectation of hybrid working of 3 days in the office and 2 days out for full time members of staff, pro rata for part time staff. This is to allow for collaboration time in the office but focussed time when working from home. The phased return is seeking to acknowledge the varying degrees of nervousness and eagerness to return to working in close proximity.

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The office is in use 5 days a week between 9.00am and 5pm with some people in earlier and later than this. The public reception is only open Monday-Wednesday 9.00am-5pm as the capacity for more than this is reduced following the staff restructure.

## Budget

At its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> September Bishop's Council considered the budget assumptions for the 2022 budget these having been discussed by the Diocesan Executive Finance Committee. The decisions made on this occasion formed the basis of the consultation evenings which ran from end September until mid-October. At its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> October Council were given the feedback from the budget consultations and made the decision on the budget which is to be presented to Synod on November 6<sup>th</sup>. Details will be provided in Paper 2.

## Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan (CBIL) Repayment

In 2020, Bishop's Council made the difficult but necessary decision to take out a Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan. The details of the loan can be summarised as follows:-

Amount	£2m
Term	6 years, 1st year interest to be paid by the government and 12-month capital repayment holiday so no repayments until 12 months after drawdown. Loan to be repaid in full over the remaining 5-year term in equal monthly instalments of £33,333
Interest Rate	2.25%
Early Repayment Charge	None
Security	DBF properties totalling £2.82m value
Disbursement date	November 2020

The various options for repayment along with cash flow up to September 2022 were considered by the Diocesan Executive Finance Committee Based on 13<sup>th</sup> September 21 and the Investment Advisory Group on 16<sup>th</sup> September. Based on the cash flow projections, both committees recommended that we keep the full CBIL and opt for monthly repayments of capital and interest. Bishop's Council accepted these recommendations.

## Live | Pray | Serve

Since the decision earlier in the year to extend the period for ongoing conversations Bishop's Council has received updates as to the progress of the Clergy and Lay Conferences which were developed with a wider planning group and also the progress of the deanery events. This process culminated in the discussion at the meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> October 21 about the next steps and recruitment principles which are presented to Synod in Paper 3.

## Governance Handbook and Role Descriptions

Part of the work under Live|Pray|Serve has been to look at what Growth Enabling Structures mean in terms of our Governance structures supporting our purpose to grow in depth, impact

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and number. Work is in the early stages but equally as we are starting a new triennium and running elections to Boards and Committees, it is an important phase in this work also. The first part of this was Bishop's Council approving a Governance Handbook in 2020 and when it met on 18<sup>th</sup> October Council approved an updated version along with the role descriptions of the Chair of the House of Clergy and Chair of the House of Laity. Further role descriptions still need to be prepared and this is work in progress.

The next phase of work will be an improved induction process onto Bishop's Council and other committees and a more robust training cycle tailored to those serving at a particular time.

### Clergy Wellbeing Officer

Within Bishop's Council update for the last diocesan synod meeting, synod was updated as to the intention to appoint a Clergy Wellbeing Officer. Since that meeting, we have been out to recruit but were unable to make an appointment to the post. The senior leadership team are therefore further assessing how we might best meet the needs of our clergy and provide support. In the meantime, we are extending our contract with Health Assured (an employee assistance scheme) so that it covers the clergy as well as the lay staff. This is a resource which provides informal support through an online chat function on an anonymous basis as well as access to 6 sessions of counselling at no cost to the individual. There is also access to legal advice on a wide range of issues. In the same way that lay staff can access this support without their line managers having any involvement, so clergy can access it without having to contact their Archdeacon first. Log on and access details will be circulated shortly, as soon as the contract is extended.

In addition to this we will continue to offer funding for counselling as needed in addition to this support.

### Bill Passing Through Parliament in Ghana

As a diocese with a link to Ghana we have been paying attention to the developments in Ghana and the Ghanaian Bishops' support for the Bill going before Parliament in Ghana which places lives at risk through introducing criminal sanctions against those in LBGTQ+ communities. On Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October, the senior leadership team met with Max Cross Chair of our IDWAL committee and together agreed a statement which was published on Tuesday in advance of the Statement issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury. This statement was also referenced in the Guardian which can be accessed here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/oct/26/ghanaian-bishops-anti-lgbtq-law-uk-church-leaders>

For those who have not seen the statement, which was circulated on social media, it reads as follows: -

*Our bishop-designate, Bishop Jonathan Frost, our commissary bishop, Bishop Rob Wickham, and the senior staff of the Diocese of Portsmouth said, "As a diocese, we have long-standing,*

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*formal links with the Anglican Church in Ghana, which we value. However, we are dismayed to hear that the country's Anglican bishops have thrown their weight behind the 'Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values' Bill.*

*"We are seeking urgent conversations with our colleagues in Ghana to ask why - not least in the light of the communique signed by all Anglican Primates in 2016, in which they pledged to reject criminal sanctions against members of the LGBT+ community, and to challenge homophobia.*

*"We strongly oppose the bill currently being considered by the Ghanaian Parliament, which proposes imprisonment of members of the LGBT+ community for being who they are, and to criminalise those who wish to support them. We believe this to be a fundamental violation of people's human rights, which we believe will lead to state-sponsored violence that will threaten the lives of those in the LGBT+ community and their friends. As Christians, we also believe this stigmatises people in a way that does not affirm the value of each person as a unique individual, created in God's image.*

*"We are committed to our relationship with our Anglican brothers and sisters in Ghana, and there is much mutual respect. Our close relationship prompts us to challenge each other as fellow disciples of Jesus Christ, sharpening each other's thinking and speaking up against injustice in our respective countries."*

At the meeting of Bishop's Council on 27<sup>th</sup> October, Rev Canon Bob White raised this statement as a matter of 'Any Other Business' and sought that Bishop's Council support this statement. Bishop Council unanimously endorsed this statement and recorded its support.

**Motion for Diocesan Synod:** - Diocesan Synod agrees with and endorses the statement made by the senior leadership team

**Victoria James**  
**Diocesan Secretary**  
**28 October 2021**

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