**Bishop’s Council Update**

There have been three Bishop’s Council meetings since Synod last met as there was an extraordinary meeting called on 3rd April 2019 to allow Bishop’s Council time to fully debate and consider the pastoral reorganisation which had been proposed for parts of Gosport Deanery, Newport, Isle of Wight and Leigh Park, Warren Park and West Leigh. Synod has also devoted time to this subject during 2019.

11th March 2019

Much time in previous meetings had rightly been given to thinking about Resourcing Growth and pastoral reorganisation that this meeting had quite a heavy agenda. Bishop Council considered the following items:-

1. The Parish Share position for 2018. John Gwynn, Chair for the Diocesan Finance Committee, reported that Parish Share receipts for 2018 were at 98.76% up from 98.51% in 2017. It was noted that some 2018 receipts came in just after close of books so this percentage might have been higher. Bishop Christopher stated that this was a good outcome, especially the 97.5% share received from the Isle of Wight. Council acknowledged that this was a wonderful result showing the commitment and effort that is made in parishes to seek to meet Parish Share; this is a demonstration of great Christian generosity and behind these figures is also the hard work of parish treasurers, clergy and churchwardens and those working in Gift Aid Officer role.
2. There was an update on the Viability Focus Process (VFP), noting that no new parishes would be entering this process in 2019 as a result of their 2018 parish share position but a new process of support would start in 2019, the Sustainability and Discipleship Focus Process to work with parishes at an earlier stage than VFP.
3. The Management accounts for 2018
4. The Finance Team which works across Portsmouth and Winchester Diocese has been reviewed by the Auditors to look at efficiency and systems. Proposals have been made and accepted to change the roles of members of the team so that individuals work more routinely across the two dioceses which will bring efficiencies and a greater capacity to cover work in times of sickness and holiday. The speed of reporting will also be better across the two dioceses which will aid decision making both in terms of governance through Bishop’s Council but will also greatly assist in decision making by the Diocesan Secretary and Heads of Department. The new Finance Director, Lisa Streeter, who joined the Diocese is March is tasked with implementing the review. A Deputy Finance Director will also be recruited to bring extra capacity to the Finance Team.
5. Council approved plans for the Thy Kingdom Come event at Portchester Castle on 9th June.
6. In 2016 Council agreed £300,000 for the development of a Chapel Space at Cornerstone School, Whiteley. This development stalled but is now likely to proceed; Council therefore considered and agreed a 10% increase in this agreed amount to allow for inflation costs which was achievable from the growth in the funds. Therefore, £275,000 is to come from the New Churches Fund and £55,000 from the Portsmouth Diocesan Education Trust.
7. Canon H2 provides that there should be only one Archdeacon from the Diocese on General Synod. From May, when Revd Peter Leonard begins as Archdeacon of the Isle of Wight, we would have two Archdeacons on General Synod. Members of the House of Clergy voted via email to determine whether we would retain the two Archdeacons on general Synod until 2020 when there will be the routine election for General Synod membership. Members of the House of Clergy voted to retain both Gavin and Peter as General Synod Members until the routine election in 2020.
8. The Council for Social responsibility has been reviewed which made various recommendations to Bishop’s Council which Council accepted at this meeting:-
	1. A new CSR Trustee Board is to be created, separate from Bishop’s Council.
	2. CSR to provide a Mission and Society Officer who will work on the aims set by the Diocese. This commissioning and those aims, will be via a Memorandum of Understanding.

**3rd April 2019**

Not only was this an extraordinary meeting, it was an extended meeting; it ran for just short of 4 hours which is almost twice as long as a routine Bishop’s Council meeting. I am grateful to members of Council for their willingness to devote this time, particularly those from the Island for whom it was a very late evening. There was good debate and discussion which highlights the care Council, both as individuals and as a body, has taken in this process to fully understand the decisions to be made and to test thinking from all angles as has been the case throughout the process.

Bishop Christopher reminded Council of the vision and the process to date. Some key points:

* This is not about spending less or limiting vision and the need to remind both parishes and congregations of this.
* Jesus called us to be bold and humble; to model our lives on integrity, obedience, humility and boldness
* By meeting, the Council had agreed to take on a leadership role and to accept a corporate responsibility in the role of the diocese, with commitment and willingness
* Humility and boldness are measured by nothing less than the full stature of Jesus Christ
* To be aware of the seriousness of what is to come throughout the meeting and the need for wisdom and discernment.

All potentially affected clergy were offered the opportunity to address Council on the proposals as they relate to their particular parish or parishes. Council therefore heard presentations from Revd Jonathan Jeffery, Revd Cannon Kevin Arkell and Revd Marcus Bagg. Gavin Collins read a statement from Revd Allie Kerr who had intended to attend in person but was in the event too unwell to do so.

Each clergy person was given 15 minutes each- 10 minutes to present their points with a further 5 minutes for the Bishop’s Council to ask any questions of clarification.

There then followed time for discussion and questions on points which relate to each of the proposed scheme equally, including:-

* The process to date;
* The difference between team and group ministries
* The decision not to designate posts

Council then moved to a substantial discussion on each of the individual schemes. Council voted in favour of each of the pastoral schemes and recommended the proposals to Bishop Christopher, who agreed that they be sent to the Church Commissioners.

The Church Commissioners have since published each of the Schemes which are now out for public consultation. The closing date for responses to the Commissioners is 29th May 2019.

8th May 2019

At this meeting Council:-

1. Heard from the Finance Director and the Auditor relating to the Annual Accounts which lead Council to receive and adopt the PDBF Annual Report and Accounts for 2018 which are presented to Synod as Paper 2 and will be discussed at agenda item 9. Council also received and adopted the PDCSR Annual Report and Accounts for 2018.
2. HaysMacintyre LLP were re-appointed as auditors for PDCSR and PDBF for 2019.
3. The Client Investment Director from CCLA gave a presentation to BC on Investment management as it relates to Bishop’s Council.
4. Lisa Streeter, Finance Director presented the Q1 management accounts for 2019.
5. Council approved (confirming discussions during 2018) £1,010,000 being transferred from the Wickham Glebe to the general fund to allow for expenditure on clergy housing (£600K plus £410k as agreed in June 2018) which would cover improvement work to the parsonages which had been funded from the general fund (glebe funds are restricted to this type of work). This was done to make efficient use of the funds available.
6. Pending a review, Council approved the membership of the following committees:-
* Diocesan Finance Committee (DFC)
* Property Sub Committee
* Synod Agenda Group
* Investment Advisory Group
* Lay Staff Remuneration & Conditions of Service Committee (LSRCSC)
1. Agreed to the continuation of the 0.6FTE Diocesan Safeguarding Trainer post. This has been a fixed term post but there will now be an open recruitment post for a permanent position.
2. Council received draft documentation to implement the decision taken in March for a new CSR Trustee body to be formed. Council therefore agreed :-

a. that Archdeacon Joanne and Victoria James be appointed as members of the CSR Trustee body

b. the draft Articles of Association

1. Council approved a short term loan to Winchester Diocese of £500k. This is to assist them in the purchase of a new house for the Bishop of Southampton. Delays in some other house sales mean that they cannot proceed with the purchase of this house without drawing down from investments. We however have the money on deposit currently. The arrangement would be a 6 month loan, which our cash flow can sustain. It is expected that the loan would be repaid sooner than this but it is also on the basis of immediate return should the need arise. The agreed rate of interest is 0.5% above the CCLA deposit rate so we would receive some return for this loan.

During March, April and May, Council have made a significant number of decisions on a diverse range of issues.

**Victoria James**

**Diocesan Secretary**