

Dorchester Deanery Synod

Minutes of the fourth meeting of the eighteenth triennium held on Thursday 04th November 2021 on Zoom.

Present: List kept by Secretary.

Apologies: Bob Light, Margaret Walters, the Revd Pene Kennedy, the Revd Mark Phillips.

1. **Opening Prayer:**

The Revd Sarah Hillman welcomed all to the meeting. She invited us to share in the opening prayer.

2. **Apologies for Absence:** See above.

3. **Minute of previous meeting 14th July 2021:** These were accepted as an accurate record and signed by the Secretary on behalf of the Revd Sarah Hillman.

4. **Matter Arising:** Ride n Stride raised £86,000 so far. Final figures due early Dec. It went well.

5. **Election of Lay Chair and Vice Lay Chair:** The Secretary had received one Lay Chair nomination from Roger Holehouse (Proposer Alan Neades, Seconder Charles Hodgeson) and one Vice Lay Chair nomination from Nigel Pridmore (Proposer Michael Clarke, Seconder Bob Light). As both posts were uncontested and hands were raised in support of the nominations both were duly elected. Roger asked for it to be noted that he would be filling in the role for the two years and not standing again as he felt it was time to retire at 75. However he was happy to take the role for the two years and hopefully members of the Synod would come to him with an interest in taking up the role themselves in two years' time. Nigel said he felt the Vice Lay Chair's role was important and that he was happy to re-join the Standing Committee.

6. **Understanding Diocesan Finance:** David Pain began by saying how happy he was to have the opportunity to meet and discuss with us what was happening financially. With 430 something parishes and each different in their Mission and Ministry they are also very different from each other. He explained about the budget going to Diocesan Synod on 6th Nov included feeds from the Bishop, Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Group, Archdeacon Property Services Group, Investment Review Group and so on. The Mission and Pastoral Plan is key and he outlined its three objectives:

- Clearer paths to mission and ministry
- Better care for those who serve
- Stronger roots for the local church

Choices on spending have to be made and much revolves around Mission and Ministry including the number of stipendiary clergy, the nature of other support, and property including the present ongoing sale of Church House as an office.

Liz Ashmead went on to highlight specific spending figures which will be under discussion at Diocesan Synod this Saturday. The Pre 2017 budget assumed a 100% of the Parish Share would be received but it only achieved 97%. The budget has not always kept up with inflation. Hence the deficit is now of £5 million with the addition of a £2.5 million Coronavirus Bank Loan. As a result the church has been selling assets to fund its deficit. Parish Share was 89.8% in 2020. Liz then showed where some of our assets were; 94 million in clergy houses, investments of 31 million, cash and bank 3.7 million and a Clergy Pension deficit. Glebe land money (141 plots). The proposal was to increase the share by 5% in 2022, followed by above inflation increases for 2023-2025 where inflation was assumed to be 2% or by 10% in 2022. Views from parishes have already come in that the latter is unviable so the budget for 2022 will be based on 5%. The 2020 income was 13,011 and in 2022 predicted to be 13,680. The vast majority of expenditure from direct ministry (stipend, pensions, housing).

Liz was then asked questions on where Safeguarding appeared in the accounts; it is under 'support for parishes' and the cost. It was £212,000 in 2020. It has been growing steadily and will go yet higher due to ever more robust requirements. There is a cooperation with Bath and Wells in the HR area to share Diocesan expertise and expenditure. The aim is to get the deficit to under a million pounds. (Figures do not include redundancy costs as there haven't been any). Regarding redundancy Liz explained Church House would be reducing costs by 10% next year but 8% has already been saved this year through normal staff movement ('natural wastage') so hopefully there would not be any redundancies as such.

Quinquennial Architects fees are reimbursed by Diocese but churches have to pay for the work as an outcome of quinquennial reports. Most parishes are with Ecclesiastical Insurance or Trinitas so she is negotiating a global reduction in fees. As part of this she needs help and plans to ask Deanery Treasurers to collate information on all parish insurance policies.

The question is do we keep our buildings with 500 historic churches where less than half have 100 people going to church each week. Is there a solution if we divest ourselves of some churches? Discussion followed on GS-2222 and how this might impact on funding. Cuts to social justice involve a change of approach where funding from Ecclesiastical insurance's charity arm has enabled community hubs to be set up. (E.g. Bridport). There is also a commitment to Net Zero for which a response is required by February. Basically we need to get down to under a million a year in deficit. Deanery Secretary will be provided with regular financial information to send out to Parishes.

7. **Has your church joined Eco Church?:** The Secretary provided a 5 minute PowerPoint on various ways Churches could look at funding and support. Each Church is different but the information and contacts had kindly been provided by individual experts who were not able to speak. The presentation with contact details will be sent out to Synod members. Thanks was expressed for this useful document and Sydling St Nicholas reported back on their Air Source Heat Pump which they were looking to install instead of the present system. It is expensive £175,000 (before VAT). However it is generally felt that we are in the early stages of developments and conservation issues will improve when current development projects come to market (i.e. Bio-oil and Hydrogen).
8. **Financial Statement:** Mr Michael Clarke thanked all those who had responded to the survey on Parish Share. It seems we will look to Option 2 but we will all pay what we can afford. This year in share 57% was paid by the end of August. (Compared to 71% at the same time last year).
9. **Diocesan Synod Feedback:** David Elliott had kindly supplied, and the Secretary circulated, a summary of the last meeting on 15th September. He asked if there were any questions. There were none.
10. **Sharing your Parish Events:** Stinsford – last Saturday in November 11 a.m. onwards in the Church a Christmas Fair. Buckland Newton – 11th December 10-12 noon a Bring and Buy / Christmas Social. St George's Fordington – Christmas Tree Festival 3, 4 ,5, 6th December and 3rd Dec 6 pm. Carols on the Green. Charminster an Advent course for non-church goers is being planned.
11. **Any Other Business:** Stephen Musgrave and Rachel Wood asked for an update and understanding on GS-2222. The Rural Dean explained there had been a consultation but not at a general level. The paper was a set of proposals for General Synod to debate rather than a final version and looks at churches and their roles in the local community. People should engage with their General Synod representatives if they wished their views to be taken into account. Stephen responded that he felt all Deanery Synod members should look up the information on GS-2222 and be aware that it was coming.
12. **Dates for next and future meetings: Tuesday 3rd May Fordington; Wed 20th July Kingston Maurward; Thursday 10th November Zoom. All start 7.30 p.m.
Next Standing Committee Thursday 11th Nov 10.30 a.m. Zoom.**
13. **Closing Prayer:** Canon John Wood gave the closing prayer.

Meeting closed at 20:58.