

**Acts of Diocesan Synod and Minutes of the meeting of the Diocesan Board of
Finance held on Tuesday 16th June 2009 at the Chapter House**

There were 98 members present and 16 apologies

1. Welcomes

There were no new members to the Diocese to welcome.

2. Notices & Questions

The Chair of the House of Laity, having given due notice, received a written response to a question directed to the Director of Social Responsibility (appended to the Minutes). There was no supplementary question.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th December 2008

The minutes were agreed and signed as a correct record.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Motion from Forest North Deanery

Mr Roger Parker, in moving the motion, noted that there had been a lack of grassroot participation in General Synod issues, with Synodical governance seeming to be top-down without recourse to the local deaneries. More participation at the local level would contribute to the well-being of the deaneries and, therefore, the diocese. Mr Parker suggested a formal mechanism whereby Diocesan Synod would inform Deanery Synods in advance of forthcoming business at General Synod, in order to allow debate and feedback. The motion was seconded by Mrs Caroline Nolan.

Both The Revds Canon Andrew Dow and David Primrose thought the motion timely; the current system relied upon members of General Synod making themselves available to report back to local deaneries. This was not always taken up by deaneries: Canon Dow noted that very few issues had been remitted to Diocesan Synod in recent years.

A discussion ensued in which disappointment was noted at the negative way in which the motion was phrased; a desire for a greater opportunity to generate debate at a local level was expressed; concern was voiced that General Synod was not necessarily representative of the main body of the church.

The President acknowledged that some fault lay at the diocesan level and in order to avoid a divisive vote invited the proposer to withdraw the motion and gave the assurances that General Synod members would be included in the Diocesan Synod planning committee and that matters from General Synod would be brought to Diocesan Synod. Mr Parker, in agreeing to the motion's withdrawal, responded that

the grassroots mechanism was still missing. The President noted his concern and agreed that the issue should be resolved at the diocesan level.

Synod agreed to the withdrawal of the motion.

7. Revisions to Standing Orders DS09/01

The Chair of the House of Clergy introduced the revised Standing Orders recommended by Bishop's Council. Canon Parsons stressed the necessity of rules that were both transparent and accessible; that they remain coherent and relevant; that the language reflects the character of the body. Additionally, the change that specifically allows senior employees of the DBF to be members of Synod was noted by the President. Mr John Kilgour requested that the motion be amended to specify the Standing Orders in DS 09/01.

The revised motion

'That Synod adopts a revised set of Standing Orders printed in DS 09/01 for introduction at the start of the new triennium'

was approved unanimously by Synod.

The Chairman of the Board of Finance took the chair for the following items.

8 Annual Accounts 2008 DS09/02

The Director of Finance introduced the accounts for 2008. He noted the continued deficit in Parish Share, which had now grown to £800k. Some of this would be recoverable (around £100k) when payments for Ordinands costs were received from the National Church. The sale of assets had generated valuable income: £2.7m from houses and glebe disposals. However, the historic assets had suffered losses of £4.5m giving an overall balance sheet fall of £2.7m. Synod was made aware of a contingent liability on lay worker's pensions that was being contested by the DBF.

Several members sought clarification on technical points and were given responses by the Director of Finance. The Chairman of the Board of Finance expressed his continuing concern at the failure of Parish Share contributions to take full account of inflationary cost pressures.

Synod resolved to receive the Annual Accounts for 2008.

9. Appointment of Auditors for 2009

On a motion proposed by the Chairman of the Board of Finance, Synod agreed the following resolution:

'That Synod appoint Mazars LLP as Auditors of the Annual Accounts for 2009 at a rate of remuneration to be agreed by Bishop's Council'

10. Building the Future DS09/03

The President introduced his paper by acknowledging that church closure was acceptable where the decision was taken after careful consideration by the local congregation. However, he made it clear that his primary objective in preparing the

paper was to secure the future of our churches as places of prayer. Presented as places of invitation and welcome church buildings were a crucial part of mission. The paper was intended to be a resource as well as an encouragement. He suggested that the policy statement be used as a checklist for PCCs to review the condition of their own churches and highlighted some of the recommendations in the paper and the examples of best practice contained within it. The President moved the motion.

Mr Timothy Royle spoke in favour of the motion, noting the lost opportunity afforded by the Millennium Halls Programme because of the innate conservatism of congregations. Village Halls had been renewed at great public expense leaving church buildings to languish empty six-days a week. There was a need for greater flexibility of use. The Chairman of the DAC, in responding, identified numerous examples across the diocese where re-ordering had created flexible spaces.

The Archdeacon of Gloucester encouraged all parishes to put the paper at the top of their agenda. As well as Friends organisations, the Archdeacon suggested congregations invite the whole community to contribute to the maintenance costs. Others cautioned against a begging bowl approach to giving. The Bishop of Tewkesbury noted projected clergy deployment numbers for 2020 and wondered if the present model of parish ministry could be sustained.

The President responded to the points raised. Whereupon Mr Chris Hill proposed an amendment to the motion: 'commending' the paper to PCCs. The Archdeacon of Cheltenham seconded the amendment and on a vote was carried. This became the substantive motion with 12 against.

'That Synod welcomes 'Building the Future' as an important statement and resource on the role of church buildings in the mission of the diocese, and formally adopts the policy that, as far as possible there should be a church building in every community

- *Enjoying the support of the community*
- *Open during the day*
- *With signage that explains the Christian faith and the Church's use*
- *A place where people pray, both in shared worship and on their own*
- *Ordered for good and lively worship*
- *In wide use by the community*
- *A place of welcome, dialogue and of healing*
- *Recognised as a sign of God's presence in the community that gathers there.*

and commend it to every PCC for discussion'

The President resumed the chair at this point in the meeting.

11. SW Dioceses Environmental Initiative

The Director of Social Responsibility, Canon Adrian Slade, introduced the motion by noting the Diocese's pioneering adoption of an environmental policy several years ago. In striving to reach the 20.12% target for greenhouse gas reduction by 2012, Canon Slade thanked parishes for supporting the Ecotricity initiative. He urged all Christian peoples to change the narrative of the debate about personal impact on the

environment by accepting responsibility for a change in behaviour and lifestyle. The motion represented a collective response from dioceses across the South-West in an effort to speak authoritatively.

The Revd John Jessop made reference to historical evidence relating to climate change and suggested that two simple ways of conserving energy would be for everyone to drive more slowly and for water consumption to be reduced through the installation of water meters in parsonages.

In proposing the motion, the Revd Jim Caterer supported the aspiration of the motion to work in partnership with government at the local and national level. The Revd Canon Celia Thomson seconded the motion, noting the efforts made by the Cathedral to reduce its carbon footprint. The Chairman of the DAC outlined some of the practical steps that congregations could take to reduce energy consumption, before turning to new technologies.

Nevertheless, Lady Dunrossil expressed the reservations of many about the prescriptive nature of the whole motion, and of the value of involving government. The solution remained a local issue. Whilst many were prepared to support the first part of the motion, others would not support the second point. The President proposed, and the proposer accepted, that the motion be taken in parts. As a result of the votes, the following resolution was adopted

‘This Synod calls upon all Dioceses, PCCs, Governing bodies of VA/VC schools and all church members to: take steps to reduce consumption of energy derived from fossil fuels; and to invest in renewable energy sources.’

12. Bishop’s Council Report DS09/04

Synod noted the report.

13. Final Act of Worship

The President led an act of worship to mark the final meeting of the triennium.

14. Date of Next Meeting – 24/10/09