

**Coventry Diocesan Synod and the
Annual General Meeting for the Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance.
Minutes – 21 June 2022**

Minutes of the meeting of the Coventry Diocesan Synod which was held on Tuesday 21 June 2022 at 5:30pm at Hope Hall, Harris Church of England Academy

Bishop of Coventry took the Chair 5:45pm

Diocesan Synod meeting

1 Welcomes, apologies and notices

The Bishop of Coventry welcomed everyone to Diocesan Synod, especially; Ted, the 3-month-old son of Roberta Harrison, Headteacher of Harris Church of England Academy; Jo Hands, new Governance and Grants Officer; Richard Hibbert, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Coventry, and Jacqueline Ladds, new Diocesan Secretary; and Helen Bryant, Chaplain of Harris Academy, the young people of the school and their music teacher who led the worship.

Apologies were noted and the Synod was quorate.

Helen Bryant led the worship with the pupils, and Bishop Christopher thanked them and led applause.

2 Minutes (DS 22/13)

The minutes of the Diocesan Synod meeting held on Saturday 19th March 2022 were approved.

3 Presidential address

The Bishop of Coventry addressed the Synod. A copy of Bishop Christopher's address can be accessed online. Bishop Christopher led prayers for the people of Ukraine and Russia.

The Chair of the House of Laity took the Chair

Motion to suspend the Standing Orders, to enable the Synod to meet as the CDBF Ltd.

AGM agenda

The Annual General Meeting of the Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd

As the members of the Board of Finance, Diocesan Synod was asked to consider the following items:

4 i) Minutes (DS 22/14)

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 22 June 2021 were approved

ii) Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2021 (DS 22/15)

Simon Danks addressed the meeting:

"The report and accounts before you have been reviewed by the audit and risk committee who met with Crowe, our appointed auditors after they completed their audit. Once again, the audit was clean with no matters raised by the auditors. The accounts were also closely scrutinised by the Diocesan Finance Group and Bishop's Council before being approved by the latter group in their role as directors, and now presented to you the members of the Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance.

The conditions experienced in 2020 did not let up in 2021 and last year proved to be another difficult year for clergy, parishes and the DBF with no growth in income. Only 92% of parish share offered and budgeted for in 2021 was received for which the DBF is grateful, but it has not returned to the level of share collected in 2019 of 98%. We can see at note 4a (p35) share collected is at an almost identical level compared with 2020. £155k or around a third of the shortfall was given in parish share relief. As before, this relief was funded by a release of historic funds, a gift to those in need this year, from those who gave generously in the past. Parochial fees were charged in full for the whole year, climbing back up to pre-pandemic levels and parishes will gain the benefit of this in their 2023 parish share offers.

With income remaining flat, and with no uplift for the planned inflationary increases to clergy and housing costs, the uplift in the cost of mission and ministry of £700k has contributed to the loss this year. Two factors affected this; first, having been unable to undertake a significant amount of work in maintaining our parsonages, the costs in this area rose, not only higher than 2020 but showing 17% higher than 2019 as our property team endeavoured to catch up on a backlog, managing challenges of scarcity of materials and increased costs associated with this. Second, our clergy pension liabilities (note 9 on p39) showed a rise of

45%. This is as a result of actuarial valuations of our liabilities, which leads to a technical accounting movement, if you have a particular interest in this then I ask that you speak to Julie Bellamy separately. As in the previous year, Diocesan Synod agreed to release £1.5m of historic funds, which you can see on the Statement of Financial Activities on page 27, this is shown underneath the normal release of investments of £2.1m This was in line with the strategy to:

1. support parishes with share relief,
2. support the ongoing sustainability of the Cathedral,
3. and to support the growth strategy.

Despite the release of these historic funds, we can see that the deficit before investment gains is £316k.

If we look at note 18 to the accounts (p44) we can see the release of these historic funds from the endowment in the “movements in the year” section. It is worth noting that during the year returns from our investments, and the gain on investment movements mean that we are only releasing approximately 50% of the £7.4m gain we had during the year. The historic funds that are available to use has increased in value to £48m. However, we must bring a note of caution at this point as movements in the financial markets have meant that in the first 5 months of this year, we have seen a reduction in values amounting to approximately 50% of last year’s growth.

Within my report last year, I asked synod members to be considering how we might wisely use our historic funds to support our ongoing strategy implementation so that we can have a long-lasting positive impact on the health of our diocese and on the impact that the kingdom of God makes in our communities. Whilst we will be discussing the growth strategy component later in this meeting we need to consider how we use our funds to deliver our “whole diocese” strategy; our progress towards being a net zero organisation being an important part of that overall picture, as well as our support of other dioceses in financial difficulties, church buildings, and our part supporting the mission overseas.”

Questions

John Anderson – a new member, asked for clarification on why accounts were being received rather than approved.

Simon Danks clarified that Bishop’s Council as the Directors had approved the accounts and the members of Synod receive them.

Following the presentation by the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, it was proposed:

a) *“That the Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2021 be received”;*
Vote carried

b) *“That the appointment of Crowe UK LLP Auditor of the Company shall be renewed until the next Annual General Meeting and that the Directors be authorised to fix the remuneration of the Auditor”.*
Vote carried

Thanks were given to Julie Bellamy and the Finance team.

Standing Orders reinstated

Diocesan Synod meeting agenda

5 Diocesan Board of Education Annual Report and Financial Statements (DS 22/16)

April Gold, Diocesan Director of Education, addressed the Synod on behalf of the Chair of the DBE who was unable to attend:

Accounts received by the Board of Education last Wednesday showed a clean audit despite new staff and systems.

The year was difficult for schools as the effects of the pandemic are ongoing resulting in a change to services and support provision, mainly to online. This resulted in more CPD and more engagement. It also saved money on venues and courses and so fed into the healthy financial position. We have plans for these funds:

- Beacon Project – 5 schools supporting vulnerable pupils to be educated in their local community; changing the mindset of staff, ensuring inclusion and resulting in improvements in attendance. It is hoped to see children thrive in their community.
- Alive 2023 - funding for collective worship events – all primary schools will attend across 4 worship events at Stoneleigh Arena.

There will be sensible reserves left.

The Chair of the House of Laity proposed the motion:

- “That the Report and Financial Statements of Coventry Diocesan Board of Education for the year ended 31 December 2021 be noted.”*

Vote carried unanimously.

The Chair of the House of Clergy took the Chair.

The Chair proposed a motion to suspend the Standing Orders, to enable a discussion

6 Diocesan Mission and Growth Strategy

- The Synod received an update on the Diocesan growth strategy from Barry Dugmore, Phil Atkinson, Matt Spina and Dave Poultney. Stories were shared of those who are engaging with the Church Urban Plants and the revitalisation that is happening in these locations.

The Reverend Claire McArthur shared her joy of attending Coventry North and East Deaneries, and St Laurence hub resource church where Abby Rhodes was installed, saying that it ‘was wonderful to be there and they are now working out how to work in tandem by having their own synod, sharing work and their buzzing spirit’.

A question was asked in relation to the deanery plan and hub church, which came first? Dave Poultney responded that deaneries always have a plan and the hub church is a response to an identified need by the deanery.

Barry Dugmore led prayers for the work.

Standing Orders reinstated

7 Questions received under S069

Question 1

Anthony Rich to ask Bishop Christopher:

Has contact been established by the CofE with the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, and with what results?

Question 2

Anthony Rich to ask Bishop Christopher:

Has there been further dialogue between the CofE and either or both of the Russian Orthodox Church/ The Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine (or Uniate Ukrainian church in communion with Rome) and to what effect?

Bishop Christopher: A lot is happening on a number of levels, some of which cannot be shared publicly but the CofE is working with Ukraine and Russia, using every effort to change the language of endorsement of the war and to seek peace with justice. St Andrew’s, Moscow is a member of the Community of the Cross of Nails.

8 Closing prayers and thanksgiving

Bishop Christopher closed the meeting at 19:31 with prayer.

To note the next meeting of the Synod will be on Saturday 19 November 2022 at Hope Hall, Harris Church of England Academy (Harris Drive, Overslade Lane, Rugby CV22 6EA).