

CARLISLE DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE LIMITED**Minutes of a Meeting of the Carlisle Diocesan Board of Finance, held at Newbiggin Village Hall, Newbiggin on Saturday 5th March 2022****Chair's Remarks**

The Chair, Mr Jim Johnson, introduced the meeting. He reminded the members of the Board that at their last meeting they had approved the budget for 2022. The Board's financial strategy was to maximise income in order to maximise spending on Mission and Ministry, with an accompanying objective of breaking even.

We had achieved our objective in recent years but were always aware that the context changes and events happen. The Chair was aware of a number of major contingencies that we needed to be ready for.

The first of these was achieving the academisation of the remaining 90-plus church schools. The government had said they had to become academies, but that we would probably need at least one more Multi Academy Trust in the Diocese to accommodate all our schools in an environment with a strong Christian ethos. We current had the Good Shepherd Multi Academy Trust which provided a supportive home for approximately 10 schools. If more Multi Academy Trusts had to be formed it was unclear what the cost implications would be.

The second was that Synod had voted in favour of continuing to operate Rydal Hall as the Diocesan Retreat House and Conference Centre. Working capital had been allocated to tide Rydal over the period in which Covid-19 had affected its financial position but in his opinion there remained some uncertainty about the future trading environment.

The third contingency related to the Church of England's commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030. An environmental group had been set up to plan for this and a sample of parsonages had been inspected to give an idea of the cost to bring them up to as close to a carbon neutral status as they can be. The quoted cost was currently at least £100k per house. Given that the Diocese holds over 100 houses for local ministry purposes the total costs could be very significant.

We would continue to pursue our policy of disposing of surplus properties and investing the proceeds to fund mission into the future. If we could bring forward projects that were innovative and outreaching, and could produce measured outcomes, we could potentially receive support through the relationships that have been built with the National Church Institutions.

The following questions were raised: -

- Was consideration being given to allowing church schools to form academies with non-church schools bearing in mind that it was possible to do this in ways that ensured that the Christian ethos is maintained even in a non-church school MAT. Was the Board of Education, with the support of the Board of Finance,

considering multi membership MAT's rather than just insisting on church-school-MAT-only models?

The Chair of the DBE, Revd Andrew Towner, responded to the question. He expressed the view that the Kingdom is a place of blessing for all and that therefore we don't want to do anything that dilutes the Christian distinctiveness of any of our schools. So, we are looking to find models that would both ensure that Christian distinctiveness and work in the geography of Cumbria. As our thinking develops we will bring more information to Synod and give opportunities to for discussion.

- The Chair of the DBE appeared to make a distinction between mission and traditional ministry. This risked creating a false dichotomy and we should instead view healthy, traditional models of ministry within a healthy parish system being highly missional.

Bishop James responded to the question. He agreed that what we might term traditional ministry is absolutely fundamentally part of the mission of the church. He believed that the distinction being drawn was between a traditional version of the ministry of word and sacrament and the kind of innovative outreach and evangelism that we had been experimenting with in recent years, with considerable success. Both of these aspects were highly valued and Synod should be in no doubt about our continued commitment to parish ministry.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Diocesan Board of Finance held on Saturday 9th October 2022 were approved with an amendment to paragraph 2 in relation to the disposal of surplus houses.

Minutes of the Finance Committee & Questions to the Chair

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on Wednesday, 15th September 2021 and Wednesday 17th November 2021 were received.

A member asked the question regarding the September Finance Committee minutes in which there was a suggestion of increasing capacity in the property department. Derek Hurton explained additional support was being provided in the property department but that there were some complicating factors, particularly in relation to Covid which had delayed progress.