

BISHOP'S COUNCIL AND STANDING COMMITTEE

Chairman: The Bishop of Carlisle
Secretary: Mr Derek Hurton

Report of the meeting held at Rydal Hall on Wednesday 7th September

Present: - The Bishop of Carlisle (in the Chair), the Dean, The Archdeacon of Westmorland and Furness, the Archdeacon of West Cumberland, the Associate Archdeacon of West Cumberland, the Revd R P Ham, The Revd J Maycock, the Revd A B Norman, the Revd S Thompson, the Revd A Towner, Dr C Angus, Mr A R H Cook, Mr C Howarth, Mr D Hurton, Mr J A E Johnson, Mrs R Milburn, Mr N Barrett & Mr M Lawson.

In attendance: - Canon C Butland, Mrs C Bell, Miss K Roughton, Sophie Hodge.

Devotions were led by Revd Andrew Towner.

Apologies for absence: no apologies were received.

The Council approved the minutes of the meeting of Bishop's Council held on 5th May 2022.

Matters Arising:

i) Introduction to the new Bishop of Penrith: Bishop James introduced the new Bishop of Penrith, Rob Saner-Haigh, to Bishop's Council Members. He is already well known in the diocese having been a curate here and the vicar of Holy Trinity in Kendal for 10 years. Bishop Rob moved on to become the Director of Mission and Ministry in Newcastle Diocese but has now returned to the diocese. His consecration was on the 15th of July in York Minster and there will be a service to welcome and install him at Carlisle Cathedral on the 11th of September.

ii) PCR2 – updated, expected publication date: Derek Hurton gave an update on the publication of the PCR2 report. In May the council were advised that the Executive Summary and press release would be published in mid-June at the earliest. That date has now been pushed back to the end of September or early October 2022.

A question was raised surrounding the clergy wellbeing work that was carried out in 2021, and if there was going to be any follow up with Bishop's Council. Derek Hurton advised that he a written or verbal update could be provided to a future meeting, and the topic could be added to the Steering Committee agenda for further discussion.

Regular Reporting:

Carbon Neutral 2030: The Council noted the report on the work undertaken in recent months under the guidance of the environmental group.

During the discussion the following points were raised.

- The number of returns from churches on the Energy Footprint Tool appears to be very low. Can this be revisited? The best way of achieving a higher return rate is keep reminding and nudging churches, but bearing in mind that all return rates for parochial information are lower in the post pandemic period.
- A request for continued provision of information to help churches, including regular digests of the information and guidance being provided by the National Church. It would be helpful if this could include a document detailing easy wins and quick fixes.
- Concern over the scale of the challenge for many of our churches, especially large, historic buildings and those in rural areas. The national approach is increasingly to focus on the 20% of buildings with the highest emissions, recognising that small rural churches used at most once a week and which had switched to renewable electricity suppliers would have a very small carbon footprint.
- Whether there would be substantial funding available to the Dioceses or Parishes to help them make the transition to being carbon neutral. The Church Commissioners have indicatively allocated £190m of funding for the next 9 years for the overall carbon neutral agenda but have not yet said where it will be spent.

Reaching Deeper: Kerry Roughton gave a verbal update to the Council. Recruitment to the vacant West Coast Pioneer post is under way with a view to a start date early in the new year. Sustainability assessments are underway on the projects this Autumn for a post-covid review of financial sustainability. In conjunction with the sustainability review we are reviewing programme outcomes, to see whether they remain achievable in the light of the impact of the pandemic and where they will be achieved. Fresh Expression group sizes continue to be smaller than anticipated in the original bid, but we are currently meeting the average weekly attendance expected numbers across the whole programme of work.

Feedback from June Synod: There were no comments or feedback from the June Synod.

God for All Vision Refresh: Bishop James introduced this item. Bishop's Council have been involved throughout the Vision Refresh process and various stages of work over the last three years.

In June of this year the ecumenical church leaders' Strategy Group endorsed the refreshed Vision and Strategy and a number of 'component strategies' and agreed to take them for 'denominational proof-reading' through September and October. This Bishop's Council meeting provides the main opportunity for this 'proof-reading' within the Anglican Diocese. The associated financial resources and priorities will be provided through the Diocesan budget which will be agreed through Bishop's Council, the DBF Finance Committee and the DBF/Synod in September and October.

The authors of the overview and component strategies have made reference to the theological foundations on which their work is based, but this is more explicit in some areas than others. For example, the note on 'God for All missional background thinking and reflections' illustrates the theological underpinning of the sections in the Overview on our 'shared understanding of mission'.

The refreshed Vision and Strategy will be presented at Diocesan Synod on 15 October, followed by a roadshow of 6 events in October and January featuring Bishops James and Rob. These events are being planned with an Anglican emphasis and for a principally Anglican audience. Other denominational leaders will be tailoring the presentations for their own people. The content is designed as a mixture of strategic principles and approaches, together with some specific actions and funding plans. The events themselves will include opportunities for discussion and questions but at this stage the detail has not been worked out.

There is a church leaders' Strategy Group meeting on the 5th of October, prior to Bishop James presenting the Vision and Strategy to Diocesan Synod. Bishop's Council members were invited to provide specific comments that could be feed into that meeting.

During the discussion the following comments were made:

- the four 'themes' are the focus of our mission, so we need to link them to the shared understanding of mission
- is the mission section 'ruthless' enough in giving a focus and priorities?
- the document could helpfully acknowledge that Mission Communities have both a theological basis and a structural basis

Diocesan Budget 2023+: Derek Hurton introduced the Diocesan Budget 2023+ item and associated detailed paper.

He reminded the Council that the budget exists in order to achieve the strategy, with the Council's role being to set out the priorities, and the DBF's role being to provide funding to support those priorities.

He outlined ingredients that went to make up the budget including: aspects of the current content; the budget principles; priorities, especially continuing to invest in local ministry in Mission Communities and support the implementation of God for All; and concrete expenditure proposals.

The results of inputting the full range of assumptions and funding bids identified within the process to date showed a substantial and growing deficit. Revisiting assumptions and identifying potential areas of mitigation in relation to sourcing external funding for new work and requiring existing initiatives to become self-sustaining would reduce the deficit substantially but not eliminate it.

At that stage the material factors impacting the budget are higher inflation, lower Parish Offer and Parochial Fees and relatively static local ministry costs (in cash terms) achieved by a further fall in local ministry numbers, as advised by Archdeacons. Within the local ministry budget housing costs rise as we adapt properties to reduce their carbon footprint, offset by a fall in pension costs as the Clergy Pension scheme contribution rate is reduced.

Attention has therefore been given to the question of whether the local church, across the county as a whole, can take more ownership of the deployment of ministry and its financing, and if so, what the impact will be. Modelling shows that if the Offer rises at the same rate as stipends over the budget period, then we will reach 2028 in a sustainable position.

The draft budget is therefore likely to emphasise the goal of increasing the Offer as part of a wider dialogue in which plans for mission, ministry and finance are worked out together by bishops/archdeacons and the local church (mission community). The potential to access external funding, including for church revitalization, planting & pioneering and for growing younger will be part of the discussions.

This year's 3% increase in Offer supports the view that an increase in Offer can be achieved on the back of proper dialogue, but there are also arguments against this, particularly in relation to the longer term trends and the current levels of inflation and economic uncertainty.

Given the age profile of our congregations we should not expect such an approach to achieve financial sustainability in the medium or long term, so beyond, say, 2025, sustainability would be dependent upon the God for All strategy having an impact.

During the discussion the following comments were made:

- this is about educating PCC's that we are one Diocese and encouraging more affluent parishes to support their less affluent neighbours.
- if parishes feel they are supported and listened to, they are more likely to be receptive to the process and generous in their giving.
- this approach suggests a substantial culture change in local dialogue and planning.
- Mission Communities play a big part in this process and need support. We have one chance to get this right, and a lot will depend on whether there is good local leadership.

On balance, members agreed that this approach should be followed in the more detailed budget to be presented to the DBF Finance Committee in 2 weeks' time. In doing so the Council recognised that it would require the full commitment of senior clergy and mission community leaders and a need to follow through on deployment and recruitment decisions.

Archdeacon Review Group: Cameron Butland introduced the Archdeaconries Review Group Report. The Archdeaconries Review Group (ARG) was set up by the Bishop's Council at the January 2022 Residential. At that meeting Bishop's Council supported Bishop James in progressing the appointment of a new Bishop of Penrith, a decision which has implications for the 2021 Task Force's recommendation of reducing the number of Bishops and Archdeacons to four in total. The appointment of a new Bishop of Penrith together with the Task Force's recommendation could be taken to imply that the diocese will have two archdeacons going forward. The ARG was therefore given the job of considering the three archdeaconries and roles of the archdeacons.

The decision by the Archdeacon of Carlisle to step down from his role and leave the Diocese, alters the context of the discussion and debate. For the immediate future his various roles and responsibilities will be covered by his colleagues. The Diocese now needs to assess what the diocese is looking for from the role in the future and to ask how it can best support the ecumenical county's Vision and Strategy, while ensuring that the role is realistic and does not overwhelm those who are asked to fulfil it.

Cameron thanked the many people who have taken the time and trouble to contribute to the report and who have expressed their views clearly. The report was made available to the Council members at the meeting. Diocesan Synod will be briefed on the process at their meeting in October and invited to submit comments and ideas. The Council will be able to discuss the issue at its meeting on 7 November and the January 2023 residential and proposals will be presented to Diocesan Synod in March.

One member wanted to highlight that maintaining the status quo, at least for the time being, is not currently presented as an option but should be given consideration.

Steering Committee Report: The Council received the report of the meeting held on 12th April 2022.

Mission and Pastoral Committee Matters: The following draft minutes of the Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Committees were received by the Council:

Archdeaconry of Westmorland and Furness	16 th June 2022
Archdeaconry of West Cumberland	21 st June 2022
Archdeaconry of Carlisle	9 th June 2022