

24th September 2022

Questions under Standing Orders

The following questions have been submitted

1. From Mr Peter Holman, Carnmarth North Deanery

For Episcopal College

The Diocese of Truro has recently been repeatedly urged to be 'open, honest and transparent' about its financial affairs, particularly in relation to its Transforming Mission (TM) projects. Specifically, there have been calls for the Sustainability Plans for all five TM Projects in Cornwall to be published, alongside an 'open, honest and transparent' update on progress against these plans. This is particularly important as On The Way deanery plans are developed and implemented: these plans will have a huge impact on the retention or otherwise of stipendiary priests in Cornwall.

Yet the Diocese has refused to make these documents - and TM finances generally - public. This would encourage much-needed confidence in Strategic Development Funding initiatives which, as the Chote report (Feb. 2022) says, have caused concern across the country. The report notes 'a broader lack of trust and unity of purpose for which these schemes seem to serve as a lightning rod'.

The Diocese of Truro's failure to provide details of the finances involved in these expensive initiatives has increased scepticism across Cornwall. They are not detailed in the Diocese's annual accounts.

Would the Episcopal College please agree to independent scrutiny of the specific targets and achievements of the TM projects as set out in their original Sustainability Plans. If the Bishops and Archdeacons are confident about the schemes' success, why will they not agree? What is there to hide?

2. From Mr Martin Saunders, Pydar Deanery

For the Diocesan Secretary

The Diocesan Secretary knows that I am disappointed that no space has yet been made in the Synod's agendas to discuss the Governance report, which was received by Church House in June 2020, although apparently it has been discussed by the BDC. There are several points which should be discussed by this synod. At random, by way of example, does the membership of the BDC and the board of the Company have to be precisely the same. No disrespect to our retiring Dean, but is it necessary that the Dean is a director of the Company, with all its legal obligations and liabilities that entails, as well as definitely being on the BDC. Surely the Dean has enough on his plate without being lumbered by these further obligations.

When will this report be discussed by Synod?

3. From Mr Martin Saunders, Pydar Deanery

For the Finance Team

Each year, the MMF toolkit explains in detail how the MMF call per benefice is calculated, giving a financial breakdown by incumbent, other stipendiary priests, lay readers etc and the central costs element. Parishes are led to think that their MMF call funds these costs. However, that appears not to be the case. To the extent that 'Total Return' monies are used in any one year, these monies are used to pay clergy stipends and for which, I understand, they have to be. An equivalent amount of the MMF call is used to fund other Church House costs.

Should not the MMF monies received by Church House be used only for the purpose for which they were asked?