

## September 2024 Report from the Bishops Diocesan Council

This report comes from the Diocesan Secretary on behalf of the Bishops Diocesan Council (BDC) - it is addressed to members of Diocesan Synod. When timings allow, members receive a report that has been signed off or approved by a BDC meeting, on this occasion the report has not been before BDC. The paper is not confidential and can be forwarded or passed on by members, we particularly encourage its use as a report to Deanery Synod.

These reports usually follow a similar format, if there are things that you would like to see included or if you have questions about anything here please contact Simon Cade or the officer involved directly. Because this is the first report of a new triennium with some new members there is a bit more explanation than you will usually see, they are usually two sides.

### 1. **Fruitfulness and Sustainability Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal**

Implementation of the Diocesan Plan and Deanery Plans is overseen by the Board for Change and Renewal which is chaired by Bishop Hugh, the lead officer for the Board is **Ruth Marriott**. The Board reports to BDC.

- **Children and young people**  
This is one of our priority areas, it is a priority in all the deanery plans and in the diocesan plan. The Assets Strategy approved by BDC and Synod last year identified the need to bring additional diocesan resources to this area of work, but as yet plans for how to do this (what the extra work should be and where) have not been finalised. BDC have looked at what is currently going on in parishes and schools, and have sought evidence of “best practice” and what is effective. BDC will be looking at this again in the autumn.  
In the meantime we are proceeding with three “Flourish” pilots across the diocese, information about these is available elsewhere.
- **People planning and clergy recruitment**  
The last year has seen the successful recruitment of a record number of parish priests (there will be 15 new incumbents in 2024 - twice a typical year) and we are continuing to prioritise clergy appointments into 2025.  
BDC have asked for a comprehensive “people plan” to help inform decisions about clergy and lay deployment, including the work of volunteers and parish officers.
- **Working with communities experiencing deprivation**  
BDC have reviewed the use of Lowest Income Communities Funding (LICF) - this is money received from the national church to support ministry and mission in communities experiencing economic deprivation. As the trustees of the Diocesan Board of Finance, which is the body that receives the funding, BDC members were reassured that parishes and deaneries are using the funds in line with diocesan priorities and in accordance with terms of the grant.
- **Statistics for Mission**  
Members may wonder what happens to the annual returns made to Church House Westminster - the autumn count of weekly attendance and the number of children in our congregations etc. The draft 2023 numbers showed that nationally average weekly attendance rose slightly between 2022 and 2023 for both the whole congregation and children and young people. The Diocese of Truro adult numbers tracked the national trend, slightly up on 2022 but still not back to pre-pandemic levels. The data doesn't tell us whether this is “new”

people or folk returning slowly after the pandemic - we think it is probably a mixture of both. Whichever it is, this is better news than we are used to - well done!

The more worrying news is that in the Diocese of Truro the number of children and young people that we are recording continues to fall, at least on the draft data. Between 2019 and 2023 the diocese saw one of the sharpest reductions in the number of children in any diocese (a 25% drop) and contrary to the national trend an ongoing fall between 2022 and 2023.

There are still some health warnings about the data, not least because with very small overall numbers a couple of big churches with patchy data can skew the diocesan headline. We will have a better picture when the validated data is published later in the year. In the meantime, when it comes to time to fill in the forms please do so - the data does get noticed and used.

## 2. Governance

The lead officer for governance is **Kate Cortez**.

The **Vacancy in See Committee** completed its work and finalised the diocesan Statement of Needs which has been published. Please pray for the Crown Nominations Commission who will be working to nominate our new bishop, the relevant meetings are on 6<sup>th</sup> September for shortlisting candidates and then interviews on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> October. We expect an “announcement” in January 2025 and a likely “welcome” in the diocese in the Easter season next year.

You will be aware that **elections for the new triennium** of Diocesan Synod have taken place. The full membership list will be shared separately. We are pleased to report that the recent elections have returned a higher number of members than in our previous triennium with 89% of lay spaces filled and 63% of clergy. There are 68 members elected with 40% returning and 60% new to Diocesan Synod.

There will be elections and appointments to a number of bodies which we ask you to consider putting yourself forward for:

- Bishop’s Diocesan Council (nomination papers issued 10 September 2024)
- Diocesan Board of Education (nomination papers issued 10 September 2024)
- Finance, Assets and Risk Committee (someone with an accounting background)
- Property Management Committee (someone with a surveying/health and safety background)

Members of Diocesan Synod are involved in most of this, you are probably an elector or can stand for election, or both. If you want more information about this contact Kate Cortez. One complicating factor to note is that for some roles there are separate constituencies for each archdeaconry. Either way, please keep this work in your prayers and think prayerfully about how to vote and what to stand for.

The Diocesan Board of Finance has employed a three-step cycle of **governance review** with an independent review in 2019/20 followed by an officer led review in 2021/2022 and then a trustee led review in 2023/2024. This final part of the sequence has now completed and Jeffrey Terry, parish priest and retired barrister, has presented his report to the BDC. Officers and members are now giving their attention to his recommendations.

## 3. Safeguarding

A robust independent audit of diocesan, cathedral and parish safeguarding was undertaken by INEQE as part of a national program of audit recommended by the IICSA inquiry; our report was published in early July and is available [here](#). BDC and

the cathedral chapter, with the bishop and dean, have accepted the recommendations of the audit in full.

The audit findings are very positive and are a huge credit to parish safeguarding officers, clergy, churchwardens and all those who support them, particularly the diocesan safeguarding team under **Andy Earl**. We obviously can't afford to be complacent, but the report is a solid endorsement that at all levels there are good people doing the right thing. Well done!

Implementation of the recommendations will be led by the safeguarding team under the watch of the independent Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel. We expect to report to synod on progress on this either later this year or early next year.

#### 4. **Operational**

The Church House team have relocated to the Old Cathedral School, next to Truro Cathedral. This puts us close to our partners in the cathedral team and we are easier to access by public transport. The offices are much smaller (and cheaper) and while we have a bigger main room (the Assembly Room for those who know it) there is less parking space - visitors will usually need to either book parking with the office (if available) or use town centre public parking.

#### 5. **Finance and Budget**

The Director of Finance and Assets is **Sophie Eddy**.

BDC receive regular reports from the Finance, Assets and Risk Committee (FAR) to keep them updated on the budget situation, our management of risk, and looking forward to future financial arrangements.

FAR are reporting more positive news on MMF contributions from parishes. Despite ongoing challenges at local level PCCs are continuing to honour the commitments made in deanery plans, as is the DBF through the allocation of LICF and mission funding, and by working hard to make as many clergy appointments as possible. The 2025 draft budget will go to the October meeting of BDC and then come to Diocesan Synod in November. The ongoing use of reserves to support deanery plans and the Diocesan Plan for Change and Renewal in line with the Assets Strategy will mean another significant deficit budget in 2025 (this is the consequence of using £22million of DBF reserves to support parishes). BDC continue to monitor the long-term use of assets to ensure that it is within agreed expectations and in line with diocesan and deanery priorities.

Members who have questions about any of these matters or any of the work of the diocese can contact the officer responsible or Simon Cade. Contact details of officers are [here](#)

If an item is on the agenda for discussion then any member can raise a question or make a point during the debate. You may want to let us know if there is useful information that we can gather in advance.

Members can also ask a more formal "Question under Standing Orders" - there is information about how to do this in the Guide to Synod which you should have received.