

Diocesan Synod – 16th March 2024
Standing Committee Report

13th February 2024

- Opening worship was led by the Archdeacon of Walsall. It was noted that this was the Archdeacon's last meeting before his retirement in May. Bishop Michael thanked him for his service on the Council's behalf.
- Bishop Michael thanked Bishop Sarah for her ministry as acting diocesan bishop last Autumn.
- Under Matters Arising Amanda Robbie asked for an update on Clergy Wellbeing. Bishop Matthew said that this had been discussed at the Bishop's Staff residential last October and the aim was to identify an overarching strategy based around supporting clergy to build resilience and offering support when needed. Work on this was ongoing.
- Bishop Michael gave a verbal report on senior appointments. The recruitment process for a new Dean was a complicated process, and interviews were to take place in April with a possible installation in September. Interviews for the Bishop of Wolverhampton would take place in June. He was grateful to Bishop Jonathan Clark for providing episcopal care in the Area until 31st March. Regarding the role of Archdeacon of Walsall he was minded to delay the process until a new Bishop of Wolverhampton was in place. He would be appointing two current clergy as associate/acting archdeacons to provide cover in the meantime. He expressed thanks to the Revds Jo Farnworth and Mary Thomas for their work in Salop during the Archdeacon's absence.
- Members divided into small groups to discuss the diocesan strategy document and answer set questions. Each group then gave feedback which was noted. The strategy set out was supported to go forward to Diocesan Synod for consideration.
- As the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC), members noted reports on Pastoral Schemes and Orders completed and Suspensions and Restrictions.
- A revision of the constitution of the Stafford Area Mission and Pastoral Committee was approved.
- The DMPC also approved a proposal that the churches of Saint Aidan, and Saint Chad's Chadsmoor should become parish churches of the parish. This related to a 2009 pastoral scheme creating the parish of Chadsmoor. The scheme had required the Bishop's consultation with the DAC and DMPC, and no record of consultation with the DMPC at the time had been found.
- Meeting as the Diocesan Board of Finance Council, members then received the minutes of the meetings of the Finance and Asset Management Committee (FAM) in November 2023 and January 2024.
- Common Fund write off applications in respect of Leigh and of Moxley were approved.
- The Finance Director gave a report back on the 2023 budget and Common Fund receipts, summarising the challenges moving forward. In essence, it was encouraging and gave tangible credibility to our 2024 break-even budget. Our investments had gained about 5% (worth £1.9m), however, the property revaluation had seen a reduction in value of about 3% (worth £3.6m). The cashflow position was looking relatively good. It would rely on certain, intentional asset sales, and an increase in letting income. It had benefited already by the National Church releasing its Low-income Support funding. There were bound to be some surprises such as house purchases but with the usual level of monitoring and control, hopefully and surprises

could be managed effectively. Common Fund receipts were a source of encouragement, at around £100k up on the previous year; they continued to be a vindication of the new formula's introduction. The receipt of money to invest from closed church building sales and the partial reimbursement of associated costs, reminded us of the necessity of managing well all aspects of buildings and property. Where included within the budget, the disposal of the right buildings, and the right time, would be essential to realise the balanced budget set with the use of Total Return Approach and other related income streams.

JD February 2024