

DIOCESAN SYNOD
Sixth Meeting of the Fortieth Session
DRAFT Minutes of a meeting held via Zoom
Wednesday 21 June at 18:00

Attendees:

House of Bishops – 2 representatives

House of Clergy – 43 representatives

House of Laity – 32 representatives

Please note that not everyone attended the whole meeting, and this is reflected in the voting.

Apologies:

Apologies were received from 17 members of Diocesan Synod: 9 Clergy, 8 Laity

Opening Prayers were led by Angela Robson.

NORWICH DIOCESAN BOARD OF FINANCE LTD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. Introduction by the NDBF Chair and Chair's Comments

Mark Jeffries, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance introduced the first part of the meeting, the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Norwich Diocesan Board of Finance Limited (NDBF) and explained that all Diocesan Synod members are members of NDBF and were therefore invited to take part in the Annual General Meeting.

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 16 June 2022

No matters arising were received.

Subject to the year 2022 being added to the title, the minutes were unanimously agreed and would be signed as a true record at a suitable time.

3. Receive and adopt the Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022

The Chair sought permission for Mark Proctor, Partner, Lovewell Blake LLP, to join the meeting.

Mark Proctor confirmed that the 2022 accounts received a clean audit with no issues to report. The Chair referred to the previously circulated report, explained that the report and accounts had been considered by the Bishop's Council of Trustees on 20 May 2023 and invited the Director of Finance to address the meeting.

Susan Bunting, Director of Finance, highlighted key points from the Trustees' and Directors' Report incorporating the Strategic Report and the financial statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2022.

The Chair invited questions.

There were none.

The Chair moved to adopt the Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022.

The result was as follows:

In Favour 77 Against 0 Abstentions 0

4. To approve the re-appointment of Messrs Lovewell Blake as Auditors at a fee to be arranged.

The Chair moved to approve the re-appointment of Messrs Lovewell Blake as Auditors at a fee to be arranged.

The Bishop of Lynn asked for how long Messrs Lovewell Blake had been Auditors for the Diocese of Norwich.

Susan Bunting gave an assurance that whilst Messrs Lovewell Blake had been appointed for a significant time, the Audit team regularly rotated membership.

The Bishop of Lynn cautioned that it would be good practice to re-tender for this appointment in due course.

The result was as follows:

In Favour 74 Against 3 Abstentions 0

Action: Re-tender for the appointment of auditors to be considered.

The Chair thanked Synod for their participation during the Annual General Meeting of the NDBF and handed the Chair to the Revd Dr Patrick Richmond, Chair of the House of Clergy for the first session of Diocesan Synod.

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5. The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2023

- (i) **Amendment to item 5, page 4, para 4** “The Archdeacon of Norwich invited Synod to join small teams around each table to discuss three questions” to be amended to read: “The Archdeacon of Norwich invited Synod to consider three questions”
- (ii) **Amendment to item 8, page 7, para 2 “The Revd Canon Steven Sivyer” to be amended to read** “The Revd Dr Steven Sivyer”
- (iii) **Amendment to the spelling of** Bilson to Billson on pages 8 and 9 of the draft minutes.
- (iv) **Amendment to the supplementary question Under Standing Order 71**
(Question 3) “The Revd Kevin Billson asked how brothers and sisters might act upon their conscience” to read: “Has any thought been given by the Bishops’ and the cathedral as to how the endorsement of the prayers of love and faith might offend the conscience of those who cannot accept them, and so become a stumbling block to ‘the weak’ in the terms described by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 8?”

Subject to these amendments, the minutes were unanimously agreed and would be signed as a true record at a suitable time.

6. Matters arising from the previous meeting

Item 5: It was confirmed that a mechanism had been put in place for Diocesan Synod members not present at the meeting on 18 March 2023 to have a voice. Archdeacon Keith James had been in contact with those members and had passed all feedback to the Bishop of Norwich.

In response to a query on the format of recent minutes which no longer included individual names of those who raised questions during meetings, Stuart Jones, Diocesan Registrar, confirmed that there was no legal requirement for contributors to be named in the formal minutes of meetings. Tim Sweeting, Diocesan Secretary, clarified that the format of Diocesan Synod minutes would be taken to the Agenda Planning Group for further discussion.

The Chair confirmed that information on Parochial Fees had been circulated to Diocesan Synod by email on 8 June 2023 and was due for further consideration by General Synod when it met in July.

Action: The format of Diocesan Synod minutes to be a future agenda item for the Agenda Planning Group.

7. The Norwich Diocesan Board of Finance: 2022 Annual Review and Summarised Accounts

Tim Sweeting, Diocesan Secretary, spoke to the Annual Review and Summarised Accounts previously circulated and explained the aim of the report was to give a high-level summary of the key activities of the Norwich Diocesan Board of Finance staff, the Parish Support Team and commended the work of the team over the last year in their committed support of the parishes.

The Chair invited comments.

Members thanked Tim Sweeting for the hard work that had gone into this report and the efforts of the Parish Support Team across the year.

The Chair proposed that the 2022 Report and Accounts be received.

The 2022 Report and Accounts were unanimously agreed.

The Revd Dr Patrick Richmond thanked Synod and handed the Chair to Kandi Kammoun, Chair of the House of Laity for the second part of the meeting.

8. Diocesan Vision Strategy and Update

This item was taken out of sequence at this point on the agenda (previously listed as item 9).

The Bishop of Lynn gave a verbal update on the Diocesan Vision and Strategy including the Vision Programme Board (VPB) which was in place to set up and oversee the projects, highlighting three areas of note:

1. It was hoped that the eight projects together enabled a step change in the mission and ministry of benefices and other church communities.
2. A funding bid had been submitted for a Director of Mission and Ministry, an ordained priest to lead on Project 3: Increase intentionality and ownership of local mission through an increase on the number of parish/benefice mission plans with support from the deaneries.
3. It was very important to seek God's grace for the fulfilment, or the changing, of these plans to further shape the strategic expression of aspirations as we seek to be a prayerful, pastoral and prophetic people.

Members welcomed the proposed appointment of Director of Mission and Ministry and asked what measures of success had been set to ensure this plan was successful.

The Bishop of Lynn explained the projects had different success measures built in. This was not planned to be a short-term exercise. It was hoped the Diocese would be stronger in faith by the end of the project. The aspirations of the parishes were paramount.

The Bishop of Norwich invited the Very Revd Dr Andrew Braddock, former Director of Mission and Ministry in the Diocese of Gloucester, to comment.

The Dean thanked the Bishop of Lynn for the organic metaphor in her presentation and reflected that as we seek to follow the way of God both deeply in prayer and within our local context, the role of Director of

Mission and Ministry was key to joining people and church communities together to enable mutual learning and allowing local wisdom to be shared more widely. One of the joys of the role of Director of Mission and Ministry had also been bringing a sense of the strategic mission to local communities and bringing stories together.

Members joined a wide-ranging discussion which endorsed mission action planning. One member of Synod suggested that a Director of Mission and Ministry should be paid the same as parish clergy.

Tim Sweeting explained the aim was to engage people working at a local level, to ensure the work was responsive to local needs and wishes, where local people felt the Spirit was moving, whilst keeping a conceptual framework within which this work would sit. If it was possible to recruit to the role, it would be paid at a rate equivalent to the Archdeacons pay with a housing allowance.

The Chair invited further questions.

The Bishop of Lynn was asked to comment on funding for projects and explained that monies had been applied for and further applications would be made. If groups of parishes had particular hopes and aspirations under God, the plan was to apply for funding to resource these whilst remaining realistic about the ability to carry out God's calling.

The Revd Charles Read declared a conflict of interest between his membership of Diocesan Synod and his role as an NDBF staff member, Licensed Lay Ministry Training Coordinator within the Parish Support Team, suggesting more empowerment of Licensed Lay Ministers and Readers at local level.

The Bishop of Lynn endorsed the value of lay ministry, citing Project 1: Attract and recruit excellent lay and ordained leaders to an increased range of ministry pathways and support them to thrive. There were no plans to change structures at this time.

Members noted that work to engage young mothers via first aid training, and helping people to understand how to use defibrillators, had brought tangible, positive outcomes locally. The Bishop of Lynn thanked the member for their comment which highlighted the value of working in partnership with other organisations.

BREAK

Synod took a 15-minute break at this point.

9. Love Matters - summary report of the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households

The Chair invited a presentation to include a discussion and questions and answers session by William Fremont-Brown, Secretary to the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households and Mary Hawes, permanent part of the Commission Core team.

Mary Hawes shared a detailed presentation on the Commission's background, work and recommendations along with a link to the Church Commissioners website: [Love Matters final report](#)

Synod was asked to move to breakout rooms facilitated by the Bishop of Lynn, the Archdeacon of Lynn, the Archdeacon of Norwich and the Archdeacon of Norfolk to consider the following four questions before returning to the main session.

- 1. How can you maximise the protective effect of the family in your local area?
What are the challenges families face in your area? What might the church be able to do to overcome these?**

The Archdeacon of Lynn fed back on the wide-ranging discussion held by the group, including the challenges of the cost-of-living crisis, deprivation, low income, unemployment and the support that was in place, such as food larders, food banks and ministry to support lone parents.

2. How can you ensure that loving relationships matter and are valued in everything that happens within the Diocese?

The Archdeacon of Norwich facilitated this group and fed back on a wide-ranging discussion regarding love as action, for example extending a welcome and hospitality. The group posed the question, was valuing all loving relationships the same as blessing? Or was there a difference?

3. What opportunities and challenges do children have within your context/parish? How might the church/Diocese ensure every child has the best start in life?

This group was facilitated by the Bishop of Lynn who fed back on one main point, the challenges arising from a lack of strength in relationships, particularly in families and across generations. Therefore, the group agreed the church was key to strengthening intergenerational relationships.

4. What are the challenges in your local context that prevent people of all ages from flourishing?

The Archdeacon of Norfolk gave feedback on this question. The short answer was poverty, in good measure financially but the group also identified poverty in other ways, for example in some rural areas there was an absence of transport and in some urban areas a health poverty because of emissions and people living close to roads.

The Chair invited the Bishop of Norwich to respond.

The Bishop of Norwich thanked members for the richness of their suggestions and for helping to build an amazing picture of the support that was currently in place across the diocese and what more might be done.

In heartfelt response to the points that had been raised, Bishop Graham spoke of the ongoing work to empower young people which was another theme of the Commission on Families and Households. For example, the Eco-council was a place to share ideas that are both challenging and very progressive. A new initiative had been introduced by the Bishop of Norwich this year to nominate someone in the family of the school as a 'School Champion'.

Bishop Graham reflected that families are diverse, but also very complex and this had been recognised in the summary report of the Archbishops' Commission. As Christians, we have the fruits of the spirit to draw upon as we try to support people across the diocese in both churches and schools, teaching loving commitment, even when tough times come. The biggest part churches can play is to enable children and families to meet Jesus Christ and experience his transformative love. The best way we can pass on the faith is within families, where faith is lived out. How we proclaim Jesus Christ in people's lives will help build stronger families and support people in a life-long way of a life of holiness, love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The Chair thanked the Bishop of Norwich and invited further questions.

In response to the question of whether the report authors had discussed 'purpose' (i.e. living lives that are meaningful and have purpose) and fullness in life, William Fremont-Brown responded that the commission had thought very carefully about how the church could support and model this and signposted members to resources on the website: [Theology Papers | The Church of England](#)

Members raised the point that many churches operated in areas of scarcity of volunteers and funds and William Fremont-Brown explained the commission had been mindful of current pressures facing many churches. This report emphatically did not ask for churches to do more with less, but to build on the good

work already happening in order to make the most meaningful difference. Political lobbying for government to put families and young people higher on their agenda remained an ongoing challenge across the two main political parties.

The Chair invited further questions.

The Revd Dr Steven Sivyer referred to 'Love Matters' and the role of the church itself, which was to introduce people to the source of love and asked how the report echoed the five key messages.

Mary Hawes explained the remit of the Commission had been to look at how as a church and as a country we help families to flourish. When people came into contact with churches that were showing the love and welcome and hospitality of Jesus, in all sorts of situations, that was indicative in itself and through that people were introduced to the possibility of a lifelong relationship that was life changing.

Members heard that Norfolk was one of the pilot areas for family hubs which brought together a range of existing services, so people were able to access advice and support when needed. The Norwich hub opened on June 6, there was a Norfolk County Council website with links available with more information: www.norfolk.gov.uk/familyhubs <https://www.justonenorfolk.nhs.uk/family-hubs>

Mary Hawes explained that part of the mandate for community hubs was to engage with local communities, including faith groups and endorsed churches taking the initiative in coming alongside the family as a very important piece of work.

The Chair thanked William Fremont-Brown and Mary Hawes for their presentation and comments and thanked the Bishop of Norwich for his response.

10. Question under Standing Order 71

The Revd Chris Hutton, Redenhall Deanery, Rector - Earsham (Ditchingham) Group serving the communities of Alburgh, Broome, Ditchingham, Denton, Earsham and Hedenham:

"Thank you for all the time and effort you have dedicated to engaging in correspondence and actively listening to the thoughts and concerns of clergy and laity regarding "Living in Love and Faith" and the "Prayers of Love and Faith." Please would you summarise the main areas of concern you have heard raised that require pastoral reassurance and the protection of freedom of conscience and where we are in the process of finding ways to address them?"

The Bishop of Norwich responded "Thank you for your helpful question which is very welcome. Bishop Jane and I have valued spending time with members of the Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship's committee, and we have both benefitted from time one to one with a number of people hearing about their response to the Prayers of Love and Faith.

Obviously, there are those for whom the prayers do not go far enough and they long for a time when same sex marriages can be conducted in church. There are those who are entirely comfortable with the suite of prayers that are being considered and look forward to the time that they can be used.

However, I think your question is focussed on those who, for theological reasons, cannot support their use. Obviously, the reasons for this vary between individuals but the main areas of concern are:

- about the prayers for God's blessing of a couple and prayers when rings are worn.
- that the Prayers, whilst providing a warm and joyful opportunity to celebrate a couple's love, should not attempt to simulate Holy Matrimony.
- that the Prayers might to some seem to indicate a change to the Church of England's doctrine of marriage.

- that sexual intimacy should only be within opposite sex marriage, and this is a salvation issue. Those with this view describe it as a first order issue.
- how those who disagree in conscience with the Prayers of Love and Faith will be protected by bishops in the event of adverse press coverage and fears that they will be labelled as being homophobic.
- how clergy and their PCCs work together when they have different views about whether to use the Prayers.
- how those who disagree with the use of the Prayers of Love and Faith can remain part of the Church of England in a generous space free for each to decide whether or not to use the prayers, or whether there needs to be a process to opt in or opt out of their use, or whether there needs to be extended episcopal care, or, in the most extreme view, a separate province within the Church of England.
- should clergy be permitted to enter into same sex marriages.
- the content of what will replace the House of Bishop’s 1991 teaching document Issues in Human Sexuality.

It is perhaps worth saying that many of the Prayers of Love and Faith are drawn from Common Worship or ancient Christian tradition and are thus already available.

Each of the areas I have mentioned above are explored by three Living in Love and Faith working groups which are made up of bishops, clergy and laity representing the diversity of views about these matters. The groups are looking at the Prayers of Love and Faith, pastoral guidance and pastoral reassurance.

The House of Bishops met in May for three days to discuss these areas. Bishop Jane and I attended the College of Bishops two weeks ago where further work was done. There will be a presentation and questions at the July meeting of the General Synod, in York, and the current plan is that proposals about the way forward will be brought by the House of Bishops to the November meeting of General Synod.

Bishop Jane and I, together with Archdeacon Ian Bishop, the next Bishop of Thetford, are committed to caring for and seeing the flourishing of all in this diocese, no matter their views on this matter, through a generosity of spirit and fostering the language of grace as we seek to follow Jesus’ calling to unity witnessed when we are one Church, with one faith, following the one Lord.”

The Chair invited a supplementary question.

There was none.

Closing Prayer was led by The Revd Dr Andrew Braddock

The meeting closed at 21:00

Item	Action	By Whom	Deadline
4	Discuss the re-tender for the appointment of auditors with the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.	SEB	2024
6(ii)	The format of Diocesan Synod minutes to be taken to the Agenda Planning Group for further discussion.	TS	July 2023