

OXFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD

Draft Budget for 2015

The 2015 budget has been constructed to allow:

- a continuation of the current level of ministry provision with stipend increases which track the Regional Stipends Benchmark and the payment of clergy pension contributions at the new, higher rate from January 2015
- a low average increase in the share requested (1.2%), to facilitate the transition to the new share scheme and to encourage an increase in the total percentage of share paid
- the funding of central support services which not only deal efficiently with “backroom” and compliance functions but which are shaped to support the mission action planning being undertaken in deaneries and parishes
- our contribution to national costs including those related to clergy training, clergy retirement housing and the national church functions including General Synod.

Stipendiary clergy numbers have been held at 327.7 for the diocese as a whole, and some funding from the 2013 surplus has been set aside to contribute to the cost of development posts as they are identified. Experience over the last couple of years has allowed the allocation for clergy vacancies to be increased (so reducing the call on the budget) while recognising that this is a difficult area to anticipate. The unprecedented drop in clergy movements around the time that Common Tenure was introduced, placed an unexpected and severe pressure on the budget at that stage. It highlighted the sensitivity of this area and the need for a cautious approach to it.

The cost of pension provision for stipendiary clergy will be £3.246m in 2015, up by £153K from the 2014 budget provision of £3.093m.

We continue to invest in the church of the future with significant resourcing focussed on those exploring their suitability for ordained or licensed lay ministry. We expect to enable around 30 people to attend selection conferences for ordination training in 2015 and are working with another 60 people who are in the process of discernment. This is in addition to the stipendiary and self-supporting curates who are continuing their training in the diocese.

Our strategic approach continues to be shaped by the recognition of the *urgent* need to work with God to grow the Church within the Diocese of Oxford, to prioritise activity that supports this work and to ensure that all our activity underpins and is aligned to it.

A number of key pieces of work within the 2015 budget exemplify this approach:

- We are continuing the process of refocussing staff time that is not allocated to mandatory work to projects that support the development and implementation of

deanery and parish mission action plans, including work in areas of new housing. Teams from the Departments of Mission and Communication will be leading on this in 2015.

- A workshop on the resourcing of Collective Worship in schools is being piloted by a joint Education and Mission team in a number of deaneries. It will be focussed on the needs of clergy, lay people and staff who lead or assist in leading worship in schools.
- Exploratory work is being undertaken to look at ways of engaging with young adults in the context of social justice projects.
- A vocations strategy is being formulated which will encompass both ordained and lay ministries and will support the development of lay discipleship.
- In conjunction with the national church we will be looking at ways of improving data collection and its use in reporting and planning.

In addition to the support of parochial ministry, the budget contributes to the mission work undertaken in our local communities through for example education, work with deaf people, and PACT. It also supports our developing relationships with partner dioceses and our understanding of, and contribution to, the worldwide Church. This budget includes a small additional amount to facilitate the work of the Council for Partnership in World Mission.

It is good to note that the take up of the direct debit scheme has been very encouraging and will significantly help diocesan cashflow. Similarly the steps taken by a number of deaneries to agree plans to transition back to full payment of share, and the planned use of reserves to smooth that process, are both helping to keep the average share increase low. However the committed payment of share throughout the year is, as ever, vital to maintain the mission and ministry of the Church across the diocese.

Rosemary Pearce
Diocesan Secretary
October 2014