



The Buildings Management & Strategy Committee

Frequently Asked Questions Living in a Clergy House in the Oxford Diocese

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Living in a Clergy House in the Oxford Diocese - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) April 2020

This section is divided into four main areas

- Internal Housing
- External Housing
- Moving into your Home
- Moving out of your Home
- Contact Details

Internal Housing

Internal Decorating:

Q. What decorating can I do?

A. The house is your home and like any home you can carry out any internal decorating you wish.

However, at the same time we would remind you that the house will also be occupied by your successors in office. Using wallpaper or very strong coloured paints will make redecoration more difficult and expensive for clergy coming to the house after you.

We recommend that any decorating you carry out accommodates a scheme using solely pastel colours. We would be grateful if you kept all the ceilings in a white matt finish and any gloss work in your house to brilliant white paint.

You are not permitted to apply any textured paint finishes to ceilings and walls. We will not sanction painting your kitchen units or utility room units.

Clergy will be expected to carry out any further decorating required and a £500 decoration grant is offered to you between each quinquennial survey to carry this out and on production of receipts the Diocese can reimburse you.

Floor Finishes (See also "Moving into your home")

Q. What type of floor finishes will I need to provide myself?

A. The Buildings Committee is unable to provide floor finishes to rooms other than "wet areas" (kitchen, utility room, cloakroom, etc.). See also the section "Moving into Your Home".

We would request that you do not lay materials (other than carpet) without first discussing the matter with the Diocesan Surveyor.

Pets

Q. What Pets am I permitted to keep?

A. The Buildings Committee requests that a maximum of two cats and two dogs are permitted to be kept in your house at any one time.

The Buildings Committee requests that any pets, other than domestic cats and dogs, are kept outside at all times. Prior agreement of the Buildings Committee is required if it is your intention to keep animals other than the permitted cats and dogs.

It is becoming more common that when the ODBF purchases new property, in some instances, they are required to enter into covenants which specifically prevent the keeping of some animals as pets at the property, i.e. chickens, ducks, etc., or on occasion, a restriction on the number of cats and dogs that can be kept.

It is necessary to obtain permission from DEFRA before keeping certain animals at a domestic residence, i.e. pigs, sheep, goats. Where appropriate, you will need to provide suitable consent from the requisite authority. Before you purchase or introduce any such animals to the house, please confirm with the Diocesan offices whether any such restrictions/covenants exist at your home.

On vacation of the property, you will be responsible for removing associated structures used for retaining pets/domesticated animals and making good any damage to the garden.

Please be aware that pet foodstuffs and bedding attracts rats, pests and other vermin. Damage caused to Diocesan property as a result of vermin infestation will not be funded from the Diocesan budget.

Please remember, any damage caused by your pets to your home or garden will be paid for by you. (Any work must be carried out by a contractor approved by the Diocesan Office.)

Cat and Dog Flaps

Q. Am I able to have a cat or dog flap fixed through one of the external doors?

A. Where permitted, cat and dog flaps may be fitted through external doors only. It is the responsibility of the clergy to pay for both the cost of the cat/dog flap, and the cost of installing such a flap within the external door.

We will also require that you pay for the cost of the future reinstatement of the door panel/door structure in advance of the work being carried out. Any work must be carried out by a contractor approved by the Diocesan Offices.

As with any other structural alteration to the house, no cat/dog flap should be installed without the written prior consent of the Diocesan Surveyor.

Kitchen Appliances:

Q. Are any kitchen appliances provided in diocesan houses?

A. The Diocese does not provide or maintain any kitchen equipment ("White Goods" or cookers) within its houses.

When you move into your home the Diocese will offer you a cooker grant of up to £300 or half the cost depending on the lesser sum on production of receipts which are to be sent to the Diocesan Offices for reimbursement. This grant is for the cooker only and not for connection, extended guarantees etc. The cooker is yours and as and when you leave, it must be removed. No further grants are offered if the cooker goes wrong.

Where a property has built in kitchen equipment, the following policy has been adopted:

- i) The Diocese will remove the appliances as and when they go wrong leaving a 600mm sized opening to accommodate your own appliances, supplied by yourself.

Q. We have a cooker that is bigger than the standard 600mm wide cooker, can the kitchen be altered to accommodate this?

A. The Diocese has no objection for the kitchen being altered to accommodate the bigger cooker but at no cost to the Diocese and permission will need to be sort from the Diocesan Surveyor prior to any works starting.

The works usually includes removing base units, wall units, extractor fan, alter the worktop to the new width required, extending the tiling behind the new cooker space down to floor level, new flooring as there will be a bigger cooker opening, new extractor

fan for the new opening, possible relocation of electric sockets and/or gas points. As and when you move you will have to pay for the reinstatement of the opening to a 600mm wide opening. Any work must be carried out by a contractor approved by the Diocesan Office.

Fixture and Fittings:

Q. Am I able to remove or alter any fixtures and fittings in my home?

A. All fixtures and fittings included in your home are part of the fabric of the parsonage. If you would like to alter or replace any these items, please contact the Diocesan Surveyor before attempting any alterations.

Please also refer to Kitchen Appliances and Boilers and Heating Systems.

Electrical Wiring and Equipment:

Q. What is the policy regarding electrical equipment and wiring within a parsonage house?

A. All electrically operated equipment owned by yourself is your responsibility.

Its general safety and adequacy should be checked on a regular basis. It is important to note that faulty appliances can seriously affect residual current devices (the small switches in the consumer unit), the result of which will mean that your electricity supply will be cut.

Your home's electrical circuits are tested to NICEIC standards at the time of the quinquennial inspection (every 5 years). Where general electrical routine problems are encountered suggesting further investigation, an additional test is carried out at that time.

The recommendations and standards of the IEE have been adopted. It is essential to remember that under no circumstances should the electrical wiring or its associated equipment (switches, power sockets, ceiling roses etc.), be altered or tampered with by yourself, members of your family, or any unauthorised person.

Under new legislation such work would be illegal. It is important to remember that the above requirements include electrical equipment in gardens.

Q. What do I do if I lose electrical power to the property?

A. i) Check with neighbors to see if they have lost electricity as it might be a power cut and then contact your electricity supplier to report the loss of power.

ii) Check the fuse board to see if any of the circuits have tripped and reset if possible. If not possible unplug all appliances, lights etc from the property and see if the trip will reset. In quite a few cases the problem is with an appliance and if unplugged it allows the trip to be reset and the defective appliance to be identified.

If you still are unable to restore power to a circuit or the property, please contact the Diocesan office. If it turns out the power failure is down to an appliance you own, the Diocese will invoice you for the callout and repair.

Security Alarm Systems

Q. Does the Oxford Diocese provide security alarm systems?

A. We currently provide a bells only alarm system at no cost to yourself, but we do ask that you confirm in writing that you will use the alarm. There will be paperwork to be completed that will be provided by the alarm company so they have a record of you living at the property.

If it turns out that you don't use the alarm and don't want to use it please contact the Diocesan offices and the contract will be cancelled.

Telephones and Broadband

Q. Who pays for my telephone?

A. This falls to you to contact a telephone supplier and arrange for a telephone line/number to be installed to the property.

If you feel that you require additional telephone sockets within your house (over and above those already installed), the cost of supply of the additional wiring and equipment must be met by yourself. However, prior to any authorisation, it is necessary to agree any work with the Diocesan Surveyor.

Recent changes in the regulations relating to competitive practices in the telephone industry now mean that BT is unable to retain telephone numbers on residential accounts during vacancies.

Utility Bills

Q. Who pays for my Council Tax & Water Rates?

A. The Diocesan budget meets the annual council tax and water charges at your house.

Q. Who pays for the electric, gas and/or oil to the property?

A. These costs will fall to yourself whilst you are occupying the property and you will need to open accounts in your name when you move in.

Boilers and Heating Systems

Q. Who pays for servicing my boiler?

A. The Diocese has a contract with a heating contractor who carry out the servicing of your boiler on an annual basis. When your boiler is due for a service, you will be contacted by the contractor, who will arrange a convenient appointment with you.

At the time of the inspection, you will be issued with a "Landlord/ Homeowner Gas Safety Record" or a "Landlord Oil Installation Check", which you should retain and a copy is sent to the Diocesan Office by the contractor.

At the time of the service, please mention to the contractor any additional minor plumbing work that can be carried-out at the time of the boiler servicing (e.g. minor radiator problems, such as thermostatic controls, the boiler programmer, tap washers, etc.) and either they can be rectified then or the contractor will contact the Diocese for approval to carry out the works at another time.

The Diocese does not service your gas cooker or provide gas safety certificates relating to any of your own gas appliances.

Q. What happens if I run out of heating oil?

A. Please ensure that you keep a regular check on the level of oil in your storage tank. Many heating oil providers will now offer you a service, whereby they will check the level of oil in your tank and "top it up" if necessary.

If you feel that the sight gauge is giving an inaccurate reading, please contact the Diocesan offices as soon as possible. The Diocese cannot accept responsibility for damage to heating systems as a result of clergy running out of heating oil and may charge you for the callout of an heating engineer to prime the boiler. Under these circumstances the Diocesan office will invoice you for the full cost of the contractor's work.

Please ensure that you fit a high tensile steel padlock to help avoid oil theft.

Chimney Sweeping

Q. Who pays for sweeping my chimneys?

A. The cost of sweeping a flue is the responsibility of clergy. It is important to regularly sweep flues in order to ensure that there are no blockages (e.g. from bird's nests, etc.) following the spring/summer period. Further, you should use competent contractors, possibly someone with a recommendation from residents within your parish.

Multi Fuel Burning Stove

Q. Can we fit a multi fuel/wood burning stove?

A. Permission from the Diocese will need to be obtained before any works are carried out to install a multi fuel/wood burning stove.

Generally, the Diocese will have no objection for multi fuel/wood burning stove being installed but any works will need to meet with the current building regulations and a HETAS certificate is issued on completion and sent to the Diocese for their records. Unfortunately, the Diocese cannot contribute towards the cost of a multi fuel/wood burning stove.

When you leave the property the fire place needs to be reinstated to its original layout or the multi fuel/wood burning stove is left insitu at no cost to the Diocese.

Wall Tiles

Q. Am I allowed to change wall tiles, or to paint them with a proprietary paint?

A. It may be that you do not like the style or colour of wall tiles within your house. Our current policy is to provide wall tiles which are comparatively neutral. Wall tiles which are in a good condition may not be replaced or painted.

Curtains and Blinds

Q. Who provides curtains and blinds in my home?

A. All curtains and blinds are your own responsibility. Existing blinds will not be replaced from the Diocesan budget. We do not provide replacement specialist blinds to roof lights.

Q. Will the Diocese reimburse me a proportion of the cost of the curtains and/or blinds when I leave?

A. The Diocese will not reimburse you the cost of curtains, blinds and/or carpets. If you wish to leave them when you move from the property then they might benefit the next occupant of the property.

Roof Void

Q. What can I store within the roof?

A. We try to discourage storage within the roof void for two significant reasons. Firstly, roofs are designed to receive light loads, mainly for access or properly designed water tank platforms. This is particularly significant where the house is a more modern structure where prefabricated roof trusses have been used.

If heavy goods are stored (or lighter ones in high piles), then significant damage to ceilings (and even the roof structure itself) can occur.

Secondly, with modern levels of roof insulation (up to 300mm) it is necessary to maintain the same thickness of insulant over the whole of the roof void. By allowing storage over the insulant, you are significantly decreasing its effectiveness and ensuring that your heating bills are higher than necessary.

Glazing to Windows & Doors

Q. Who is responsible for accidental damage to glass in windows and doors?

A. Damage to windows and doors is covered under the Board's block buildings insurance policy. Occupiers will be asked to meet the "excess" of any claim to replace broken glass.

The current excess on the policy is £250. This means that you will be expected to pay for the full cost of any breakage up to £250. If, however, the cost to replace the damaged glass is less than £250 you are expected to pay for the broken glass in full.

However, you will not be expected to pay for broken seals on double glazed units or structural related damage.

External House

TV Aerials

Q. Does the Diocese provide TV aerials?

A. The Diocese is not responsible for the repair and/or re[placement] of TV aerials this would be a cost that you would have to meet.

If it is your intention to install additional television sockets within your home, it will be necessary for you to obtain the prior consent of the Diocesan Surveyor.

Many families enjoy watching programmes delivered by satellite and cable television stations. The erection of a satellite dish is an essential part of the installation and we would ask that the dish is placed in an unobtrusive position that will not cause structural defects, or encourage the ingress of surface water.

It should be remembered that satellite dishes often require planning permission prior to installation, particularly in Conservation Areas and where your home is a listed building.

Where a cable company's installation is agreed, it is essential that you ensure that the cable company makes good any disturbance to a driveway, garden and wall areas. Please ensure that no cables are taken through window frames as this is the preferred option by some companies as they find it easier than drilling through masonry.

Any way-leaves will need to be agreed by the Diocesan Surveyor and will be at the cost of the occupier and any documentation will be required to contain sketch drawings identifying the line of way-leaves and the position of aerials.

These documents need to be held at the property and the Diocesan Office.

Security Lights:

Q. Who replaces bulbs in external security lights?

A. Where external security lights exist in parsonage houses, clergy are responsible for changing the light bulbs.

When changing bulbs it is important to use strong ladders positioned in accordance with good working practice available from www.hse.gov.uk.

The work should be carried out in conjunction with another person giving support and stability to the bottom rungs of the ladder.

Should you feel either unable to carry out the work yourself or unable to obtain suitable assistance, please contact the Diocesan offices.

Drains/Blocked Drains

Q. My drains are blocked.

A. Over the past few years we have experienced blocked drains caused by materials other

than toilet paper being flushed through the w/c - e.g. baby wipes, nappies, sanitary items, fat being poured down sink wastes. Such blockages can be severe and cause significant disruption to households whilst the problem is being remedied. Therefore, in your own interest, please ensure that only proprietary toilet tissue is used and fat is disposed of correctly.

If the Diocesan offices is requested to clear a blocked drain, then please be aware that the cost of any such work will be borne by the occupant, should the problem be one which has been caused by "misuse".

Cesspools/Septic Tanks

Q. Who pays for emptying our cesspool/septic tank?

A. The cost of emptying cesspools rests with the Diocese. When you think that a cesspool or septic tank is becoming full, please contact the Diocesan offices, who will arrange and pay the cost of an appropriate contractor to empty the unit as soon as possible.

It is generally recommended that a septic tank/cesspool is emptied once every 12 months, although some units are capable of working well after that period. Where possible and practical, please avoid placing excessive quantities of bleach and biological detergents down the drains.

Rainwater Goods

Q. Who is responsible for cleaning out the rainwater goods on my home?

A. The Diocese is responsible for cleaning out the rainwater goods and will carry this out as part of the quinquennial survey. If, however, you notice that the rainwater goods are blocked, vegetation growing out of them please contact the Diocesan offices and they will arrange for them to be cleared.

Maintaining Your Garden:

Q. What if I am unable to cope with my garden?

A. It is your responsibility to maintain and control your garden. You can do this by undertaking the work yourself or paying someone to help you (please note this is a legitimate expense and can be claimed against tax).

Should you find yourself unable to deal with it on a routine basis, your Parish may be willing to give practical help or pay towards the cost of employing a gardener. If this is not possible, please contact the Diocesan offices before it becomes overgrown and too much of a burden.

The sooner you speak to us, the sooner we can discuss any problems and lessen the expense to yourself and the Diocese as a result.

Garden Sheds

Q. Am I provided with a garden shed?

A. We will not provide new sheds unless it is considered that there is a lack of adequate storage space within the house and/or garage.

Unless the existing shed structure poses a health and safety danger or the house storage facilities are considered inadequate, we will not repair "old" sheds. However, we will remove them from the parsonage grounds if they are a danger.

Garden Compost

Q. Am I allowed to construct a compost heap within the garden?

A. Compost heaps are considered a necessary part of everyday gardening and are often essential for the collection of general garden debris.

However, we would ask that you ensure that the compost is well controlled and not built against boundary fences, walls, sheds and kept free from vermin and at the end of your occupancy is removed in total and the compost site made good.

Fences

Q. Do you provide garden fences to control and retain family pets?

A. The only garden fencing which we provide is perimeter garden fences. We do not provide fencing to control or retain pets, nor will we be able to amend existing fencing for those purposes. If you want this work carried out we can put you in touch with approved contractors and you will have to pay for the works

Garden Planting

Q. What recommendations are available when planting in my garden?

A. The Diocese requests that you do not plant any new trees in your garden nor any large shrubs close to the parsonage house or its out-buildings. We are very concerned about the effect of trees and shrubs on foundations and masonry.

We are also anxious that new trees planted in a parsonage garden do not become protected by local authority Tree Preservation Orders, together with the rising costs of tree maintenance affecting the Diocesan budgets.

Please also ensure that ivy and other creeping plants, such as Wisteria, Virginia Creeper, ivy etc. are not planted by the property and are removed from the masonry of the property.

Parsonage Trees

Q. Who is responsible for maintaining trees growing within my parsonage boundaries?

A. Fruit trees, shrubs and "dwarf" varieties of deciduous/evergreen trees are the responsibility of yourself.

All other trees are the responsibility of the Diocese. Please ensure that growth to those plants under your control is regularly controlled and that foliage does not affect the house masonry, nor impair the free flow of air around the house or out-buildings.

Many parsonage houses are within Conservation Areas and may also have Tree Preservation Orders attached to them. Where this is the case, Local Authority consent will be required, prior to carrying out work (except in the case of an emergency). Please help us by reporting problems with trees to the Diocesan offices as soon as possible. We try and carry out a Health and Safety Duty of Care Survey on mature trees as part of the quinquennial inspection.

Please also remember that you have a duty of care to all visitors who enter your property and it is essential we take all reasonable steps to ensure their safety.

Electric Cars and Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Point

Q. If I have or want to have an electric car how do I arrange for an electric vehicle (EV) charging point to be installed?

A: The Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance has no objection for an EV charging point being fitted as long as you:

- Contact the Diocesan Surveyor to request permission before any works are carried out.
- There will be no financial contribution for your proposed installation and removal of the EV charging point from the Diocese.
- You arrange for any works to be carried out by competent contractor in accordance

- with the current building and NICEIC electrical regulations.
- If there are any upgrades required to the parsonage house electrical services for the EV charging point would be at your cost
 - Copies of the installation certificates are sent to the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance for our records

Moving Into Your Home

Initial Meeting

Every effort will be made to ensure that your move is as straightforward as possible. Once you have been offered and you have accepted your new post in the Oxford Diocese you will meet the Diocesan Surveyor at your new home so that the property can be inspected and any works can be agreed prior to your move.

Schedules of the agreed works will be sent to you and, hopefully, be carried out before you occupy the property.

Ingoing Decoration Grant

Q. What decorating will be carried out for me?

A. The Diocese can offer a decoration grant up to £1000 and this will be determined when you meet the Diocesan surveyor who will assess the current condition of the internal decoration. There are 2 ways in which you can claim the decoration grant:

i) Produce receipts for materials, labour or both and the Diocese will reimburse you. Unfortunately, if we do not receive a receipt to show that the invoice has been paid in full then the Diocese cannot reimburse you.

Or

ii) The Diocese can pay the decorator direct if an invoice is made out and sent to the following:

The Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance
Church House Oxford
Langford Locks
Kidlington
Oxon
OX5 1GF

It is vital that if you arrange for the contractor to invoice the Diocese to advise them that they will not receive payment for at least 2 weeks after receipt of the invoice.

We would remind you that the house will also be occupied by your successors in office. Using wallpaper or very strong coloured paints will make redecoration more difficult and expensive for clergy coming to the house after you.

We recommend that any decorating you carry out accommodates a scheme using solely pastel colours. We would be grateful if you kept all the ceilings in a white matt finish and any gloss work in your house to brilliant white paint.

You are not permitted to apply any textured paint finishes to ceilings and walls. We will not sanction painting your kitchen units, utility room units and/or wall tiles.

Floor Coverings

Q. Which floor coverings will be provided for me?

A. The Diocese will replace the flooring in the “wet areas” (kitchen, utility room, cloakroom, etc.) if considered by the Diocesan Surveyor to be in an unacceptable condition and will be

replaced with a vinyl cushion floor.

We request that you do not replace vinyl floor finishes provided by Diocese without the prior consent of the Diocesan Surveyor. However, where such floor finishes are excessively worn, we will endeavor to replace them at our cost.

Laminate Flooring

Q. Can I lay laminate flooring in lieu of carpet?

A. Should you wish to lay laminate floors in your home, you will require the consent of the Diocesan Surveyor prior to installation. Should consent be given, it will be necessary for you to accept that you will need to remove the floor prior to your departure.

You will also need to make good, adjust items such as skirting boards and/or doors (which may need to be replaced) which are affected by the laminate at no cost to the Diocese.

Moving Out of Your Home

Q. What am I expected to do upon leaving my home?

A. Prior to leaving your home, you will be contacted by the Diocesan Surveyor who will arrange to meet with you and discuss your views about the suitability (or otherwise) of the parsonage. It would be most helpful if you were able to inform the Diocesan Surveyor of your impressions (both good and bad) of the house.

- Would you please inform the Diocesan offices of the names of your utility service providers (gas and/or electric), together with your customer reference numbers.
- You will need to carefully note your utility meter readings (gas and/or electric) and inform the respective companies of your intended leaving date and of course ensure full payment of outstanding costs.
- You will need to transfer the utility accounts from your name into the following, so the account is not terminated and causing a problem for the next occupant:
 - The Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance
 - Church House Oxford
 - Langford Locks
 - Kidlington
 - Oxon
 - OX5 1GF
- For heating oil, it would be most helpful if you were able to retain sufficient heating oil in the tank for the boiler to be re-fired and the heating system to be tested after you have left. To leave the tank with little oil in-situ can lead to costly repairs to the boiler fuel pump and burner.
- During winter months, however, the central heating should be left on a minimum setting. You will be advised of the settings when you meet with the Diocesan Surveyor before you leave
- Please inform the Diocesan offices if this has been done.
- For electricity, you merely inform the service provider.
- Please remove all your possessions from the house, roof voids, garage and any out-buildings.
- Before or on the day of departure, you should make sure that the property and all its contents are properly cleaned, including carpets, kitchen units etc.
- Please arrange to have your post redirected by the post office.
- During the vacancy the Diocese will arrange for the grass to be cut and hedges maintained but will not manage shrubs and borders. This is something you might ask your church wardens to organise so the garden looks maintained for your successor.
- As we are unable to retain telephone numbers with British Telecom (FAQ 1.h also) you

may wish to invite your PCC to retain the account themselves with an answer phone so that messages can be picked up.

- Please can the keys be given to your church warden who will take on the responsibility of inspecting the property during the vacancy and for the property to be inspected twice a week whilst it is empty.

Contact Details

Q. Who do I contact at the Diocesan offices to report/discuss an issue with the parsonage house?

A. Report any issues to Surveyors Department at Church House Oxford using following contact details:

Tony Kerry: tony.kerry@oxford.anglican.org Tel: 01865 208292 (voicemail available)

Chris Mariner: chris.mariner@oxford.anglican.org Tel: 01865 208232 (voicemail available)

Karen Drew: karen.drew@oxford.anglican.org Tel: 01865 208268 (voicemail available)