



# The Buildings Committee

## Housing Policy Document & General Guidance Notes

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Issue No: 5

Date Issued: May 2021  
Date for Review: May 2022

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The Buildings Committee is a sub-committee of the Bishop's Council which is the executive body of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance and has both lay and clergy members. It sets the policy for acquisition, repair, maintenance and disposal of all parsonage houses, team vicarages and houses in the Board of Finance corporate ownership. It manages leasehold corporate property vested in the Board of Finance and redundant churches during the waiting period but is not responsible for the repair and maintenance of active churches. Its policies are implemented through the Archdeaconry Sub-Committees, which also have lay and clergy membership. The business of the Glebe Committee is reported to the committee. The Director of Glebe and Buildings oversees the operation of the Diocesan Advisory Committee.

## **2 THE BUILDINGS TEAM**

The Property department are instructed by the Buildings Committee to carry the policies. To contact the Property Department the contact details are as follows:

- Repairs and Maintenance – [property.maintenance@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:property.maintenance@oxford.anglican.org)
- Lettings/Rental – [odbflettings@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:odbflettings@oxford.anglican.org)
- Property Enquiries - [propertyenquiries@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:propertyenquiries@oxford.anglican.org)
- Telephone number – 01865 208200

## **3 AIMS**

The Buildings Committee aims to provide accommodation that is fit for purpose for Clergy occupation.

Ideally, the house should also be energy efficient and economical to run and maintain. The committee aims to cater for other housing requirements including appropriate housing for associate priests and curates-in-training, Area Bishops, Archdeacons and Diocesan officers.

## **4 GENERAL HOUSING POLICY**

### **i) Background**

The provision of The Church Commissioners 'Green Guide' parsonages is at the centre of the Buildings Committee policies. Replacements necessary to achieve this are undertaken with the full consultation of clergy, patrons and PCCs. Revenue expenditure for maintenance is linked to the parish share and is therefore strictly controlled. The properties which are most expensive to maintain are prioritised within the programme for replacement in due course.

### **ii) Diocesan Board of Finance Corporate Property**

It is the Board of Finance's policy to provide other houses, firstly to meet the needs of personnel with specific accommodation or location requirements and secondly to give flexibility in locating assistant clergy where needed.

In many parishes housing is provided for curates-in-training by the PCC, either through outright purchase, rental, or with Diocesan help. This may be by way of providing a house or, where a parish has some capital, by facilitating the use of Equity Sharing arrangements.

Where housing is likely to be needed for only three to four years, rental is favoured over outright purchase.

**iii) Disposal Policy**

The committee is required to dispose of all surplus properties at full market value. In certain exceptional circumstances some properties are retained and let.

**iv) Current Housing Stock**

There are approximately 380 parsonages and team vicarages and 60 Board of Finance properties at any one time.

We seek to maintain a programme of planned maintenance works on our housing, in addition to the policy of replacing housing which does not meet the required standard.

**v) Common Tenure**

Policies and procedures relating to 'housing' have been revisited, to reflect the new Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of service) Measure 2009.

For those clergy who hold their office subject to Common Tenure, the new Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) Measure and its supporting regulations (2009) confer their rights to housing. The legislation states that this must be suitable accommodation for the purpose otherwise referred to as a 'house of residence.' More specifically, it refers to office holders who hold a full-time and sometimes a part-time office for which he/she is entitled to receive a stipend other than the incumbent of a benefice.

Whilst section 4(7) of the new Measure explains the meaning of 'housing provider' in this context and identifies relevant housing providers for office holders under Common Tenure, Regulation 12 and 13 of the same legislation outline respectively the relevant housing provider's duties and right of entry relating to houses of residence.

Similarly, office holders subject to Common Tenure, who are in occupation of a house of residence or other accommodation provided under the new Measure, have duties and responsibilities towards them. These are outlined in Regulation 14.

Please be advised that your entitlement to housing; the name of the housing provider as well as the owner of the property for office holders in Common Tenure are specified in your individual Statement Of. Whilst more details about the legislation and its provisions; rights and obligations of each party and other information are provided in the Diocesan clergy handbook.

## **5 MAINTENANCE OF HOUSES**

Maintenance of the houses is the responsibility of the Board, except for internal decorations, garden maintenance (other than mature trees) and flooring (other than wet areas). If there are repairs that need to be undertaken, these are to be put in hand through the Surveyors department. It is necessary to seek authorisation prior to works being undertaken, except in an emergency when the surveyors should be advised at the earliest opportunity. However, occupiers and/or their PCCs are encouraged, whenever possible, to arrange and pay for minor repairs. PCCs should inform the Property Department if they are prepared to help in this way. Occupiers of houses maintained by the diocese are expected to keep them in good order internally and to notify the Property Department or Archdeacon if problems arise (see item 7).

## **6 QUINQUENNIAL SURVEYS**

The aim of the five year 'Quinquennial' Survey is to ascertain the necessary maintenance works to each individual property and its surroundings. Brief details are provided below of the Quinquennial process:

- The Property Department maintains a register of Quinquennial inspection dates for each property; these are conducted on a five-year rolling programme.
- When a property is due for an inspection, notification is issued by the Diocesan Surveyor to each occupant throughout the year.
- The Diocesan Surveyor will inspect the property to ascertain if any repairs are deemed necessary, both immediately and during the ensuing five years.
- A report is compiled on the general condition of the property following this survey.
- A list of proposed works is prepared and prioritised.
- Any questions arising from the report may, if necessary, be referred to the relevant Archdeaconry Sub-Committee.

## **7 REACTIVE MAINTENANCE AND URGENT WORKS**

Reactive or urgent repairs are works which require immediate attention to avoid serious consequences. Essential repairs may be required for the following reasons:

- i There is a danger to the occupants, i.e. a gas leak or electrical fault.
- ii There is a danger to the public, i.e. a fallen tree or dangerous wall adjacent to a public footpath.
- iii The security of the building could be at risk, i.e. a broken window or door which is unable to be locked.
- iv Potential loss of basic service, such as a broken water pipe, central heating boiler failure, leaking pipe work etc.
- v Potential hazard which may result in additional damage to the property and/or its contents, i.e. a leaking pipe, flat roof leak etc.

In the first instance, the Property Department should be contacted immediately on 01865 208268. The Property Department holds a list of approved contractors who can attend the same day to rectify faults, however in the event

of an emergency outside normal working hours or at weekends/public holidays, the following process should be implemented:

In the event of an emergency out of normal office hours concerning:

- i) Central heating and major plumbing defects (e.g. flooding) contact Uniheat (Oxford) Ltd – tel: 07802 900153
- ii) Electrics (e.g. loss of power to all of property after checking with supplier) contact Giles Eadle 07831 306416
- iii) Blocked drains – contact OPC drain services 01235 835999

At the earliest opportunity, please inform the Property Department of actions taken and any cost incurred will be reimbursed on production of receipts.

## **8 PLANNED MAINTENANCE WORKS**

Each year, a planned maintenance programme is compiled following regular site surveys and visits from Diocesan Surveyors to properties. Usual items to be included within the planned maintenance budget would be window replacements, external decorations, re-roofing works etc. Works are prioritised within the programme according to the budget available and the potential urgency for the work. For example, a boiler replacement would normally take precedence over external decorations which could be postponed until the following year. Although individual properties may have items on the planned programme each year, it is **not guaranteed** that items which appear on the programme will be conducted at that time. There is a balancing act between urgent repairs and planned maintenance repairs, the latter will always be postponed so that the urgent repair can be undertaken.

Planned maintenance is normally discussed at the Buildings Committee and any matters arising from this should be discussed with both the Property Department and the Archdeacon.

It is normal practise for the Diocesan Surveyor to notify individuals when there are proposed works on the planned programme for that year, however this is very much budget-dependant. All planned maintenance works will be conducted by Diocesan approved contractors, under the direct instruction of the Diocesan Surveyor. Occupants of the individual property will be consulted in full, prior to works being undertaken and wherever possible, potentially disruptive works will be conducted when there is an interregnum, or a property becomes vacant to minimise any potential disruption.

## **9 PRIORITISATION**

Works identified to be put forward for inclusion on the proposed planned maintenance programme each year are prioritised using several criteria.

Where there could be a potential problem for the occupant of the house if an item failed, such as a heating boiler, this would normally become a high priority. Items such as window replacements may be lower down the prioritisation scale as although they are essential to maintain the fabric of the building, they do not cause problems for the occupant of the house as a boiler failure could.

The prioritisation of all planned works is the responsibility of the Diocesan Surveyor in agreement with the Director of Buildings and Glebe.

## **10 MINOR IMPROVEMENTS**

This type of improvement work is often carried out during an interregnum and may involve internal alterations to provide a more suitable family or work area within an existing dwelling.

Any request for minor improvements should be directed to either the Diocesan Surveyor in the first instance, or the Archdeacon, who would then normally discuss individual requirements before reporting them to the Buildings Committee meeting for consideration; the Buildings Committee meetings take place three times per year.

## **11 MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS**

Major improvement works are carried out during an interregnum and may include substantial remodelling and extending an existing house to bring the house up to 'green guide' standards wherever possible. Works of this nature will need to be agreed by the Buildings Committee and the source of funds agreed with the Finance Committee. It should be noted that this type of project can take a considerable amount of time to complete as larger projects are subject to a wide range of Diocesan procedures, legal requirements as well as statutory requirements such as planning and building control approvals.

## **12 GENERAL HOUSING POLICIES**

### **i) Introduction**

The Board is constantly trying to refine the housing portfolio to meet the agreed standards of accommodation, location, and economy of maintenance with low running costs.

Each year, several houses will either be replaced or new ones constructed, depending on the funds that can be generated.

The time scale for achieving new-build solutions can often mean that short-term accommodation must be provided either by using the existing house (or another nearby) or by renting. The time scale of the planning process can be particularly unpredictable.

### **ii) Space Heating and Water Heating**

Most of the Diocesan housing stock is heated using traditional gas boilers with central heating radiators throughout the house. There are several houses in mostly rural areas which are heated using oil fired boilers. Each year, there is a programme of central heating upgrades.



We are investigating renewable heating solutions in response to the Diocese commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2035. The heating replacement programme will be dependent on the budgets and emerging heating technology solutions.

**iii) Kitchens and Utility Rooms**

Where new or replacement kitchen/utility rooms are installed/replaced, the kitchen units will be from the standard Howden kitchens range. A standard Shaker style kitchen has been adopted in recent years, along with worktops from the standard laminate range; high gloss, wood strip and granite worktop options will not be available. Stainless steel kitchen sinks will be provided, usually with a 1½ bowl sink option in the main kitchen, fitted with a monoblock mixer tap or twin pillar taps within the utility room. Tiled splash backs will be installed above the worktops. These will be from the standard range provided by Johnson Tiles, a choice of four different colours will be available (but not to be mixed). Space and services will be provided for a dishwasher, if required, 'fridge and cooker point. Dependant on the services to the house, the cooker point **may** be supplied with both gas and electric for use with a dual fuel cooker. Space will also be provided for a 'fridge and in certain conditions, space for an upright 'fridge/freezer may be provided, depending on the layout of the kitchen. A range of wall units are normally provided, these will be from the standard range from Howden Joinery and will not include decorative pelmets or under cabinet lighting. If there is sufficient space within the utility room, it is normal practise to include provision for a washing machine and tumble drier with external vent, dependant on the type of tumble drier.

**iv) Bathrooms and Shower Rooms**

The sanitary ware to be installed in all new bathrooms and showers will be white in colour. If shower cubicles are installed during refurbishment works, they will be finished with ceramic wall tiles, with a selection being made available from up to four different colours from the Johnson Tiles standard range (not mixed). With the recent improvements in the design of sanitary ware, it is current policy to install ultra-low-flush WCs wherever possible, mixer taps and low-capacity washbasins to minimise the use of water in line with the Diocesan policy on energy savings and recent legislation introduced to cut water consumption. In new build housing and major refurbishment which includes electrical re-wires, there will be provision for a mirror light incorporating a shaver point. Bathroom and shower fixtures and fittings, including mirrors, shelving, etc. will not be supplied or installed by the Board.

**v) Floor Coverings**

In new/refurbished houses, the Board will install the following floor coverings:

- All wet areas i.e. shower room, bathroom, kitchen and utility room will be fitted with Novalon cushion vinyl flooring. There will be a selection of up to six different styles and colours to choose from.
- Where **new** housing includes a concrete floor finish, carpet and underlay will be installed by the Board with a selection of up to eight different plain carpet colours. It is not Diocesan policy to install wood-strip flooring, laminate flooring or ceramic tiles in their properties.

**vi) Power Showers**

The standard shower mixer specified by the Board is a 'Mira Excel' shower mixer valve or an electric shower. Shower water pressure is dependent on the type of system installed and the location of water tanks. In line with the Diocesan policy on energy and water consumption, the Board will not install additional pumps on shower systems to boost water pressure.

**vii) Insulation**

There has been an ongoing programme of insulation improvements in recent years and all new build and major refurbishment of houses include upgrading or increasing insulation within the roof void to comply with current building regulation requirements. The majority of properties also incorporate insulated cavity walls, which further improves energy efficiency. Whenever a new house is purchased, the insulation is checked within the roof space and if felt to be inefficient, is placed on the programme for improvement.

**viii) Lighting**

The use of halogen/recessed spotlight type lighting is **not** supplied by the Board as this type of light fitting is highly inefficient. Wherever possible on new-build and major refurbishment projects, low energy lighting or LED lighting will be installed. External floodlights will not be installed unless they are fitted with LED light fittings and switched by either timer control or movement detector.

**ix) Double Glazing**

Each year, there is a programme of double glazing/window improvements throughout the Diocese. The Buildings Committee has been committed to upgrading windows and supplying and installing double glazing wherever possible throughout the housing stock. The prioritisation of window improvements or replacement will be conducted by the Diocesan Surveyors based on the following criteria of age, condition, location etc.

**x) Roof Space/Storage**

Most of the Diocesan property incorporates roof space storage, either in the main dwelling or within the garage. The occupant is requested not to store excessive quantities or weight within the roof space, as this could cause structural problems in due course. In new build housing, a

limited amount of boarded loft space storage area will be provided. It is not the policy of the Board to provide loft boarding facilities within existing properties. When leaving a property, you are requested to ensure that all roof spaces are **completely** emptied.

**xi) TV Aerials/Satellite Dish**

TV aerial outlets will be included in the main living room, kitchen and bedroom in new build housing and wherever a complete re-wire is carried out. It is not Diocesan policy to replace or provide TV aerials for anything other than new build housing.

Satellite dishes are the responsibility of the occupant, and it should be noted that although there is currently no policy against the installation of a satellite dish, it is the occupant's responsibility to check that planning permission is not required (it usually is in conservation areas) and that the equipment is removed when leaving the property.

**xii) Security**

Provision of security lighting and bells only burglar alarms are met by the Board of Finance, where there is an identified need. Requests for new installations should be made to the Diocesan Surveyor.

It is important that clergy fully familiarise themselves with the operation of security systems as they will be responsible for call-out charges because of accidental false alarms.

Clergy are encouraged to leave a spare key with a Churchwarden or neighbour during their occupancy. On vacation of the property, keys should be held locally, and the Property Department should be informed as to who holds the keys.

**xiii) Gardens/Trees/Paths/Patios**

The upkeep and maintenance of gardens, other than hard surfaces, is the responsibility of the occupier. Depending on site conditions, new build housing will usually include a path around the entire perimeter of the new house, as well as a small patio. It is not Diocesan policy to provide additional paving areas or paths in existing properties.

The maintenance of substantial trees is undertaken by the Board under the direction of the Diocesan Surveyor. It should be noted that many of the trees within the boundaries of existing properties throughout the Diocese are protected with Tree Preservation Orders or may be situated within conservation areas where special approval will need to be sought prior to any work being undertaken. If the occupier of the house is in any doubt as to the condition of a tree or the need to require permission to conduct any tree works, they should contact the Diocesan Surveyor.

**xiv) Internal/External Alterations**

No alterations may be made to houses without reference to the Diocesan Surveyor. Occupiers wishing to make improvements at their own expense must submit proposals to the relevant Archdeaconry Buildings Sub-Committee. Planning and Building Control approval for alterations may need to be sought, the cost of which will be met by the occupant of the house.

**xv) Ingoing Decoration Grant**

Prior to the new occupier of an existing house moving in, the Diocesan Surveyor will conduct an 'inging' survey. If deemed appropriate, the Diocesan Surveyor can offer a discretionary decoration grant of up to £1000 and will be reimbursed upon production of receipts.

**xvi) Cooker Grants**

Cookers are not provided in any of the properties managed by the Buildings Committee. However, a cooker grant of up to £300 or half the cost, depending on which is the lesser sum, is available towards the purchase of a cooker to priests moving into the Diocese upon application to the Diocesan Surveyor. The cooker, once purchased, is the property of the occupier of the house, who is then responsible for its maintenance and is **required to remove it from the property** when vacating.

**xvii) Quinquennial Decoration Grants**

General internal decorations are the responsibility of the occupier. However, a grant of up to £500 is available at the time of the Quinquennial Survey and reimbursement will be made upon production of receipts. The occupant would be able to make claims for decorating materials within the amount agreed at any time during the following five-year period.

**xviii) Conservatories**

Due to the uncertainty of ongoing maintenance requirements, it is not Diocesan policy to purchase houses which include a conservatory or to support requests for conservatories to be installed on existing dwellings.

**xix) Garden Sheds and Greenhouses**

The Board is not responsible for the upkeep of garden sheds, summerhouses, greenhouses etc that are in the garden. The responsibility for the upkeep lies with the occupier.

**xx) Boundaries**

The Board is responsible for the boundaries where the liability rests with the Diocese. The Board is not responsible for making the boundaries 'secure to prevent the occupier's and their pets escaping. If works are required to the boundaries, then permission will be required from the Diocesan Surveyor.

**xxi) Property Insurance**

**a) Buildings**

Property insurance covers damage to the structure because of fire, accidental breakage, storm, flood, impact or vandalism and is the responsibility of the Buildings Committee. Any incident should be immediately reported to the Surveyor, so that the necessary claim can be made. There is a £250 excess on any claim.

**b) Contents**

House contents insurance should be arranged by the occupier and should include cover for greenhouses and sheds were provided by the occupier.

Clergy are recommended to ensure that their house contents policy includes cover for any liability arising out of the need to use the house as a base in the execution of their duties.

Similarly, PCCs are recommended to take out liability cover for parochial activities taking place in or around a house.

**xxii) Council Tax and Water Rates Bills**

The Diocesan Board of Finance will meet these. If a property has been rented in to house a curate-in-training, the expectation is that parishes will pay a fair proportion of council tax and water rate charges.

**xxiii) Vacating a property**

When a property becomes vacant, local Churchwardens are asked to inspect the property once a week and to report any issues to the Diocesan Surveyor.

Four to six weeks before vacating, the Diocesan Surveyor will arrange a visit to assess the property for letting and to check on its general condition. It is the occupier's responsibility to keep the interior of the house in good decorative order and to ensure that the property is left clean and tidy, clear of all rubbish and unwanted furnishings. Any belongings which are left in the main house or outbuildings after vacating the property will be cleared on instruction from the Diocesan Surveyor.

**If costs are incurred conducting this process, reimbursement will be sought from the previous occupier of the house.** Although grass will be cut, when necessary, after vacating, it would be beneficial to all parties if the garden is left in a tidy and tended condition.

**xxiv) New Appointments**

Newly appointed priests will be directed to the Diocesan Surveyor who will then arrange to inspect the house. A grant towards initial internal decorations will then be agreed and any potential future improvements discussed. Sometimes at an interregnum the opportunity is taken to do minor improvements where time permits.

**xxv) Moving Allowance**

This Board, in common with others, meets the cost of removal expenses up to the dioceses spend cap. More information is obtainable from the Stipends Administrator at Church House Oxford.

**xxvi) Telephone and Utility Bills**

***Telephones***

Whilst the property is occupied, liability falls with the occupier for the payment of telephone bills. During a vacancy, the telephone is either disconnected or the account put in the name of a member of the PCC.

***Utility Bills***

During the time that an incumbent occupies a property, the liability falls to the incumbent for the payment of gas and electricity charges. However, **generally**, when a property is vacant and unfurnished, the liability for payment of standing charges falls to the Board. The Diocese is encouraging all occupants to move to Green Renewable Energy Tariffs, as part of our Carbon Neutral policy by 2035.

**xxvii) Care of Vacant Properties**

Parochial help, particularly from the churchwardens in respect of the following, is always greatly appreciated:

- 1 Notify the Property Department at Church House Oxford as to who holds the keys.

- 2 Ensure that the meters are read.
- 3 Churchwardens are requested to check weekly that all doors, windows and outbuildings are secure and notify the Property Department and Police immediately if there is any sign of forced entry or vandalism.
- 4 Wherever possible, churchwardens are asked to keep an eye on gutters and outside drains regularly to ensure that these do not become blocked, causing potential flood damage.
- 5 Please do not allow the house or grounds to be used for any parish purposes, without the consent of the Diocesan Surveyor. It should be noted that insurance on unoccupied houses is limited and could be invalidated by parochial use of a vicarage or rectory during an interregnum.
- 6 Any PCC which uses a house during an interregnum does so at their own risk and by doing so, automatically indemnifies the Board against any damage or insurance claim, such as public liability, fire etc. The PCC will also be responsible for payment of all utilities, council tax and water charges.
- 7 If interviews are held and no appointment is made, please inform the Diocesan Surveyor and provide details of further interviewing arrangements.

**xxviii) Use of Parsonages and Team Vicarages**

Occupants of parish property are asked not to sublet any part of the house, allow use of any outbuildings by the Parish or any other body, or grant any rights of way across the grounds without consulting the Director of Glebe & Buildings. Experience has shown that this may cause serious pastoral or legal problems in the future. An occupational agreement is available on request from the Director of Glebe & Buildings for those wishing to sublet part of their house.

**xxix) Assistant Clergy Housing**

Housing for assistant clergy may be provided by the Board of Finance, the PCC or the occupier.

**xxx) Disabled Adaptations**

This is available for residents living in the property. After initial enquiries with Social Services and Occupational Therapists, the Diocese, will consider disabled adaptation works to the property. The Board of Finance will only maintain properties under its ownership.

### **13 PROPERTY LET DURING INTERREGNUM**

It is Diocesan policy that wherever possible, vacant property is let during an interregnum. By letting property, it ensures that premises are secure during a vacancy as well as generating valuable income for the Board, helping to keep Parish Share at a reduced level/lower level than if the property remained unoccupied.

When it has been established that property may be let, arrangements are made by the Property Manager to place the property on the market with letting agents to identify suitable tenants. Regular visits are made by the Property Manager during the ensuing tenancy to check conduct of tenants and condition of property.

At the end of the tenancy, arrangements are made to return keys to the Churchwardens in readiness for occupation of the property by the newly appointed member of clergy. The Keyholders will also be required to provide access for contractors, interviews and any potential letting agents or clients, during a void period.

### **14 PROPERTY RENTED TO HOUSE CURATES-IN-TRAINING**

If there is no parish owned property within parishes to accommodate curates-in-training, Diocesan policy is to rent in property to house curates placed for training purposes. Most parishes are expected to cover the cost of accommodation but those needing financial support should apply to the Diocese. There is a standard policy on how housing costs are shared between the Diocese and the Parish an application must be made to the Property Department.

### **15 HEALTH AND SAFETY**

#### ***i Asbestos***

Asbestos-based products were used extensively during the 1950s and 1960s in residential dwellings. The use of asbestos-based construction materials was not banned until recent times, therefore there are still several properties within the Diocese which may contain asbestos-based construction materials. The Property Department maintains a regularly updated asbestos register, which identifies properties where asbestos has been found, or is suspected to have been used. Should the occupier of the house be planning any minor works, such as decoration etc on the house or suspect that an item which contains asbestos has been damaged, they should notify the Diocesan Surveyor immediately. It should be noted that if asbestos-based building materials are left undisturbed, they do not pose a hazard to health. During major refurbishment works on existing properties, the Board will arrange for a full asbestos survey to be conducted and any subsequent asbestos which is uncovered will be removed.

#### ***ii Lead in Paint***

Older properties may have been decorated using lead-based paint products and the occupier of the house is warned to take care when

conducting decoration works, as the sanding or burning off paint which contains lead can be hazardous to health. If in doubt, please contact the Diocesan Surveyor prior to conducting decoration works.

**iii     *Electrical Works***

Periodical electrical checks are conducted on all Diocesan property to ensure that the fixed wiring installation is in a safe condition. Any alterations to the electrical installation of a dwelling should only be conducted by a qualified approved electrician and all works must be authorised or approved by the Diocesan Surveyor. Any electrical problems associated with domestic appliances such as washing machines, dishwashers, fridges etc. are the responsibility of the occupant, as is the disposal of these items when they are replaced, or the house is vacated.

**iv     *Invasive Plants/Hazardous Plants***

Over the past few years, several invasive/hazardous plants have become known in Diocesan properties. Some of these can cause severe irritation or skin blistering (Giant Hogweed) or the more common, invasive plant - Japanese Knotweed, a bamboo-like plant which can grow rapidly and cause structural damage to existing buildings and drive surfaces etc. If you are at concerned that your garden may contain any hazardous plants, please talk to your Diocesan Surveyor in the first instance. It should be noted that some type of invasive/hazardous plants have extremely specific control measures and disposal requirements. You are not able to just cut down Japanese Knotweed for example and dispose at your local recycling centre.

**v     *Pest Control***

If you are unable to resolve a problem with pests such as wasps nests, mice, rats etc please contact the Property Department at Church House Oxford, will arrange for a licensed pest control officer to call at the property and deal with the problem.

## **16 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

The Property Department is committed to providing a high-class service and using good local tradesmen, wherever possible. However, with the volume of work conducted by the Property Department, it is inevitable that occasionally things do not always go to plan. If you are concerned with the performance of a staff member a particular contractor or tradesmen, please contact the Diocesan Surveyor in the first instance. Should you have any issues which cannot be resolved with the Diocesan Surveyor, then the issue can be escalated by contacting your Archdeacon.