

OXFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD

16 March 2019

FIRST NOTICE PAPER

QUESTIONS UNDER STANDING ORDER 70

FIVE questions have been received:

Question ONE:

Revd Will Pearson-Gee (56 Buckingham Deanery), to ask:

“Has any consideration been given to the provision of alternative episcopal oversight for clergy and congregations who are having difficulty in receiving, in good conscience, episcopal oversight from the bishops of the diocese, on account of their expressed views on matters relating to gender and sexuality?”

Reply from the **Bishop of Dorchester** :

The four Bishops issued a pastoral letter to the Diocese, “Clothed with love” on 31st October, 2018. The letter was not a complete or detailed expression of their views on gender and sexuality but an appeal for welcome, inclusion and pastoral sensitivity. The Church of England has no formal mechanism for providing “alternative” episcopal oversight based on the views of particular bishops on any issue. A small number of parishes which have already passed a resolution about receiving the ordained ministry of women as priests and bishops have been in correspondence with the Bishops about making fuller use of the ministry of the Bishop of Maidstone who is already an Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Oxford.

Question TWO:

Revd Will Pearson-Gee (56 Buckingham Deanery), to ask:

“Will Oxford Diocese permit on-line applications to join a church electoral roll, that is to say the completion of the ER form digitally and without paperwork, as is now the practice in other Dioceses including London?”

Reply from the **Registrar**:

The diocesan guidance issued in December 2018 was silent on the point, since the Church Representation Rules (‘CRR’ - the governing legal provisions) are themselves silent on the point.

What is clear is that application forms must be signed by the applicant, and that they are to be in the form set out in Appendix 1 to the Rules (see CRR Rule 1.(2)). There is no specific provision for the method of delivery of the signed form to the Parish Electoral Roll Officer, though the latter must prepare the Roll and display it in accordance with the Rules. The list should contain only names and not addresses. The requirement that the revised Roll be 'exhibited continuously for not less than 14

days on or near the principal door of every church in the parish and every building in the parish licenced for public worship' presupposes that the revised Roll itself will be a document on paper (CRR 1.(8)).

So on the face of it there is nothing to prevent someone eligible for inclusion on the Roll completing, signing, scanning and returning the signed form electronically. In practice, of course, it is likely that the Parish Electoral Roll Officer will want to print the form received electronically so that there is a permanent record during the lifetime of the current Roll, and for production in the event that there should be an appeal with regard to enrolment, refusal or removal under CRR 43.

So this is essentially a matter of local decision and convenience, provided that the requirements of the CRR are fulfilled however the completed documentation is submitted. It is not a matter for the diocese centrally to 'permit' or otherwise.

For the avoidance of doubt, I should add that although I very much hope the national group working on a revision of the CRR will authorise the use of a fully electronic system to enable applications to be completed and submitted without formal manuscript signatures, that is not yet the case.

Question THREE:

The Revd Mike Smith (143) Reading Deanery, to ask the Chair of the ODBF:

When the Synod last reviewed the stipend differential of £500 paid to Team Rectors in the diocese, and what were the reasons given for its payment?

Reply from the **Chair of the ODBF:**

The Team Rector supplement was introduced in 2012 and reviewed by the Planning and Budget Sub- Committee in 2014 but not increased. The payment was originally given in recognition of the responsibility and demands of leading team ministry.

Question FOUR:

The Revd Mike Smith(143) Reading Deanery, to ask the Chair of the ODBF :

Using the most up to date information available to the diocese, can you provide in tabular form:

- a. the total value of all historic assets (including endowment and glebe assets held under the Endowments and Glebe Measure 1976) held by the diocese;
- b. the value of these assets on a per person basis for the population of the diocese;

c. the average weekly Church of England attendance in the diocese, as a percentage of the population of the diocese;

d. the percentage of the diocese's population who live in the 10% most deprived lower super output areas nationally?

Reply from the **Chair of the Board of Finance**:

Diocese	Endowment and Glebe (a) Includes Team Vicarages	Diocese Population	Assets per capita (b)	Average weekly attendance as % of population	% of diocesan population in 10% most deprived nationally
2017	£000s		£		
Oxford	154,666	2,387,000	64.80	2%	2.1%

Question FIVE:

Revd Mark Bennet (37) Newbury Deanery to ask :

“At the recent meeting of the General Synod, in response to a question, a table was produced showing that at £150million+ the Diocese of Oxford had 50% more historic wealth held in endowment and glebe than the next wealthiest dioceses. The same response showed that we have proportionately fewer areas of deprivation than any other diocese apart from Guildford (which ranks equal). In the light of this what steps is the Diocese taking to:

(a) account to our hard-pressed parishes for the deployment of this wealth

(b) adjust the story we tell ourselves about finance to the lived reality of the church beyond the Diocese

(c) contextualise our financial position within the national church so that any misleading aspects of these raw data are corrected before important decisions are made”

2017 Endowment and Glebe Assets by Diocese and Assets per Capita

Diocese	Endowment and Glebe (a)	Diocese population	Assets per capita (b)	Ranking of Assets per capita
2017	£000s		£	
Oxford	154,666	2,387,000	64.80	3
Lincoln	99,359	1,080,000	92.00	1
Southwark	87,705	2,864,000	30.62	16
London	66,993	4,306,000	15.56	26
Chelmsford	66,144	3,211,000	20.60	23
Coventry	58,375	881,000	66.26	2
Chichester	57,485	1,692,000	33.97	13
Norwich	55,073	912,000	60.39	4
Peterborough	52,587	920,000	57.16	5
St Albans	49,418	1,922,000	25.71	21
Leicester	46,270	1,049,000	44.11	9
Bath and Wells	40,891	955,000	42.82	11
Lichfield	37,904	2,159,000	17.56	25
Worcester	37,850	890,000	42.53	12
Ely	37,400	761,000	49.15	8
Exeter	36,704	1,184,000	31.00	15
York	33,952	1,442,000	23.55	22
Derby	32,199	1,057,000	30.46	17
Southwell & Notts	32,186	1,151,000	27.96	19
Leeds	29,959	2,735,000	10.95	31
Truro	29,849	564,000	52.92	6
Gloucester	29,165	668,000	43.66	10
Salisbury	29,038	955,000	30.41	18
Durham	27,341	1,487,000	18.39	24
Manchester	21,261	2,168,000	9.81	32
St Eds & Ips	18,934	679,000	27.89	20
Hereford	17,185	329,000	52.23	7
Carlisle	16,329	497,000	32.86	14
Rochester	15,138	1,358,000	11.15	30
Winchester	14,586	1,235,000	11.81	28
Bristol	13,765	1,030,000	13.36	27
Guildford	11,929	1,060,000	11.25	29
Blackburn	11,423	1,346,000	8.49	33
Chester	10,978	1,638,000	6.70	36
Sheffield	9,604	1,294,000	7.42	35
Portsmouth	6,474	789,000	8.21	34
Birmingham	5,470	1,581,000	3.46	38
Newcastle	3,666	822,000	4.46	37
Canterbury	3,531	1,138,000	3.10	39
Liverpool	1,040	1,607,000	0.65	40
Church of England	1,409,826	55,803,000	25.26	

Notes:

- Endowments and Glebe Measure (1976) does not apply to the Diocese of Sodor and Man
- The Assets are only those covered by the Endowments and Glebe Measure, all dioceses will have other assets which are not included here for consistency.

Average weekly attendance and percentage of population in those parishes which make up the most deprived 10% of population

Diocese	All age average weekly attendance 2017	Attendance per capita (c)	Ranking of attendance per capita	Percentage of population in those parishes which make up the most deprived 10% of population (d)	Ranking
Bath & Wells	21,300	2.2%	6	1.8%	31
Birmingham	16,300	1.0%	41	36.0%	1
Blackburn	22,500	1.7%	20	18.2%	6
Bristol	13,300	1.3%	33	10.1%	13
Canterbury	20,600	1.8%	15	7.1%	19
Carlisle	11,900	2.4%	4	7.2%	18
Chelmsford	34,600	1.1%	40	3.1%	27
Chester	30,500	1.9%	13	8.8%	16
Chichester	35,600	2.1%	8	2.6%	28
Coventry	14,300	1.6%	23	6.6%	20
Derby	14,800	1.4%	28	4.5%	26
Durham	18,800	1.3%	34	15.1%	8
Ely	17,000	2.2%	5	1.0%	36
Exeter	22,700	1.9%	12	6.6%	21
Gloucester	16,700	2.5%	2	1.9%	30
Guildford	22,700	2.1%	7	0.0%	40
Hereford	9,300	2.8%	1	5.4%	24
Leicester	12,900	1.2%	36	6.0%	23
Lichfield	29,500	1.4%	30	14.4%	9
Lincoln	14,800	1.4%	29	11.5%	12
Liverpool	22,900	1.4%	26	29.7%	3
London	69,800	1.6%	24	9.5%	14
Manchester	25,800	1.2%	38	30.1%	2
Newcastle	13,500	1.6%	22	12.9%	10
Norwich	17,700	1.9%	11	8.4%	17
Oxford	46,700	2.0%	10	0.0%	40
Peterborough	15,300	1.7%	21	6.0%	22

Portsmouth	11,100	1.4%	27	9.0%	15
Rochester	24,000	1.8%	17	1.7%	33
St. Albans	28,700	1.5%	25	1.2%	35
St. Eds & Ipswich	13,600	2.0%	9	0.2%	38
Salisbury	22,900	2.4%	3	0.7%	37
Sheffield	15,500	1.2%	37	22.2%	4
Sodor & Man	1,500	1.7%	19	No Data	
Southwark	38,300	1.3%	31	1.5%	34
Southwell & Notts	13,600	1.2%	39	12.1%	11
Truro	10,000	1.8%	16	1.7%	32
Winchester	22,400	1.8%	14	2.4%	29
Worcester	11,600	1.3%	32	4.6%	25
York	25,400	1.8%	18	16.3%	7
Leeds	34,400	1.3%	35	18.9%	5
Church of England	895,300	1.6%		10.0%	

The Chair of the Board of Finance to reply:

Successive Chairs of the ODBF have sought to both explain clearly the makeup of diocesan assets and the wealth of the Oxford Diocese in comparison with some other dioceses. This has been done repeatedly through various means including presentations to Diocesan Synod, Financial Consultation and Briefing sessions, in diocesan publications and in the Annual Report and Accounts.

The Endowment and Glebe Assets consist not only of historic land assets and investments but also the Team Vicarages. £31.3m of the Oxford diocesan assets are held in the value of those team vicarages. In this diocese, unlike some others, the average cost of buying a house comparable to a “green guide” vicarage is £600-700K. In some parts of the diocese it is closer to £1m. It is not clear whether other Dioceses’ data include such operational assets – for example the Diocese of London’s accounts for the year to 31 December 2017 show total property and other investments of £130.2million, none of it operational, albeit some in restricted or designated funds rather than the endowment or glebe funds. That would put them significantly in excess of our property and other investments, though not on a per capita basis.

In 1976 it was anticipated that the glebe which would be transferred to the Diocese as a result of the new Endowments and Glebe Measure would “extend to some 6,000 acres.” The Glebe assets have increased significantly because of the development gain which has been possible on some of the Glebe land and because of the active investment management approach taken within the diocese. In both these areas we have been more proactive than many dioceses. It is interesting to note the increase in the value of the non-vicarage property and investment portfolio from £68.6m in 2007 to £123.3m in 2017 and £124.1m in 2018 reflecting both beneficial sales and active investment management.

Historically it has only been possible to use the *income* resulting from the glebe assets and this has been used to subsidise the parish share - in 2018 by 17%. Since 2016 it has been

possible to take a Total Return Approach to these assets and Bishop's Council decided that, in addition to the share subsidy increased annually by inflation, £7.5m should be released over the period 2018 – 2020 to take forward Common Vision work.

As within our diocese, the national church encourages mutual support between the dioceses. The Church Commissioners have increasingly focussed their resources towards the poorer dioceses. For more than 20 years the Oxford Diocese has received no allocation from the Church Commissioners. Even back in 2009 the poorest dioceses were each receiving over £2m per year from the Commissioners and this increased until recent years when transition began to a new system. The Church Commissioners are now ringfencing funds for the poorer dioceses, allocating £40m to them in 2018.

More generally the amount that the national church asks from dioceses to cover the costs of running the national church and for paying for the training of ordinands has a built in wealth factor. So although our diocese is equivalent to 4.28% of the national population, it pays 6.25% of the national costs. This percentage has increased as our assets have grown. We have accepted these costs as part of our relational commitment and sought to explain them to the parishes. Recognising our wealth we have asked representatives of the national church whether it is appropriate to apply, particularly in respect of our deprived areas, for Strategic Development Funding or whether we should leave it for others. We have been encouraged to apply.

We are in correspondence with the national church about the information presented to the General Synod in the table above, which inaccurately states that no parts of the Oxford Diocese fall within the 10% most deprived in the country. Sadly a number of parishes in the Milton Keynes and Cowley deaneries fall into this category. However the bulk of our diocese is significantly more affluent and the change in legislation allows us to prudently use more of our historic funds. We agree with Mark Bennett that as a diocese there is a need to adjust the story we tell ourselves about finance to the lived reality of the church beyond the Diocese.