



DIOCESE OF BRISTOL

TRANSFORMING CHURCH. TOGETHER.

<b>Agenda Ref</b>	11.2
<b>Report Title</b>	Board of Directors, Bishop's Council and Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee Report (1 December 2025, 5 February 2026)
<b>Author</b>	Richard Leaman; Diocesan Secretary
<b>Date</b>	4 February 2026

1. The Bishops Council Board of Directors and Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee met on 1 December 2025 and 5 February 2025. The following topics were on the agendas:
  - a. **Volunteering**

Geralyn Meehan Director of People and Safeguarding presented the draft Volunteer Strategy. Trustees had a number of suggestions for the strategy, and it will be re-presented at the next Bishops Council in May 2026.
  - b. **Conflict of Interest Policy**

Stephen Sheridan presented the draft Conflict of Interest Policy. Trustees had a number of suggestions for the policy and it will be re-presented at the next Bishops Council in May 2026.
  - c. **Ephesian Fund**

Bishops Council discussed a request to use the Ephesian Fund for paying Parish Share. Trustees were keen to ensure the broad principles underpinning parish share are upheld, particularly regarding parishes working together to support each other, and asked Bishop Neil to write to take the dialogue further. No decision was made.
  - d. **Education Foundation Strategy**

Liz Townend, Diocesan Director of Education briefed Council on the strategy relating to the use of the Education Foundation Fund. The Diocesan Financial Committee have approved expenditure from the Fund to support grants to schools meeting the funds objectives of:

    - Strengthening academy trusts that uphold Christian character
    - Supporting mental health and wellbeing of pupils and staff
    - Strategic SEND provision for children and young people.

Funds have also been committed to pay for Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools

SIAMS, costs and to contribute towards the cost of one member of the Education Team.

e. **Carbon Net Zero**

Council were briefed by Joe Flatman Director of Property and Estates on the emerging carbon net zero 2030 plan and the way forward with the ten thousand pounds grant scheme. We are working hard on finding the money to support those parishes who have applied and particularly those who have undertaken works. The same brief will be given to this Diocesan Synod with a full carbon net zero plan for approval later in the year. Lack of any funding is a serious challenge, and we will have to find different ways to support the strategy which can only be implemented as and when funds become available.

f. **Safeguarding**

Council were briefed on the latest developments on the future structure for safeguarding. The new proposed structure was agreed at General Synod in February and leaves Dioceses and Parishes largely unaffected with the bulk of the changes occurring at National level.

g. **Finances**

Following presentation of the ten-year financial plan by Stephen Sheridan Director of Finance, and a majority of the members of Bishops Council voted to approve the plan being forwarded to Diocesan Synod on 21 March 2026.

Despite significant savings and optimistic assumptions on income the plan does not envisage a balanced budget and projects a stubborn nine hundred thousand pounds annual operating deficit. The main shortfall is in parish share. All levels of the Diocese will need to continue and/or grow a culture of generosity to ensure our mission as a Diocese is sustainable.

h. **Transforming Church.Together Strategy**

In November's meeting Bishops Council were advised that National Church had approved the viring of money between Transforming Church Together projects allowing for resources from projects that had come in under budget to be used for other projects in 2026. A full submission the Strategic Mission and Ministry Board will be required in April for 2027 onwards.

i. **Governance**

Bishops Council and The Board of Directors undertook their routine business of overseeing the Finance Audit and Risk and Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committees Activities and decisions. Council also discussed upcoming Synod agendas and also ways in which their meetings could be made more effective and more efficient.

j. **General Synod Elections 2026 to 2031**

At its meeting in February Bishops Council voted in favour of Emma Bakewell being appointed as the Diocesan Electoral Roll Officer and recommended to the Presiding Officer that hustings should not take place ahead of the election due to considerable practical challenges. Instead, an opportunity for electors to submit written questions to candidates will be offered.

k. **Parish Share Strategy**

Trustees agreed that serious work is urgently needed on Parish Share over the next few years. It is an agenda item on this Diocesan Synod and the aim is to build on the good that is already happening and to significantly raise our game with discipleship and generosity.

2. In addition, Bishops Council voted to approve the following resolution for use by the Diocesan Secretary and Archdeacons Team;

‘The Bishops Council affirms that the flourishing of the Diocese is built upon collaboration generosity and mutual responsibility. It is therefore vital that we nurture a culture in which all members recognise their interdependence and the obligations they bear towards one another. Accordingly, the Bishops Council empowers the Diocesan Secretary and the Archdeacons - within the scope of their proper responsibilities and authority - to take account of the extent to which this mutual obligation is demonstrated when making decisions concerning the allocation of diocesan human and financial resources’.

3. **Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee**

In addition to noting several matters that are currently in progress the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee made recommendations to the Bishop about three suspensions; one to be lifted; one pastoral scheme and zero bishops mission order.