

Agenda ref	7.1
Report Title	Board of Directors, Bishop's Council and Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee Report (24 March and 13 May 2025)
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1. The Bishop's Council, Board of Directors and Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee met in person and via Zoom on 24 March and 13 May 2025.

24 March

2. Trustees discussed the DBF response to a letter from the Charity Commission which asked: *whether, following any changes made or agreed by Synod, there are any remaining structural, procedural or constitutional arrangements under ecclesiastical law that you consider conflict with, or prevent you and your co-trustees from fulfilling, your safeguarding duties as charity trustees (Legal Impediments)*. This letter was received following General Synod's decision to adopt Option 3 for the future of safeguarding, and investigate the feasibility of Option 4.
3. RL presented a first draft which had been reviewed by our registrar. It was agreed that we should highlight that we have just had a satisfactory independent audit, and there were no impediments, other than some minor long-standing issues which would require national action/legislation. Bishop's Council concluded that the current structures and processes were sufficient to ensure good safeguarding governance, and we should say so in our response. RL was tasked to send the agreed letter once Council's proposed amendments had been incorporated.

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13 May 2025

Safeguarding

4. Council considered safeguarding at this meeting – primarily at a Diocesan level.
5. +Viv informed the committee that the Diocesan Safeguarding Team had been commended by an external auditor, who described it as a model for how safeguarding work should be supported across the Church of England. +Viv asked that this should be noted in the Annual Report to Diocesan Synod which is on the agenda for this meeting.
6. AB briefed Council on the Diocese of Bristol Safeguarding Improvement Plan 2024, noting subsequent changes to the document since its distribution to the committee and expressing confidence in the progress being made. He highlighted that whilst a number of the recommendations are currently ongoing, the Diocesan Safeguarding Team had identified certain recommendations within the plan that would be more appropriately addressed at a regional or national level. Regarding the recommendation which called for the DBF to request a full independent safeguarding review of Trinity College, AB reported positive communication with the Bishop of Aston, who chairs the Trinity College Trustees. This communication also involved the Chair of the Ministry Division, the Bishop responsible for ministry training, and the Director of the National Safeguarding Team (NST). A working party was being established by the NST to ensure that theological educational institutions are audited against the same baselines as other relevant entities.
7. AB identified an area of concern is the “unknown,” emphasizing that there will always be issues of which he is unaware. He highlighted the current lack of a robust process for tracking struggling parishes that may require additional support. While Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSOs) sometimes initiate contact, this is not consistently the case. AB pointed out that a parish might appear inactive, when in reality, they are simply not updating their activities on the parish dashboard.
8. The recommendation that the Diocese appoints a new separate Director of Safeguarding was discussed. RL explained that upon comparing the current Director of People and Safeguarding’s responsibilities with the proposed new terms of reference, no shortcomings were identified. RL confirmed that for this reason, coupled with financial considerations, and a desire not to expand the size of the senior leadership team, the decision was made not to adopt the recommendation. This approach is further endorsed by the positive results from the recent independent

audit. BF agreed that as long as the role was performing and meeting our objectives, change did not seem necessary. VF suggested that the matter remain under review.

9. +VF then referred to the motion approved by General Synod that endorses 'model 3' of 'Future of Church Safeguarding Synod' paper, while also mandating further work on 'model 4' (detailed in the same paper). Both models explore independent safeguarding. AB stated that the projected timescale for implementation is the next three years, a timeframe he considers optimistic. However, he confirmed that work is proceeding at pace, with monthly progress updates being received. AB also noted the significant investment which would be involved.

TCT Funding Bid – Next Stage

10. RL briefed council on the principles underlying the next stage funding bid. The paper will indicate what is going well and what we want to do more of, what is going less well and we want to stop, and what new things we would like to do under TCT. In particular the principles which will be applied are:
 - There is no anticipated change to the overall Strategy as originally articulated
 - The bid will reflect phasing changes (e.g. where delivery has been delayed from the original plan)
 - Adjustment to 'Forms of Church' to focus on 2 Mission Areas (in Chippenham and Bristol East), not 4 as originally envisaged
 - Potentially a significant increase in activity for U18s, as it evolves to a broader CYPF strategy (Children, Young People, Families)
 - Most teams highlighting insufficient capacity to deliver, some rebalancing or increased resource is needed.
 - Need for specific Focussed Support Initiative (FSI) funding for the Stage 3 period
 - More investment in (People and) Systems
 - Potential for an additional PCN context (from 2026)
 - CNZ may need increased emphasis on Biodiversity in line with National Church direction.
11. RL conveyed his willingness to be ambitious with the bid but highlighted a potential apportionment issue at the National Church level. This issue, he noted, could affect the total funding SMIBB receives, which in turn would impact the amount they can distribute.

All Saints Corn Street

12. Council reviewed a paper on the repair to the roof of All Saints Corn Street, noting the DBF has a legal liability to do so, and the longer we delay the repairs the more expensive they will be. Council noted that Synod had been made aware of the intended expenditure on three previous occasions, but decided that the matter should be discussed at Diocesan Synod which is on the agenda for this meeting).

Diocesan Synod Meetings

13. Council discussed the style and content of recent meetings. It was agreed that:
 - the registrar should advise Council and Synod on the handling of multiple similar questions
 - The Chairs of the Houses of Clergy and Laity should discuss and agree a way forward with 'hybrid (in-person/remote) meetings, given the difficulties we sometimes experience
 - RL and RB would meet with the BMO which has stated its intention to pay share via the Ephesians Fund

Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC) work

Overview

14. In addition to noting several matters that are currently in progress, the DMPC recommended two suspensions and the appointment of six Interim Priests.
15. In accordance with Rule 24(1) of the Church Representation Rules (CRR) 2022, the DMPC considered a Scheme to provide for representation of the Bishop's Mission Order (BMO) known as the Concord BMO on the Deanery Synod. This Scheme will be brought to Diocesan Synod for approval in November, once the BMO has come into effect.

Sally Cordwell elected to fill casual vacancy on Standing Committee (Bishop's Council/Board of Directors/Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee)

16. We are pleased to announce that Sally Cordwell has been elected to fill the lay casual vacancy on the Standing Committee (Bishop's Council/Board of Directors/Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee). The election was held between 25 April and 16 May 2025. We extend our sincere thanks to all who participated in the process. Sally will be formally inducted onto the Standing Committee in due course. We hope you will join us in congratulating her on this appointment and in offering

her your support as she takes up this important role in the life of the diocese.