

Cynhadledd Esgobaeth Llanelwy :: St Asaph Diocesan Conference



Pwyllgor Sefydlog :: Standing Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Diocesan Conference held on 22nd September 2022 in St Ethelwolds Church Hall, Shotton.

1. Welcome and Opening Reflection

The meeting was chaired by Revd Canon Jason Bray and Norma Rowles. Jason opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present to the Standing Committee. Revd Anne Hooper was then invited to deliver the opening reflection.

2. Apologies and Conflicts of Interest

Apologies from the following members were recorded:

Sam Allin, Caroline Bennett, Stephen Burton, Jennie Castle, Ros Crawford, Jennie Creed, Roger Dutton, Sam Erlandson, Sarah Evans, Stuart Evans, Jane Finn, Juliet Fraser, Sally Harper, Maryon Hughes, Sue Huyton, Andrew James, Andrea Jones, Huw Lloyd, Jennie Downes, Christine Owen, Lorna Mills, Hermione Morris, Jeffery Olstead, Adam Pawley, John Phillips, Carole Poolman, Sandra Roberts, Peter Simpson, Jonathan Smith, Trevor Trevor & Llyr Williams.

Jason Bray asked the members of Standing Committee, having seen the agenda, whether anyone wanted to register a conflict of interest. No conflict of interest was declared.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the Standing Committee held on 28 June 2022 at St Matthews Church Hall, Buckley were reviewed and presented for approval by the Standing Committee. The minutes were then approved unanimously by members of the Standing Committee

4. Matters Arising

Jason Bray stated that there three matters arising. Members of the Standing Committee were given the opportunity to raise any further matters that they would like to discuss.

a) **Diocesan Offering 2023:** Jason confirmed that the recipient of the Diocesan Offering in 2023 will be the Trussell Trust. The Trussell Trust supports a nationwide network of food banks and campaigns for change to end the need for food banks in the UK.

b) **New Mission Area Share Formula:** Jason invited Diane McCarthy to provide an update

on the recent Mission Area share Roadshows which have introduced the new Share Formula. The sessions went very well with over 140 people attending and feedback on the new formula was positive. There is a section of the diocesan website dedicated to Mission Area Share which includes a FAQ section for anyone who would like more information: [Mission Area Share - Diocese St. Asaph \(dioceseofstasaph.org.uk\)](https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk)

- c) **Archdeacon of Wrexham:** Jason invited Bishop Gregory to provide an update on the recruitment plans for the next Archdeacon of Wrexham. Bishop Gregory explained that, following the appointment of Bishop John Lomas in the Diocese of Swansea & Brecon, a decision was made to pause the appointment of Archdeacon of Wrexham and to try and see if just two Archdeacons would suffice. Archdeacon Andy & Archdeacon Barry have each cared for half of Wrexham archdeaconry as well as their own archdeaconries.

Both archdeacons have worked hard ensuring that clergy feel supported in their work and feel empowered, as well as completing the huge task of ministerial reviews. The last few months has, however, taken its toll on both archdeacons and we are therefore aiming to appoint a third archdeacon.

Jason asked for any questions and a question of affordability arose. The bishop explained that it was never a question of being able to afford it, more can we make a saving. This role has always remained part of the budget, so the money is there ready.

The bishop then asked the Committee to raise their opinion cards to see if there was support for this proposal. The response was overwhelmingly positive

5. Report from the Engaging Steering Group

Jason invited Sarah Wheat, Diocesan Social Engagement Officer, to provide an update on the work of the Engaging Steering Group.

- a) **This Works!** – Sarah Wheat spoke about the new additions to the This Works! pages of the website which offer support for projects and people. Sarah said that we have now added lots of additional information following feedback.

On the Faith in Action page, there are some useful links to outside organisations to help us all to support members of our community, our congregations, neighbours and friends. This includes a link to Dewis for local and national organisations, the Fuel Bank Foundation and a link to NHS community hubs as well as many others. Sarah encouraged everyone to take a look and share the information: [Faith in Action - Diocese St. Asaph \(dioceseofstasaph.org.uk\)](https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk)

There is also a selection of links to policies and resources to support churches as they start a project. These include sample volunteer policies, volunteer agreement templates and risk assessment templates: we are trying to provide information that can help remove some of the barriers to projects getting started. There are also links to possible funders. Sarah asked if anyone has any contributions for the page to please contact her.

- b) **Mental Health First Aid** – Sarah outlined the Mental Health First Aid Wales training that she and Hannah Daniels have both recently undertaken. This allows us to offer MHFA training across the diocese from our own qualified trainers. Sarah has qualified as a

trainer for Adult MHFA and Hannah has qualified as a trainer for Youth MHFA.

The training can be delivered online and in person – the in-person training is probably preferable as it allows for more open discussion and connection. The first adult MHFA training session will take place on **November 23rd and 24th 2022**. There will be 14 places available at a cost of £25.20 per person. Please contact Sarah for more information.

c) **Ukrainian Refugees Diocesan Forum** – As a response to the crisis in Ukraine, we will be starting an online forum that will meet monthly. This will be a Church in Wales focused forum and will be a place to bring people together from across the diocese who are supporting refugees and their host families. It will be a place to share experiences and best practice, and to encourage and inspire others to either get involved or set up something similar up in their Mission Area. It will be a chance for a more strategic approach to offering support at a diocesan level, sharing our skills and resources.

The forum will work in partnership with Link International. We can benefit from their links with other organisations to support the excellent work that is underway across the diocese. Link International will play a key role in the forum as they can offer their experience and expertise as they have been involved at every level with the situation from the beginning. They can provide members with information on this changing situation to allow us to offer a strategic response as a diocese. The date of the first meeting will be **Thursday 20th October at 4.30pm**. If anyone would like to attend, please contact Sarah Wheat

d) **EcoFest** –Dean Nigel Williams reminded everyone about the upcoming EcoFest event on the **1st October at Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd**. Nigel thanked Huw Bryant for allowing us to use St Peter's Church and its grounds for the event. The EcoFest was originally meant to take place on the 10th September but was postponed due to the death of the Queen. There will be various stalls and activities, information on Eco-Church, Forest Church and mindfulness walks. It will be a great day out for all the family - please take a look at the diocesan website to find out more: [Eco-Fest - Diocese St. Asaph \(dioceseofstasaph.org.uk\)](https://www.dioceseofstasaph.org.uk)

Jason thanked the Engaging Steering Group for the tremendous work that they do to demonstrate God's love in our communities.

Bishop Gregory said that, on behalf of the Standing Committee, he wants to show appreciation for all these initiatives and that he gives his complete support for the Ukrainian Refugees initiative. The bishop has also been encouraged by the increasing engagement from the diocese for ecological issues.

6. Review of Standing Committee Membership

Diane McCarthy introduced the paper circulated in advance relating to the Standing Committee membership and voting rights.

This matter was first discussed when Standing Committee met on 28 June 2022. Members of the Committee engaged in a wide-ranging debate and there was no clear consensus of opinion. Further discussions have taken place since the meeting of the Standing Committee, and it has been acknowledged that the triennial elections to the Standing Committee have just taken place in the Mission Areas for the triennial period 2022 – 2025. We are conscious of the amount of work that these

elections create and want to honour the discernment of the Mission Areas. In recognition of this, the following two options are presented for consideration:

Option One: Mission Area Leaders currently have the right to attend and to speak at Standing Committee meeting. They should also have the right to vote. This proposal, if accepted, would be tested over the new triennial period after which the impact of the change would be assessed, and a recommendation made as to whether the change should become permanent or not.

Option Two: There should be no change to the current voting arrangements for the Standing Committee

Members of the Standing Committee were invited to discuss the options outlined above and to vote on their preferred course of action. If the Members of the Standing Committee vote for a change to its current voting arrangements, the proposal will be referred to the Diocesan Conference on 8 October 2022 as any change will involve amending the Diocesan Constitution. The following questions were asked:

Peter Lewis: How many additional voting members of the Standing Committee would be created if these changes were introduced?

Diane: Of the 19 Mission Area Leaders, 13 are neither the elected clerical or elected lay representative. This means that the proposal would add another 13 voting members to the Standing Committee. Of those 13 Mission Area Leaders, 10 are clergy and 3 are laity.

Huw Burgess: Option 1 changes the balance of power, as it increases the number of clerical votes in comparison to lay votes. It's not the Mission Area Leaders that make decisions, it's the Mission Area Conference that has the responsibility. I am not in favour of having 2 clerical representatives for each Mission Area.

Roy Turner: This comment assumes all that all Mission Area Leaders are clerics which is not the case

Will Marshall: If the elections had not just happened, perhaps the future membership could be one clerical representative and one lay representative at each meeting which could be different per meeting.

Jane Ayee: I would like to see proxy representatives introduced to ensure that the Mission Area always has a voice in the event of absence or sickness.

Diane agreed with Jane and noted that there are other structures where proxy votes are in place. This is a separate issue from the Standing Committee voting proposal before us today, but it is an important one. Option 2, which is no change at this point, would give us the opportunity to do a more thorough review of the membership. A vote on the two given options then took place, the results were:

Option One: 9

Option Two: 14

Abstain: 0

Result: No change, to the current voting arrangements

7. Diocesan Conference 2022

Diane reminded everyone that the Diocesan Conference will take place on 8th on zoom. All members should have received their first mailing that was sent out in August.

The theme is Growing Faith, Bringing Hope and Demonstrating Love and Dean Nigel will be opening the conference with a reflection. Our speakers are Revd Canon Richard Peers who will be speaking on Hope and Sister Gemma Simmonds who will be talking about Love, and the importance of caring for ourselves not just others. There will be also be the return of the ever-popular Question Time.

Following a short break, Norma Rowles chaired the second half of the meeting.

8. Diocesan Budget 2023

Norma welcomed everyone back to the meeting and invited Diane McCarthy to speak on the Diocesan Budget for 2023.

Income: Mission Area share is our largest source of income at 81%. The discount scheme will continue next year offering a discount of up to 4% for Mission Areas that pay promptly and regularly during the year. At the moment, for 2022 all of our Mission Areas have paid their Share in full up to the half year and we are incredibly grateful to them for this commitment. We continue to work hard to rent out surplus vicarages to generate additional income. This has been more challenging than usual during the pandemic and we are grateful for the work of the Diocesan Parsonages Inspector, Emyr Wyn Hughes and the Diocesan Property Board, chaired by Clive Myers, for their excellent management of our property portfolio. The Block Grant from the RB has now been renamed the Partnership Funding and has increased to £400k in 2023.

The total income is therefore budgeted at £4.049 million for 2023.

Expenditure: This year there will be an increase of 5% in stipends and lay salaries and contributions to the clergy housing scheme will increase by 7.3%.

One of the key principles for the new share formula is that Mission Area Share will pay for front line ministry, we have budgeted for 64.65 stipendiary clergy and maintained our investment in 8 training curacies.

The budget also includes a further years funding for the Mission Area Administrators grants as the feedback suggests the role is so important.

Total expenditure is therefore budgeted at £4.284 million for 2023.

Summary: the proposal is for a deficit budget of -£235k in 2023, in addition to a budgeted deficit of £95k this current year 2022. The Board of Finance believes this budget represents the right balance between investment in our future and careful control of costs. The Board is also honouring its commitment to reinvest surpluses on operations from previous years in our Mission Areas. It is essential that we step out in faith financially, so that we can support our mission and invest in Growing Faith, Bringing Hope and Demonstrating Love.

Standing Committee was then asked to vote to accept or reject the 2023 budget. The results were:

Accept: 25

Reject: 0

Abstain: 0

Result: The Diocesan Budget for 2023 is approved unanimously

9. Towards a 10-year Financial Plan

Norma asked Dean Nigel Williams to talk to the Standing Committee about the Representative Body's exciting plans to release funding and to invest in the future of the Church in Wales.

Nigel spoke about the Archbishop of Wales' recent address to the Governing Body and the paper that was supported by the Representative Body of the Church in Wales (RB) at its last meeting at the end of June 2022.

The RB has adopted a total returns policy for its investments. The investments generally do well and have grown substantially in recent years.

Nigel drew the attention of the Standing Committee to Section C on the paper circulated, viz. 'That the Trustees of the Representative Body urge the Bench of Bishops to conclude their work on vision, strategy, ambition, and goals as soon as possible in order to ensure alignment between strategy and finance. The Trustees invite the Chair of the Representative Body, the Deputy-Chair of the Representative Body and the Chair of the Standing Committee to request a meeting with the Bench of Bishops as soon as may be arranged'

It will be down to each diocese to look at how this money is used creatively and this should be looked at as an opportunity to grow the church. This is a significant investment, and as Diane said, we are in challenging times as a church and we need to respond with faith and urgency. This is still a work in progress and it is good that the dioceses and the province will be working closely together.

Questions were then invited.

Sandra Davies: is there an application process or will it be handed out?

Nigel: it will be handed out.

Jason Bray: Is there a time frame?

Nigel: it starts now.

Nigel invited Bishop Gregory to speak on this work in progress.

Bishop Gregory: from the point of view of the Bench of Bishops, evangelism and church growth must be at the heart of the life of the Church in Wales. In practice, this means that the Bench is doing a lot of work to articulate for the Church in Wales a common vision and set of purposes, values and goals. In October, the bishops will be working with all the key central bodies and the diocesan secretaries to crystallise this work. Each diocese is in a very different place with some being more vulnerable than others, but the bishop noted that this diocese has already made significant progress. Bishop Gregory said that he was impressed by the resilience of the diocese and its ability rise to a challenge. The principle that we are hoping to adopt is that each diocese should receive what it needs in order to move forward.

10. Review of the Order of St Asaph

The Order of St Asaph was created as a way of affirming and celebrating lay contributions to the life of the diocese. The question was raised at the last Standing Committee meeting whether it was time to have a major review of how we reward and celebrate contributions

at Mission Area and church levels, as well as at diocesan level. The feeling at the last Bishop's Staff meeting was that there is no consensus for change, therefore we are recommending that there is no change at this stage.

The bishop said that part of his job is to provide affirmation and encouragement and that he is keen to respond to any nominations from churches or Mission Areas to celebrate outstanding acts of mission or devotion. The bishop is happy to send a personal letter to anyone who has done good work in the Diocese.

Norma thanked the bishop for speaking on this subject and then invited questions, no questions were asked. The bishop then asked if the Standing Committee could show their opinion on his proposal using the consensus cards. The feedback was very positive.

11. Proposal to transfer St Mary's Church Cefn from Denbigh Mission Area to Elwy Mission Area

The recommendation is that St Mary's Church Cefn Meiriadog should be transferred from Denbigh Mission Area to Elwy Mission Area with immediate effect. Following a transition period that will last until 31 December 2022, the transfer will be formally ratified with effect from 1 January 2023 when the Diocesan Registrar will be asked to produce new Mission Area Decrees for both Mission Areas that will reflect this change and that will be signed and approved by the Bishop of St Asaph.

Rebecca Sparey Taylor confirmed the Denbigh Mission Area Conference has approved this move.

Dean Nigel Williams also confirmed that the Elwy Mission Area Conference has also agreed to the move too.

Norma then asked the committee to vote. The results of the vote were:

Approve: 26

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Result: the proposal is approved unanimously

12. Matters Raised by Mission Areas - Tanat-Vyrnwy Mission Area

Norma introduced the next item and referred to the detailed paper that had been circulated in advance. The paper acknowledged that Mission Areas are disparate and always likely to be varied in their resource needs. However, if a Mission Area fails, structurally, financially or in personal relationships, the resource cost to the diocese of the subsequent remedial actions is likely to be very substantial.

Norma invited Stephen Hayes, Mission Area Leader in Tanat-Vyrnwy Mission Area, to speak to the proposal.

Stephen Hayes: This proposal has arisen from a number of conversations in the Montgomery archdeaconry and is not a plea for top-down management nor is it meant as a disparagement for the support the Mission Areas get at the moment or the training and hard work that has been done. If a Mission Area should collapse, the cost is substantial. The cost will in part be financial but it can also be a personal cost such as broken relationships and

alienation from the church. So it is worth investing against failure, and this is what this paper really seeks to provoke a discussion about.

Archdeacon Barry was asked to respond. Barry said that this will resonate with those in fragile Mission Areas such as Tanat Vyrnwy. The key point is point 3: 'identifying a minimum level of resource for each Mission Area, sufficient to maintain that Mission Area in being at a basic level of function, and below which it will not be allowed to drop without compelling reason'. Barry stated that point one already happens, with the Mission Area reviews, and it does need to continue to happen. Referring to point two, Barry stated that developing a template is just good practice but we do have a template and if you don't know what the key criteria are please have a chat with your archdeacon. The last point concerning training, we do have training regarding governance in place. But point three is key, and the bishops staff agree it's a key point but we need time to work on it.

Barry asked Standing Committee members for their comments and reflections.

Huw Burgess: individual Mission Area should have a risk register. It would be interesting to know how Mission Areas actually have a risk register?

Barry Wilson: That would be interesting to pursue and report back on.

Tracey White: Reminded all Mission Areas that there is a risk template on the website under Mission Area policies and documents.

Norma asked Tracey White to comment further.

Tracey: This discussion highlights one of the things we have been working hard on this year. A small working group was put together to look at how Mission Areas were doing in terms of governance and the way they are run. In the last 5 years, we have made huge improvements considering the massive culture shift from PCCs to our new structure of Church Committees and Mission Area Conferences which we are now referring to as the Trustee Board.

We have put together a comprehensive document called the Trustee Guide to the Mission Area. This is also available online: [Governance - Diocese St. Asaph \(dioceseofstasaph.org.uk\)](https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk) Tracey encouraged the Mission Areas to get a copy and to watch the introductory online resources. The Guide explains what the Trustee Board should be doing and what policies and procedures should be in place. Tracey encouraged everyone to review the Guide, to share it with the Trustee Board and to amend and adopt as necessary. Tracey will continue to develop and research new policies as needed.

Norma then provided an opportunity for any other issues to be raised.

13. Date of the next meeting

The date of the next meeting will be on **Tuesday 29th November 2022** and will be held in person at St Peters Church in Holywell.

The meeting concluded with a celebration Eucharist in St Ethelwold's Church. Bishop Gregory presided and gave thanks for the life and work of the Standing Committee at the end of the current triennium.