



## DIOCESAN SYNOD

### SYNOD QUESTIONS NOTICE PAPER

#### Question 1

##### **Q The Revd Jonathan Macy (Plumstead Deanery)**

One of the Action points in the Anti Racism Charter is that unconscious bias training will be offered across the Diocese. There are many types of UB training of varying quality with varying underlying assumptions. Can we be assured that whoever runs this training in the Diocese will do so from a Christian understanding including universal sin, forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration?

##### **A The Archdeacon of Croydon**

Indeed there are many types of UB training courses available, often specifically written for the particular institution in which they will be offered. In 2017, the Church of England commissioned the development of an in-house its UB training programme, to ensure that it was theologically grounded. The underlying assumption is that unconscious bias affects the church's ability to honestly and openly use the gifts of all God's creation for the purpose of the Kingdom.

UB training is only the first step in exploring the way in which we can build a church where all are appreciated and valued, where individuals can utilise their unique strengths and where all can flourish as we work towards a more just and equitable church.

The training is primarily offered by Church of England lay and ordained trainers, who have been trained by the course developers, a highly respected and experienced organisation Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI). This is to ensure that the trainers fully understand the context of sin, forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration as outlined in this question.

#### Question 2

##### **Q Michael Lewis (Sutton Deanery)**

Does the Diocese know whether any parishes have set themselves up as Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIO), and if so, how many?

And does the Diocese have a view as to whether this form of charity structure would be advantageous to parishes (for example, with regard to Trustee personal liability)?

##### **A Anthony Demby (Director of Finance)**

We are not aware of any parishes where a CIO has been set up within the Diocese.

We do not consider CIO to be advantageous because the protections offered by a PCC limit liability to the assets of the PCC thereby protecting individual Trustees.

### Question 3

**Q Michael Lewis (Sutton Deanery)**

Is there any reason why the Synod cannot in future receive a full and comprehensive report on the annual budget (as was the case with those budget reports received by Synod up to and including 2014) in advance of the meeting, so that members are able to brief themselves properly before being asked to approve the budget at the meeting?

**A The Diocesan Secretary**

The focus of the budget summary, and budget assumptions sent to Synod in advance of the meeting is to provide a sufficient summary for there to be a debate and discussion, following the presentation, to approve (or disprove) the budget recommended by the Diocesan Council of Trustees. There are a number of reasons why Synod does not receive the same report as was the case up to and including 2014.

The aim is to provide as much accuracy as possible in real time. In 2020, for the 2021 budget process, this was severely challenged by the national emergency linked to the pandemic. The Diocese receives the vast majority of its income from parish pledges and we needed to give three months' additional time to receive these pledges so that the Board (DBF) would have sufficient pledges to complete their scrutiny of the draft budget prior to it going to Synod. In that exceptional year there were only three weeks between the Board meeting (DBF) and the Synod meeting.

The scrutinising body for the Annual Budget is the Policy & Finance Committee, of the Diocesan Council of Trustees. Under the revised governance structures of the Diocese, from 2016 onwards, 75% of the DCT is elected by the Synod and is its Standing Committee. The DBF is an integral part of the DCT and is the Board for the purposes of Charity and Company law. The detailed work is therefore undertaken before it comes to Synod, recommended by the Board. The role of Synod, as primarily the body setting the Vision and strategy of the Diocese, with members of Synod then going back to their parishes to pass on important developments has led to a greater focus on the presentation of the proposed budget. This presentation also now includes the strategic context and the annual and strategic objectives prior to the presentation on the budget itself by the Chair of the Board. This fuller presentation is made available as soon as Synod is being finished but is being worked on literally up to the day before Synod to ensure that the very latest pledges are included. The Management Team works very closely with the Chair of the DBF between the Board meeting and the Synod meeting. We believe, overall, that this balance has led to confidence and understanding of the budget and we hope in late 2021 that the information can be sent out earlier as we emerge from the pandemic.

The Parish Support Fund, together with the presentation style, should mean that there is less divergence between the budget and the annual report and financial statement of the year in question. The financial statements are given in full each summer and we hope Synod, which overwhelmingly approves the budget, values the accuracy and transparency of the process.

#### Question 4

**Q Fr Martin Hislop (Kingston Deanery)**

Could Synod be informed on the Diocese's response to the Government Faith Engagement Review?

**A The Bishop of Southwark**

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) appointed Colin Bloom, The Government's Faith Engagement Adviser, to lead a review into how best the government should engage with faith groups in England. The consultation for the Review ran from 13 November to 11 December 2020. Invitations to respond to the Review were sent out to many individuals, and consideration was given within the Diocese to the possibility of making a corporate response. On reflection, it was decided that as the Review was structured and produced to elicit individual responses, no corporate response would be offered. Individual members of the diocesan senior staff were free to respond as they saw fit.

#### Question 5

**Q Adrian Greenwood (Bermondsey Deanery)**

How will the Diocese engage with and respond to the issues and recommendations raised in the Archbishops' Commission on Housing, Church & Community which was published in the last week of February 2021? Both in relation to land under the control of the Diocese and also in relation to land under the control of PCCs and other related bodies, such as the Board of Education?

**A The Diocesan Secretary**

The Archbishops' Commission on Housing at 126 pages was published on 20 February with a range of recommendations for the Church and for the Government. A presentation was given to the informal meeting of General Synod members on 27 February. No formal endorsement has yet been given by the General Synod of the Church of England to the report.

The Diocese will consider the recommendations arising from this important report, and any motion from General Synod that follows in due course. The principal onus will fall upon Government and developers. The recommendations in the report for the Church of England are most specifically for the Church Commissioners. I look forward to the ongoing work the National Church is undertaking with the Charity Commission on the disposal of assets, and any Social Development Measure that is brought before General Synod to that end. This will enable us to provide advice to PCCs. The geospatial mapping tool commissioned by the National Church is of significant interest.

There are numerous examples of past housing initiatives around the diocese, including through the then Southwark and London Diocesan Housing Association. Other projects are in progress. The Diocese has provided housing for refugees under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. It should be noted that the Diocesan Board of Finance does not have significant land holdings.

## Question 6

### **Q The Revd Nigel Griffiths (Reigate Deanery)**

The Diocese have indicated that they should like all Deanery feedback on LLF to be returned by November to allow for the Diocese-wide LLF event. Would the Diocese consider pushing this date back to the New Year/ January given the impact the Recovery phase of lockdown is anticipated to have in our churches between summer and autumn?

### **A The Bishop of Croydon**

The timing is not in our hands: this timescale has been set by the church nationally and the plan is that feedback from the dioceses will inform discussions in the House of Bishops in December. So we need to gather what reflections there have been by late November at the latest if we are to contribute to national conversations on the next steps.

If parishes or deaneries would find it helpful for themselves to continue discussing the LLF material after November, that would of course be most welcome.