

DIOCESE OF EXETER

What do members of the Bishop's Diocesan Council do?

The Bishop's Diocesan Council (BDC) comprises three distinct legal entities (the Bishop's Council and Standing Committee, the Executive of the Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd and the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee) that Diocesan Synod has decided shall operate with the same membership and meet at the same time. The role of BDC members at any given moment in time is coloured by the nature of the business in hand and the constitution of the 'lead' body under which they are operating.

The Bishop's Council and Standing Committee

The Bishop's Council and Standing Committee is a statutory committee of the Diocesan Synod, established under Church Representation Rule 34 (1) (k), which discharges some of the advisory and consultative functions of the Synod (Section 4 of the Synodical Government Measure 1969). Its functions in relation to the Diocesan Synod are as set out in Diocesan Synod's Standing Order 75 (reproduced below):

- "To plan the business of the Synod, to prepare the Agenda for its sessions and to circulate to members information about matters for discussion;
- To initiate proposals for action by the Synod and to advise it on matters of policy which are placed before it;
- To advise the President on any matters which he may refer to the Bishop's Council;
- Subject to the directions of the Synod to transact the business of the Synod when it is not in session
- To appoint members of Councils, Boards, Committees and Working Groups or nominate members for election to the same, subject to the directions of Synod;
- To receive the reports of the Councils, Boards, Committees and Working Groups, set up under Standing Order 77, on action taken and, subject to any direction from the Synod, to give policy guide lines to any of them;
- To receive the reports of the Redundant Churches Uses Committee [Church Buildings Strategy Committee];
- To carry out such other functions as the Synod may from time to time delegate to it."

The Executive of the Diocesan Board of Finance

Members of the BDC are the Executive Directors of the company known as Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd and as such are normally responsible for discharging the functions of the Board apart from those that are required to be exercised by the Board's Annual General Meeting. They are also Trustees of the charity of the same name. Members will be assisted in the carrying out of these formal roles by the Chairman and officers of the Board.

The membership of the Diocesan Board of Finance is coterminous with the membership of the Diocesan Synod. The functions of the Board are as set out in detail in its Memorandum and Articles of Association but in general terms members are to exercise overall responsibility for the finances of the diocese under the authority of the Diocesan Synod. This requires members to find a balance between financial resources and constraints on the one hand with the policies that the Synod

wishes to see implemented on the other. Within this general description the Board needs to give due regard to the following areas of work among others: the implementation of relevant ecclesiastical and secular legislation, support of the work of the Church of England at large, the collection of Common Fund, the production of accounts and budgets, the making of appropriate grants and loans, the maintenance and investment of reserves, the ownership and use of property, the operation of trusts, the employment of staff and liaison with external authorities.

The Board also has a Standing Committee whose main functions are to transact urgent business between meetings of the Board's Executive and to deal with sensitive staff and other matters (including handling the employment of individual members of staff) which cannot be considered by the full Board, partly because of their confidential nature and partly because of time pressures.

The Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee

Members of the BDC are members of the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, which operates under the provisions of the Pastoral Measure 1983 as revised by the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007. The function of the Mission and Pastoral Committee, as set out in the Measure, is to "review the arrangements for pastoral supervision in the diocese [and] to make recommendations to the bishop [for] matters for which provision may be made [...] by a pastoral scheme or pastoral order." Within that remit, the Mission and Pastoral Committee is to have particular regard to "the making of provision for the cure of souls in the diocese as a whole" and "the traditions, needs and characteristics of individual parishes". Under the 2007 Measure the committee is enjoined to "have regard to worship, mission and community as central to the life and work of the Church of England" as well as to the "financial implications" of the way in which it carries out its functions. In addition to the above statutory functions, in the Diocese of Exeter members of the Mission and Pastoral Committee also have an important role in working through the practical implications of 'Moving On in Mission and Ministry'. This responsibility is also embodied in the composition of Archidiaconal Mission and Pastoral Committees, each of which has within its membership at least one member of the full Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, and which normally meet during the daytime twice a year.

BDC Membership Categories

There are three categories of voting members: ex officio, Bishop's nominees and elected representatives of Diocesan Synod. Others in attendance at meetings of the BDC (e.g. the Diocesan Missioner, the Bishop's Chaplain and the Director of Education) are encouraged to contribute to discussion and debate but may not vote. Members' functions and responsibilities vary, to a degree, according to the category to which they belong:

- **Ex officio:** by definition, ex officio members are those whose involvement is deemed necessary by virtue of the office that they hold. They bring the experience and responsibilities of their office to bear on the business of the Council and act as a conduit for communication to a given geographical area or (part of the) organisation.
- **Elected:** elected members are both members and representatives of Diocesan Synod, defined by category (clergy/lay) and geographical area. Their representative function implies a clear commitment to active, two-way communication between the two bodies and a willingness to share

collective responsibility for the decisions taken by the BDC on behalf of the Synod. As such they need to be prepared to play a proactive role in the life of the Synod and to speak at the Synod regarding their work on the BDC as necessary.

- **Nominated:** nominees are selected from the membership of Diocesan Synod by the Diocesan Bishop as independent voices with expertise to offer that would otherwise be lacking among the membership. They have no constituency and no formal reporting function unless specified in the terms of their nomination.

Meetings

At present the BDC meets 5 or 6 times a year, divided between daytime weekend meetings and evening weekday meetings. Members are therefore making a basic commitment to prepare for and attend 15 - 18 meetings over the course of a 3-year term of office and this is in addition to any commitments as a member of Diocesan Synod and other related synodical bodies (a member of the Diocesan Synod is an ex officio member of their 'home' deanery synod and PCC). Agendas and papers are normally issued 2 weeks in advance and late or tabled papers are only permitted in exceptional circumstances with the permission of the relevant Chair. Members wishing to suggest items for inclusion on the agenda should check the relevant deadlines with the Assistant Secretary but, as a rule of thumb, should note that the Agenda Committee usually meets approximately 4 weeks before the meeting.

Work on other bodies

There are a number of bodies that work in co-operation with the BDC and that benefit from the participation of BDC members when undertaking their work. These bodies may include and be related to statutory bodies such as the Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches or to work relating to a specific constituent body (for example, the four Archidiaconal Mission and Pastoral Committees). Some of these are time-limited task groups (for example, organising a series of events across the Diocese) and some are standing bodies (for example the Assets Group or the Communications Group), whose work is on-going at all times. Members are encouraged and expected to become actively involved in one or two of these bodies in order that they gain specialised knowledge and can speak with experience of the practical issues relating to particular areas of work. Consideration may also be given to developing a dual assurance system of members acting as portfolio holders and being responsible for the delivery of areas of work alongside specified officers.

Confidentiality

BDC members are asked to make a working presumption that the papers, minutes and discussions of the Council are confidential unless otherwise agreed. Other than items that are highlighted as being of particular sensitivity, in practice and with experience members may find that the need for confidentiality depends to a degree on the precise business in question. Agendas and minutes of BDC meetings, other than those specifically designated as confidential, are circulated to all members of Diocesan Synod and recipients of Synod papers. Additionally, regular reports to Diocesan Synod provide a clear opportunity for the BDC's business to be communicated to a wider constituency. Members wishing to disseminate information

in other ways should on each occasion seek permission from the Chair of the relevant constituent body before so doing.

Disclosure of Interests

It is important that members of synods, councils and committees should not derive inappropriate benefits from their membership of those bodies, nor be perceived to do so. The Bishop's Diocesan Council has a Code of Practice on the disclosure of interests which will be circulated to all members at the start of the triennium.

Guidance revised May 2012

Disclosure of Interests: Code of Conduct

Approved by the Bishop's Diocesan Council: 4th July 2009

Introduction

It is important that any “body” dealing with the sale, purchase or retention of assets, should be covered by a clear governance framework. This is essential for providing assurance to the public, the parent organisation and its members, and especially where the organisation is a registered charity. It also protects those who serve on that body. The key standards of public life published by the Nolan Committee provide a yardstick for the Diocese, viz:

- Selflessness (acting solely in the public interest);
- Integrity (under no financial or other obligation influencing decisions);
- Objectivity (decisions based solely on merit);
- Accountability (to the public);
- Openness (information withheld only when wide public interest demands);
- Honesty (private interests declared and conflicts avoided);
- Leadership (principles promoted by example).

Disclosure of Interests

Whilst no-one has any reason to question the honesty or integrity of any employee or of any member of the Diocesan Synod, Boards, Councils and other bodies (in this Code together called a “member”), the onus is on the Diocese to show that it has the procedures in place demonstrating that none of its members has a conflict of interest in any matter which is relevant and material.

The Code comprises three parts:

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| Part 1 | What constitutes a “relevant and material interest” |
| Part 2 | Declaring interests |
| Part 3 | Publication of the Code's requirements |

Part 1: “Relevant and Material” Interests

A “relevant and material interest” is one which could reasonably be perceived as being capable of influencing an individual's judgement. It can be direct or indirect, pecuniary or non-pecuniary. Examples of such interests are:

- Directorship of a PLC;
- Ownership of more than 5% of the shares in any company;
- Employment by any company with whom the Diocese does business;
- Consultant to any company with whom the Diocese does business;
- Purchaser or vendor in any property transaction with the Diocese;
- Any transaction by the Diocese which benefits a member personally.
- On the church electoral roll or otherwise holding any office in a parish which is the subject of specific proposals or discussions.

When considering the above, the interest of a spouse, of a person registered under the Civil Partnerships Act, or of a close relative or dependent of either, is deemed to be the interest of a member.

The following do not constitute relevant and material interests and therefore do not need to be disclosed:

- (a) Stipendiary clergy: discussions on stipends or clergy terms of service generally.
- (b) Matters forming part of the duties of archdeacons, rural deans and deanery lay chairs, acting in their official capacities.
- (c) Matters of policy, including financial policy, that will have an impact on parishes in general
- (d) Bishops and archdeacons: the work of the Diocesan Board of Patronage.

Part 2: Declaration of Interests

If a member becomes aware of a potential or actual conflict of interest (whether from the agenda and papers circulated prior to a meeting, or from discussion during the meeting), he/she must declare it forthwith. The meeting will decide whether or not it is appropriate for that person to withdraw, and shall note in the Minutes both the declaration and the decision. Subject to this, he/she may take part in any discussion, but may not vote or take part in any decision on the matter.

If a member is in doubt about the relevance of any interest, he/she should discuss the matter with the Chair of the meeting.

Part 3: Publication

A copy of this Code shall be given to every person on commencement of employment or appointment/election to any Synod, Board, Council or other Committee/Working Party.

The Agenda for every meeting of a Synod, Board, Council or other Committee/Working Party shall include the words: "If at any time you become aware of an actual or potential conflict of interest in any matter to be discussed or under discussion, you must declare it forthwith".

Because of the need for the Diocese to be seen to operate in an open and transparent manner, this Code is binding on all members.

Explanatory note (not part of the Code)

This Code covers the requirements for all diocesan bodies, except that a formal Register of Interests is not maintained, given the large number of people involved at Synod, BDC and committee level.