

AMPTHILL AND SHEFFORD DEANERY SYNOD

Making Mission Matter

Minutes of Meeting held by Zoom

Meeting ID 833 8494 1063

Passcode 815245

on 19th January 2021 at 7.15pm for 7.30pm

1. Opening Prayer

Lynda opened the meeting with prayer at 7.40pm

2. Welcome to Revd Dr Sam Cappleman

Lynda welcomed Sam Cappleman, who has been invited to present a review of the Deanery "Planning for growth and Sustainability" and answer any queries.

3. Apologies for absence were received from the following:

Clergy: Revd Dominic Holroyd-Thomas, Revd Carrie Steer

Laity: Mr Anthony Davis (*Flitwick*), Mrs Gillian Kern (*Diocesan Synod Rep*)

PRESENT

Chair:	The Revd Canon Lynda Klimas, Rural Dean	<i>Maulden</i>
Lay Chair:	Mr David Young	<i>Ampthill</i>
Treasurer and Diocesan Synod Rep:	Mr Martyn Gates	<i>Silsoe</i>
Diocesan Synod Rep:	Mrs Gillian Kern	<i>Pulloxhill</i>
Secretary:	Revd Anne Barker	

Clergy:

Revd Geoffrey Boulton	<i>Arlesey with Astwick</i>
Revd Andrew Johnson	<i>Barton le Clay, Highm Gobian, Hexton</i>
Revd Caren Topley	<i>Clifton & Southill</i>
Revd Lucy Davis	<i>Flitwick</i>
Revd Richard Winslade	<i>Gravenhurst, Shillington, & Stondon</i>
Revd Linda Washington	<i>Harlington, Westoning, Tingrith</i>
Revd Nigel Washington	<i>Harlington, Westoning, Tingrith</i>
Revd Roni Goodman	<i>Meppershall & Shefford</i>
Revd Shaun Speller	<i>Henlow and Langford</i>
Revd David Payne	<i>Silsoe, Flitton, Pulloxhill</i>
Revd Diana Young	<i>Woburn Sands</i>
Revd Stephen Nuth	<i>Woburn, Eversholt, Milton Bryan, Battlesden, Potsgrove</i>

Laity:

Mr Christopher Hodges	<i>Ampthill</i>		
Mrs Elizabeth Overfield	<i>Arlesey</i>	Mrs Sue Silver	<i>Campton</i>
Mr Derek Ambler	<i>Arlesey</i>	Mrs Audrey Brand (<i>Guest</i>)	<i>Campton</i>
Mrs Ann Clarke	<i>Aspley Guise</i>	Mrs Ruth Gray	<i>Clifton</i>
Gill Merrick	<i>Barton le Clay</i>	Mr Peter Topley	<i>Clifton</i>
Alison Millar	<i>Barton le Clay</i>	Mrs Rosemary Ilett	<i>Clophill</i>
Mrs Ruth Barton	<i>Battlesdon, Potsgrove</i>	Dr Clare Butler-Ellis	<i>Flitton</i>
Mrs Anne Gordon	<i>Campton</i>	Dr Tony Brown	<i>Flitwick</i>

Mr David Golding	<i>Flitwick</i>	Mrs Pat Goulding	<i>Shefford</i>
Mr Nick Crago	<i>Harlington</i>	Ms Julia Haigh	<i>Shefford</i>
Mrs Sue Spence	<i>Harlington</i>	Mrs Liz Allan	<i>Shillington & Gravenhurst</i>
Mrs Ann Adams (CW/Guest)	<i>Haynes</i>	Mr Tim Watson	<i>Shillington & Gravenhurst</i>
Mrs Carol Watts	<i>Haynes</i>	Mr Alan Aldridge	<i>Silsoe</i>
Mr Tony Howells	<i>Hexton</i>	Mrs Stella Brooks	<i>Steppingley</i>
Mrs Joanna Daye	<i>Higham Gobian</i>	Mr David Dallman	<i>Westoning</i>
Mr Bob Vidler	<i>Langford</i>	Mrs Jane Steer	<i>Westoning</i>
Mrs Marjorie Horrell	<i>Maulden</i>	Mrs Linda Cudjoe	<i>Woburn</i>
Mrs Christine Culliford	<i>Maulden</i>	Mr Bob Ardern	<i>Woburn Sands</i>
Mr Keith Callard	<i>Meppershall</i>	Mrs Wendy Ardern	<i>Woburn Sands</i>
Mr Christopher Valentine	<i>Meppershall</i>	Mrs Ruth Cullinan	<i>Woburn Sands</i>
Mr Kelvin White	<i>Milton Bryan</i>	Mrs Rebecca Mynett	<i>Diocesan Synod Rep</i>
Mrs Anne Styles	<i>Pulloxhill</i>		

4. The Deanery review “Planning for growth and Sustainability” Revd Dr Sam Cappleman

a) Synopsis of rationale and timeline

Sam presented the following:

Rationale and timeline:

Bishop Richard sent a letter to the Deanery in May 2019 making a number of points including:

- Parishes in the deanery have a more coherent sense of mission and flourish in a sustainable way, including meeting parish share which has fallen short in the previous 3 years by an average of over £90,000 across the Deanery
- But this is not purely a cost cutting exercise, which are often short, sharp with little dialogue but it is about sustainability, and the level of investment by the Diocese in the Deanery as in these previous years is not sustainable
- How is the gap to be closed and what number of stipendiary posts are affordable by the deanery as a whole?
- To remove deficit, enable a focus on mission it was communicated that a reduction 1.5 to 2 posts over the next 5 years would be necessary at the current level of parish share contribution
- An initial draft of recommendation by June 2020 was requested with a timetable laid out to achieve this indicating Sam as Bishop’s Chaplain would come alongside to support and advise.

Initial meeting held July 2019 in Maulden with incumbents and wardens in which the background and the timescale was outlined. Many meetings followed including, a Synod meeting on 19 November at Silsoe, and a meeting with the Patrons and incumbents on 4 March 2020. In addition, there have been Standing and Pastoral Committee meetings, where inputs and scenarios were evaluated and refined, Chapter meetings and various meetings of clergy and

church members, with feedback and questions on the process and emerging scenarios produced and consolidated.

Three emerging scenarios were presented in the March meeting, further refined down to one in September.

Process on hold over the summer due to COVID and Church Commissioner guidelines and restarted in August 2020. As the process was restarted an option to have discussions in three geographic groups was evaluated by Chapter but the feedback was that all wanted to process to come to completion and we should continue on the current trajectory.

A Chapter meeting was held on 4 November 2020 which discussed the proposal and the Questions and Responses document updated to clarify some of the points which were made. In the days after that meeting there was some further feedback and conversations, and some further questions since the papers were sent out for tonight's meeting.

No other suggested plan has been proposed

Its accepted that no plan is perfect, and some people have reservations about the plan and the process.

Questions and Responses have been consolidated in the document also circulated and this will be forwarded to the Diocese along with any outcomes from this evening.

Sam has no agenda for any particular plan but has tried to consolidate the input to encapsulate feelings and reservations. He is not trying to minimise questions and comments. It captures the essence of all the concerns which have come his way.

It is time to bring this part of the consultation to a close.

In the past the Diocese has driven the process of proposals, but a few years ago the process changed. Deaneries were allowed to put forward their suggestions for Phase I.

The Deanery can either:

- i) Put forward the plan to the Diocese for their consideration, together with questions and responses, to complete Phase I; then prepare for Phase II when more detail will be discussed with individual parishes.

Or

- ii) If the suggestions are not accepted, then the process begins all over again. The Deanery starts Phase I again.

If the plan is accepted, it could be implemented over the next 5 years or so, sometimes at a quicker pace, sometimes slower. People will be affected, so their needs will be taken into consideration.

Lynda Klimas: The wording for the proposal is on the Agenda.

b) Questions and Responses

Nick Crago: Whether or not we agree or don't agree, will the Diocese consult with the parishes?

Sam: Yes. Discussions will differ depending on whether it is in Phase I or Phase II. It will be kept under review.

Wendy Ardern: In Woburn Sands we are in a difficult position. We find it difficult to reconcile the aims with Mission. We are very aware that several thousand homes will be built in the next 2-3 years. We have a very flourishing church which pays its Share. We have a very active Mission, especially, “Love Woburn Sands”, and a community taxi, which is currently taking older adults to vaccination centres. The proposal puts us with adjacent parishes, which may involve diverting the focus on mission to supporting another parish.

Ann Clarke: Our parishes are different, and historically there has been tension between the two parishes. St Botolph’s has suffered under Covid. Participants in worship dropped, and older people were unable to use modern technology. What is the evidence that a failing parish will be uplifted by a non-failing parish?

Sam responded to Wendy and Ann: It is an opportunity for parishes to work together. The intention is not that one parish will drag another down. Its about everybody being gracious and say, “Let’s put the past behind us. We all have an opportunity to go forward in the future. God can take anything we have to offer and transform it into something better.

Sam thanked Ann and Wendy for their openness and honesty.

Geoffrey Boulton: We are very happy to work alongside our neighbours, but from a purely rational point of view, Arlesey and Astwick would be better with Stotfold. He wanted assurance that it would be taken as a genuine concern in the next Phase, that parishes could be addressed very specifically.

Sam: It is possible for a parish to change deanery, and infact diocese, as has happened in the north of the Archdeaconry. The suggestion will be captured and considered.

Tony Howells: I find it impossible to avoid an emotional response. I don’t think there’s been adequate consultation. Now is not the time to make such a significant financial decision. It is a financial matter - it’s about survival. Destroying the parishes will destroy mission and ministry.

Kelvin White: There hasn’t been sufficient consultation. With a struggling church, this brings a spiritual fight in the wrong direction. Discussing finances is madness at this time. We haven’t had the opportunity as a parish to discuss it.

Liz Allan: Are we voting for the different options, or for the reorganisation of the Deanery. We already have two parishes together. None of the suggestion would work, because of the geographical spread, and we’re voting for a burn out situation for our own priest. How can it work properly?

Sam: Two points: 1) the degree to which parishes feel they’ve been consulted. Synod reps have brought the matter to the PCCs. There has been opportunity to discuss it. As in all consultations there potentially could have been more. 2) Given what we know about Covid, it makes decision making hard. These are uncertain times. There’s a sense of disquiet and unease because of Covid, which makes voting very hard. The consultation process will still take time, and the Deanery could start again in a different way; or the Deanery could say that we understand the uncertainty, but we want to move on.

Lucy Davis: We’re being asked to make a decision this evening. We’re in a time of desolation. The financial position of the Diocese will only get worse. Someone has to pay for the ministry. Should we defer until we get a clearer picture of the finances? Sometime we have to make decisions at a time of desolation.

Kelvin White: We walk by faith, not by sight. All the plans have stopped in my church It doesn't sit comfortably spiritually to make a decision now.

Ruth Gray: The Bishop is looking for a coherent sense of mission in a sustainable way. How does the plan achieve these objectives? There is housing growth in the area - a huge amount of development. How does the demographic change inform the options? Is there a consultation paper? I haven't seen a full consultation paper, or how it relates to mission or demographic indicators - the process, objectives and mission.

Robert Ardern: There are 30 or 40 parishes in the Deanery. The proposal only affects 6 or 7 parishes. It is crucial to get the vote of those parishes affected by the proposals.

Audrey Brand: We are one of those benefices affected by the changes. It is a Benefice which has always paid its way; but the Benefice will be broken up. We've been told in this time we can't apply for a Vicar. It is very difficult for the 3 parishes which feel in limbo. We are the only Benefice in this position, with no hope of applying for a priest.

Ruth Cullinan: Mission is important. Mission and finance are difficult bedfellows. I am the Treasurer at St. Michael's. Finance and Mission are all affected by Covid. This programme has not been discussed or engaged with at a wider parish level. The finances are going to be impacted. How will joining parishes together help this? What if the parishes can't pay the Parish Share? How will that help the Deanery finances?

Sam: The Diocesan is constantly reviewing its response to Covid and the impact this has on finances, and is very aware of the effect that Covid will have on parish finances. Many parishes raise income by hiring out church hall and rooms. When this is no longer possible because groups can't meet there because of Covid restrictions, the shortfall can't be made up by parishioners' giving. The Diocesan personnel are being reduced. Ultimately we don't know what the impact of Covid will be. It will need to be reviewed regularly. At first it was thought that, but the New Year 2021, we should be back to the Status Quo, but it isn't so. These are uncertain times.

Patricia Goulding: If we go through the effort now, we might have to do it again. This is very unsettling. The PCC are happy to vote as to how it affects us, but we don't know how it will affect others.

Clare Butler-Ellis: There doesn't seem to be Diocesan support as to how to help Benefices work well.

Sam: The Flourishing Churches team is a small team as the Diocese doesn't want to divert money away from directing it to the parishes. Fresh Expressions is from 'New Money' - the funding comes from the Church Commissioners. Paul Davies helps Flourishing Churches.

Question: How does being part of a bigger benefice help parishes?

Sam: Sharing of resources, and drawing on the skills of others. Some groupings work, and some don't. There's no magic formula. It's a complex area. Being part of something bigger can be part of something more exciting and more motivating. The Deanery is voting on the plan as laid out in the document issued in September 2020.

Peter Topley: expressed concern over the vagueness of the wording.

c) Voting on the proposal

The proposed plan is:

**Planning for Growth and Sustainability
in the Ampthill and Shefford Deanery**

Proposal to Deanery Synod from the Deanery Standing and Pastoral Committee

Parish	Stipend Contribution		Ministry Support Contribution with 1 Share = £233.58				Indicative Parish Share (Stipend Contribution plus Ministry Support Contribution)
	2021 Stipend allocation	2021 Stipend amount	Church Membership Figure (CMF)	Current Share Factor (SF)	No. of Shares (CMF x SF)	Resulting Ministry Support Request (Shares x £233.58)	
Ampthill			74	1.1	81	£19,013	
Millbrook			14	1.1	15	£3,597	
Steppingley			11	1.1	12	£2,826	
Total	1.000	£35,140				£25,437	£60,577
Flitwick	1.000	£35,140	128	1.1	141	£32,888	£68,028
Silsoe			49	1.1	54	£12,590	
Pulloxhill			24	1.1	26	£6,167	
Flitton			23	1.1	25	£5,910	
Total	1.000	£35,140				£24,666	£59,806
Tingrith			11	1.1	12	£2,826	
Westoning			65	1.1	72	£16,701	
Harlington			40	1.1	44	£10,278	
Total	1.000	£35,140				£29,805	£64,945
Woburn			70	1.1	77	£17,986	
Eversholt			18	1.1	20	£4,625	
Milton Bryan			15	1.1	17	£3,854	
Battlesden & Pottesgrove			13	1.1	14	£3,340	
Total	1.000	£35,140				£29,805	£64,945
Woburn Sands			102	1.1	112	£26,208	
Aspley Guise			34	1.1	37	£8,736	
Husborne Crawley			2	1.1	2	£514	
Ridgmont			6	1.1	7	£1,542	
Total	1.500	£52,710				£36,999	£89,709
Maulden			66	1.1	73	£16,958	
Clophill			25	1.1	28	£6,423	
Total	1.000	£35,140				£23,381	£58,521
Clifton			77	1.1	85	£19,784	
Southill			31	1.1	34	£7,965	
Haynes			39	1.1	43	£10,021	
Total	1.000	£35,140				£37,770	£72,910
Meppershall			39	1.1	43	£10,021	
Shefford			42	1.1	46	£10,791	
Campton			31	1.1	34	£7,965	
Total	1.000	£35,140				£28,777	£63,917
Henlow			42	1.1	46	£10,791	
Langford			41	1.1	45	£10,534	
Stondon			21	1.1	23	£5,396	
Arlsey & Astwick			55	1.1	61	£14,132	
Total	1.500	£52,710				£40,853	£93,563
Barton-le-Cley			63	1.1	69	£16,187	
Higham Gobion			7	1.1	8	£1,799	
Hexton			7	1.1	8	£1,799	
Shillington and Gravenhurst			40	1.1	44	£10,278	
Total	1.000	£35,140				£30,062	£65,202
Deanery Totals	12.000				1458		£762,123

Curate Housing Costs

Stipend Contribution
Covers cost of clergy stipend

Ministry Support Contribution
The majority of the Parish Share paid under this heading relates to direct support for parish clergy, (e.g. housing and training support). Other areas covered include:
Stipend costs of curates-in-training
Diocesan staff supporting parish ministry
Contribution to the National Church
Contribution to the work undertaken via the Board for Church and Society.

Sam: The wording for the proposal is on the Agenda and is:

- a) **Proposal** “Following the Phase 1 consultation process which started in May 2019, this Deanery agrees that the plan proposed and presented by the Deanery Standing and Pastoral Committee at its Deanery Chapter on 4th November 2020 and Deanery Synod 19th January 2021 be forwarded to the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral committee (DMPC) for their meeting on 25th February 2021 in conclusion of the Phase 1 process and in response to Bishop Richard’s letter of May 2019”

52 people voted anonymously via a Zoom Poll.

The results are:

Against: 22%

For: 56%

Abstain: 22%

b) Next steps

Sam stated that it is important that the concerns, particularly about Covid are considered, and that we go forward in a measured way.

Very important points have been made this evening. Sam thanked everyone for their participation, openness and honesty. Sam’s prayers go with the Deanery as we move forward, with trepidation and caution. How do we as Christians take a lead in what is going on in society at the moment?

Lynda thanked Sam for his graciousness, all the paperwork produced, and all the meetings he has attended.

5. Any other Business

Lynda and Caren warmly welcomed Revd David Payne to the Deanery.

David Young suggested a gift for Jeffrey John on his move from the Dean of St Albans Cathedral to a new post in Paris. His last Sunday will be 14th February 2021. Lynda said that the Standing Committee will suggest a token.

Lynda thanked Revd Anne Barker for her secretarial work, and Revd Caren Topley for her technical expertise.

6. Minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2020

Liz Allan pointed out the correct spelling of her name, and that she had sent her apologies, and wasn’t present. The minutes of the meeting were unanimously accepted.

7. Date of the next meeting

The Next Deanery Synod will be on **17th March 2021 at 7.15pm for 7.30pm by Zoom**, and the topic will be Chaplaincy ministry.

8. Closing prayers.

9. The meeting ended at 9.10pm with the Grace.

