

MEMORANDUM BY THE ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL

INTRODUCTION

1. Under the Ecclesiastical Fees Measure 1986¹ ("the 1986 Measure"), most of the fees that the Church of England can charge in respect of marriages and funerals are set out annually in a draft Parochial Fees Order. In general, the fees charged in connection with burials in cemeteries and services in crematoria, monuments in churchyards and searches in church registers are also fixed by this Order. The draft Order is agreed by the Archbishops' Council and laid before the General Synod for its approval; the final Order is also subject to a right of veto by each House of Parliament.
2. In 2004, parochial fees produced around £40m, of which almost £16m contributed towards the cost of paying stipends to the clergy - which represented 8.2% of the total stipends bill. The remainder was raised for PCCs and payments for extras, such as flowers and the services of third parties such as organists and bell ringers.

The Increase from 1 January 2006

3. The Parochial Fees Order 2005, which came into force on 1 January 2006, increased fees by 5% in line with the recommended increase in the National Stipends Benchmark, except for the fee for a marriage service, which was increased by 10%.
4. These increases had been recommended to General Synod by the Archbishops' Council. The 2005 Order was approved by the Synod at the July 2005 Group Sessions without a debate.
5. Synod debated the following motion from the Oxford Diocesan Synod: 'That this Synod request the Archbishops' Council to bring forward draft Parochial Fees Orders increasing the level of parochial fees so as to reflect the real cost of the ministry to which they relate.' This motion was defeated after a lengthy debate.

¹ As amended by the National Institutions of The Church of England (Transfer of Functions) Order 1998.

THE CURRENT DRAFT ORDER

The Increase from 1 January 2007

6. This year, the annual consultation was carried out on the basis of a range of increases from 3% to 10%.
7. Those consulted included professional associations of funeral directors, burial and cremation authorities, the National Society of Memorial Masons, the Ecclesiastical Law Association, the Churches Main Committee, the Council for the Care of Churches, the General Register Office, the Association of Family History Societies, as well as members of the Family Life And Marriage Education Network (FLAME), including the joint chairs of the trustees.
8. In the light of responses to the consultation, the Council's Deployment, Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee (DRACSC), which has responsibility for making recommendations to the Archbishops' Council on matters of policy to do with parochial fees, again decided unanimously to recommend to the Council a 5% increase in the level of fees generally, but an increase of 10% in the fee for a marriage service.
9. During the Committee's discussion on 16 May, the following points were noted.
 - The Committee had recommended an increase in the National Stipend Benchmark of 2.5%.
 - Fees were not at a level that would dissuade people from taking advantage of the services offered by the Church of England.
 - There was a difference between funerals and marriages. The Church needs to be more sensitive about funerals. Marriages are long-planned and costed, and the fee is only a small proportion of what is spent on the wedding.
 - There were indications that a significant number of people think that fees are generally still too low. During the debate on the Oxford Diocesan Synod motion several speakers expressed the view that fees were too low. Again, in responses to the consultation on a proposed review of the primary legislation relating to parochial fees, just under a third of respondents felt that the level of fees was too low, while two thirds thought they were about right, with only a few thinking fees were too high.

10. The Archbishops' Council has, by a majority, accepted the recommendation made by DRACSC.

CONCLUSION

11. Under the Ecclesiastical Fees Measure 1986, as amended by the National Institutions of the Church of England (Transfer of Functions) Order 1998, the draft Order has to be laid before General Synod. Where the Business Committee determines that a draft Parochial Fees Order does not need to be debated by the Synod, the draft Order shall be deemed to have been approved by the General Synod without amendment unless notice is given by a member of General Synod that he or she wishes the draft Order to be debated.
12. The General Synod is, therefore, invited to approve the draft Parochial Fees Order 2006 (GS 1619) which the Council has submitted.
13. If it is so approved, the Council will make the Order by sealing it. It will thereafter need to be laid before both Houses of Parliament in accordance with legal requirements. If Synod amends it, the Council has the option of *either* sealing the Order as amended by Synod *or* withdrawing the Order for further consideration. The effect of the latter would be that the 2005 Order would remain in force for the time being, as a new Order cannot become law until it has been sealed by the Council.

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