

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 2003, parochial fees contributed more than £15m towards the cost of paying stipends to the clergy - which represented over 8% of the total stipends bill. The remainder was raised for PCCs, and, taken together with payments for extras, such as flowers and the services of third parties such as organists and bell ringers, produced around £39m.

The Increase from 1 January 2005

3. The Parochial Fees Order 2004, which came into force on 1 January 2005, 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 2004 Order was approved by the Synod at the July 2004 Group Sessions after a brief debate. The Bishop of Hereford proposed an amendment which would have had the effect of limiting the increase in the fee for a marriage service to 5%, but this amendment lapsed, as there were insufficient members of Synod to support debating the amendment or taking a vote on it. The increases in fees in 2005 have attracted very little adverse comment.

¹ As amended by the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 1995 and the National Institutions of The Church of England (Transfer of Functions) Order 1998.

THE CURRENT DRAFT ORDER

The Increase from 1 January 2006

5. This year, the usual annual consultation was carried out on the basis of a proposed general 5% increase in fees for 2006 with a higher increase of 10% for marriage service fees. This compares with an increase in the National Stipend Benchmark of 5% from 1 April 2006.
6. 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.
7. 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. The recommendation regarding marriage services reflected the view, which had been accepted by the Archbishops' Council in both 2003 and 2004, that there was some scope for increases in the level of marriage fees above those for parochial fees generally. However, the Archbishops' Council sees it as important to avoid raising the fees to such an extent as to undermine the work of all those who are seeking to encourage couples to marry in Church
8. During the Committee's discussion on 20 May, the following points were noted:
 - A consultation on various matters connected with parochial fees would be undertaken shortly. Although this would be directed primarily to other issues, the opportunity was being taken to include a question on the general level of fees.
 - The Committee had recommended an increase in the National Stipend Benchmark of just over 5%, and the general fees increase was in line with this.

- Synod would be debating 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 directed to Orders in future years, and the debate on it would be taken after any debate on the 2005 Order. In addition to the background paper from the Diocese of Oxford (GS Misc 771A, the Ministry Division would be providing a background paper on the motion (GS 771B).

9. The Archbishops' Council has accepted the recommendations made by DRACSC, and the Order which is now before the Synod gives effect to them.

Other Provisions

10. Following comments in the debates in the General Synod on the 2003 and 2004 Parochial Fees Orders regarding burial fees, the definition of “burial” in paragraph 3 of the Order has been amended slightly from that used in previous years, so that it contains an express reference to deposit in the type of lined grave known as a “brick grave” as well as to deposit in a vault.

CONCLUSION

11. The General Synod is, therefore, invited to approve the draft Parochial Fees Order 2005 (GS 1590) which the Council has submitted.
12. If it is so approved, the Council will make the Order by sealing it. It will then 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 2004 Order would remain in force until replaced by a later Order sealed by the Council.)

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