

GENERAL SYNOD

Summary of decisions by the House of Bishops and by its delegated committees

July 2022 – December 2022

1. This summary of decisions includes those made by the House and by committees delegated under its Standing Orders to handle business on its behalf.

THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS (HOB)

2. The House of Bishops has increased the frequency of its meetings as from March 2020. The House has met three times since the July 2022 group of sessions.
3. All the matters reported were taken in a Committee of the whole House under Standing Order 14.

House of Bishops 14th July 2022 (Zoom meeting)

4. The House engaged with ideas for the approach to distributing funding for work related to the Vision and Strategy for the next triennium in advance of them being taken to the Archbishops' Council in September.
5. The Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich updated the House on the collaboration work in the Eastern and West Midlands regions as part of the transforming effectiveness programme.
6. The House was informed of and discussed the work on Seal of the Confessional, ahead of the final IICSA report later this year.
7. The House was discussed other work, including from the working group on safeguarding culture, work related to racial justice, proposals for zero-based forecasting on Bishops' finances and on See Houses.

House of Bishops 26th September 2022 (Zoom meeting)

8. The House reflected on the death of HM The Queen and members recorded their gratitude for her service to the Church during her long reign.
9. The House discussed inflation and the energy crisis, including the impact on the Church of England. It agreed a number of short-term actions including a parish assistance fund. It also reflected on the way in which churches could provide warm, safe buildings for communities to use.
10. The House was updated on the work of the Governance Review Project Board and discussed the Project Board's proposals. They provided direction in relation to the board composition of the Church of England National Services (CENS)
11. The House was updated on the work that the Independent Safeguarding Board (ISB) was undertaking and they heard from the Survivor Advocate member in advance of their first report being published.

12. The House was updated on the Living in Love and Faith process.

House of Bishops 29th November 2022 (Zoom meeting)

13. The House reflected on the meeting of the College in early November and commented on the Living in Love and Faith process.

14. The House considered the main recommendations from the review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure which are currently being finalised. The House engaged with a number of policy issues where further work needs to be done and considered specific changes which are relevant to Bishops.

15. The House discussed the key recommendations that relate to the Church of England within the final overarching report from the Independent Inquiry on Child Sexual Abuse. The House also reviewed the draft proposed public response to the recommendations.

16. The House discussed a range of issues related to recruitment, induction, support and accountability of Diocesan Secretaries and considered proposals to improve each area in order to reduce unnecessary turnover and ensure Diocesan Secretaries operate as effectively as possible.

17. The House considered a draft Code of Practice on Return to Ministry and the process of assessing the return to ministry of respondents who have been subject to a limited prohibition under the CDM 2003.

18. The House was given an update on the recommendations made by the Governance Review Group in relation to the role of bishops in the governance arrangements of the National Church.

19. The House was given an update on the national Church grants made available to dioceses to help meet the challenge of increased energy costs.

THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS STANDING COMMITTEE (HBSC)

House of Bishops Standing Committee 20th October

20. The Standing Committee considered agenda items for future meetings of the House of Bishops. This included approving the inclusion of an item on sustaining effective Diocesan Secretaries and Chief Secretaries and Return to Ministry. These items were taken at the November 2022 House meeting.

21. The Standing Committee was given an update on the review of the Mission and Pastoral Measure.

22. The Standing Committee considered work related to consecrations and agreed that this should come to a future meeting of the House.

23. The Standing Committee was given an update on the work of the Church Urban Fund.

ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Advisory Council for Religious Communities 28 November 2022

24. A report was received from the sub group of the Council established to provide advice and support for communities seeking recognition or acknowledgement but who do not as yet have sufficient numbers to proceed.

25. There are three recognised communities still to be registered in accordance with Canon DA1 and the Religious Communities Regulations 2020.
26. After advice from the Legal Office, the Council agreed to establish a category of Registered Historic Community for those communities for whom it is inappropriate to make the amendments to their governance documents in order to comply with the Religious Communities Regulations 2020. This will probably involve three or four communities. The Council will seek assurances from the trustees of each community that the members are being cared for and all financial and safeguarding issues are addressed.
27. The Council agreed to issue declarations to eight communities who were requesting to be registered as acknowledged communities in accordance with the Regulations. The Council agreed that a further two could be registered once a letter of request had been received. There are a further five communities which are in the process of submitting suitable documents.
28. The Council agreed a procedure for the election from the recognised communities of ten members of the Council, whose term of office comes to an end in January 2023.
29. A report was received from the Society of the Sacred Mission on the establishment of the Herbert Kelly Institute for Anglican Religious Life at St Antony's Priory in Durham. The Council is very supportive of this initiative.
30. A letter from the Deans of Single Consecrated Life (SCL) had been received, requesting that SCL be acknowledged. The Council agreed that, in accordance with the Regulations, this was not possible as SCL is a network of support and advice rather than a religious community. The reasons for the Council's decision will be conveyed carefully to SCL.

William Nye
Secretary to The House of Bishops
January 2023