

Church Commissioners
Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee
Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

Benefice and Parish of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury
(Diocese of Lichfield)

Note by Joanna Chandler-Clarke

1. At its previous meeting on 27 February 2025, the MPCPC was invited to consider the one representation against and 14 in favour in connection with the draft Scheme to dissolve the parish and benefice of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury and to create a new benefice and parish of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury, including provision for the parish church, parsonage house and patronage arrangements, and to create a new benefice and parish of St Peter's, Shrewsbury, including the prospective parish church of the new parish and patronage arrangements. The previous Committee paper is included for reference at **Annex B**.
2. The full minute of the discussion is at MPCP(25)M1. In summary, the Committee requested the following further details from the diocese in order to inform its decision-making:
 - a. The rationale for why a 0.5 post was considered to be sufficient for the Abbey, including what was meant by the incumbent being a 'missional leader' and what his/her day-to-day responsibilities would be;
 - b. Whether the proposed 0.5 post for the Abbey was likely to be linked to another post within the diocese;
 - c. More information about the mission plan for the proposed Abbey benefice; and
 - d. The practicalities of increasing ministry provision after any appointments made on a part-time basis.
3. The response from the Bishop of Shrewsbury is attached at **Annex A**. The Bishop sets out how deployment is calculated in the Diocese of Lichfield and notes that work around the division of assets between the two proposed benefices and parishes is ongoing. However, it is clear that the proposed 0.5 post is the minimum deployment which would be allocated to the proposed Abbey benefice. The appointment would be reviewed the new Archdeacon of Salop starts in May, and there could be scope for it to be increased in the future if resources are available. The role and responsibility for the 0.5 FTE would be agreed with the PCC and those serving in the current ministry team. The Bishop notes that the current team includes a Parish Administrator, who deals with the day-to-day management of the church, including diary and bookings, as well as an organist, Choir Director and volunteers. This means that the new incumbent should be able to focus on more outward looking, missional activities.

Issues for the Committee

- Does the Committee have enough information to make a decision?
- Is the Committee content with the Scheme, now there is confirmation about the nature and role of the 0.5 post at the Abbey?
- Would the proposals further the mission of the Church?

For decision:

The possible outcomes are:

- (a) To allow the scheme to proceed as drafted;
- (b) To decide that the scheme should not be made;
- (c) To refer the scheme back to the Bishop for further consideration;
- (d) To agree to exercise its powers to allow the scheme to proceed subject to certain amendments being made under section 10(1)



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23 April 2025

Annex A

Response to the Church Commissioners Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 Benefice of Shrewsbury, Holy Cross Proposed Pastoral Scheme.

I would ask you to note my initial response, of the 23rd of January and subsequent response of the 11th of February alongside this response. This response has been created in consultation with Acting Archdeacon of Salop, The Revd. Preb. Jo Farnworth.

The questions posed in your email correspondence of the 28th of February were as follows:

Please could you explain more about the rationale for how a 0.5 post would work for the Abbey given its status as a Major Parish Church?

Deployment for all stipendiary posts in the Diocese of Lichfield is determined by a number of factors, including congregational strength, viability of buildings, strategic significance, missional engagement and opportunities and financial sustainability. While all these factors are considered for each post, the ability of the benefice to pay its Common Fund contribution underpins the assessment of deployment.

At the time that the pastoral scheme for Shrewsbury, Holy Cross, was being drawn up, it was clear that Shrewsbury Abbey would only be able to afford to pay a Common Fund contribution equating to a 0.5 post. At that time, the Abbey was encouraged to develop their missional opportunities and look at improving their financial sustainability so that the level of deployment could be increased.

In parallel with this process, discussions have been ongoing concerning the division of particular Trust Funds between Shrewsbury Abbey and St Peter, Monkmoor, should the pastoral scheme to divide the benefice go ahead. It has taken some time to come to a common mind on the division, and it is hoped that a final agreement is imminent. Until this agreement is made, it is not possible to fully assess the financial sustainability of the Abbey, and consequently its ability to afford the Common Fund payment associated with the deployment of a full-time incumbent.

However, in anticipation that the financial settlement is close to conclusion, initial work has begun to fully assess the Abbey's finances. This work will be completed by the new Archdeacon of Salop, once he takes up his role in early May. If the Abbey can evidence the resources to financially sustain a full time post, then this will be warmly received. However, it must be noted that a clear, financially realistic and sustainable pathway will need to be demonstrated, which does not rely on money which may be received from Trust Funds. Once the relevant data has been received and assessed, a request will be made for the Bishop of Lichfield's Staff Meeting to agree the final level of deployment.

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Please could you also set out the mission plan for the proposed benefice / parish, including how the proposed incumbent would work with the existing ministry team and how increasing ministry provision to full-time could work in practice after an incumbent is in place.

As stated in previous responses, ministry in this setting is well supported by a considerable number of clergy with Permission to Officiate and a Self Supporting Associate Minister, the Revd. Pat Aldred. There is a clear need for a missional leader to oversee, inspire and co-create with the congregation, a missional plan to take the Abbey forward into the future. Currently the financial position indicates that a post of 0.5 could be afforded. The proposed deployment is based on missional effectiveness informed by the currently evidenced financial reality. As previously stated, if it is demonstrated that the financial position of the Abbey has improved to the extent that a full time post could be supported through Common Fund giving, then that would be warmly received and would be reflected in the deployment proposal presented to the Bishop of Lichfield's Staff Meeting for consideration.

In the Diocese of Lichfield's recently launched Strategic Framework for developing mission and ministry in all churches, one of the key aspirations is to have "a strengthened culture of vocation amongst all God's people, and at least 30 new licensed lay ministers and 30 ordinations a year" with a commitment to "build one another up and encourage vocations in all aspects of ministry, licensed or otherwise". In response to this, we will be putting support in place to enable parishes such as the Abbey, to think through how a strengthened culture of vocation might be lived out and new ministries developed.

....how increasing ministry provision to full-time could work in practice after an incumbent is in place.

To answer the second half of the question: The way forward would be to make any initial 'interim appointment' with an indication that this might later become a full time post.

The additional questions posed in your email correspondence of the 8th of April were as follows:

Please could you define the main roles and responsibilities of the proposed 'missional leader' (the 0.5 post at the Abbey) including the day- to- day management of the church?

The roles and responsibilities of this post would have to be carefully defined, especially if we were to appoint to an interim post at 0.5. There would need to be consultation with the PCC and those serving in the current ministry team in order to create a realistic Role Description. This would be the work of the Archdeacon of Salop. However, it should be stated that the Abbey does have a Parish Administrator who deals with the day to day management of the church building, bookings and practical matters, an Organist, a Choir Director and a good team of volunteers as well as the ordained staff.

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Is it anticipated that the post for the Abbey could be combined with another role, e.g. a diocesan post, to make a full-time position?

It would be quite possible for a person applying for the 0.5 post to also hold another part time post, but this would be a personal choice rather than something we are planning to create. In the past it has been found that such arrangements can lead to difficulties, especially when one part of the arrangement comes to an end (such as a time limited post).

+ Sarah Shrewsbury

14.4.2025.

Church Commissioners
Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee

Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

**Benefice and Parish of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury
(Diocese of Lichfield)**

Note by Joanna Chandler-Clarke

Case Summary	
<p>The draft Pastoral Scheme provides for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the dissolution of the benefice and parish of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury; (ii) the creation of a new benefice and parish of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury; and for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the parish church of the new parish; • the parsonage house of the current benefice to be the parsonage house of the new benefice; and • the future patronage arrangements for the new benefice; (iii) the creation of a new benefice and parish of Saint Peter's, Shrewsbury; and for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the prospective parish church of the new parish; and • the future patronage arrangements for the new benefice; 	
Number of parishes/benefices/churches	One existing parish and benefice, with two churches (Shrewsbury Abbey (Holy Cross) and St Peter's Monkmoor)
Number of representations or comments received	One representation against; 14 in favour (one of which only if there is a full-time stipendiary person in the new benefice of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury)
Diocesan rationale in brief	Existing benefice could only afford a 0.5 post, rather than a full-time incumbent, but this would be insufficient to cover both churches effectively. The proposed division of the parish and benefice into the two areas of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury (with deployment of 0.5) and St Peter's Shrewsbury (with deployment of 0.2, i.e. House for Duty) would enable focus on reviving the life of the Abbey for Sunday worship and weekday ministry.
Main themes in the representations and any unusual factors	The representation against raised concern about: insufficient clergy deployment to meet the pastoral needs of the proposed parishes; a lack of parish-wide consultation; the motivation of special interest groups wishing to maintain current styles of worship and reduced levels of parish share; a lack of financial clarity and experience in the

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	two churches; and a long vacancy. The representations in favour say the proposal would enable focus and freedom for both churches which have distinctive characteristics and vocations.
Parish traditions	Shrewsbury Abbey (Holy Cross): Liberal Anglo-Catholic; fully choral (since 2019) St Peter's: Central Evangelical
Sifting decision	The case has been examined by the Committee's sifting panel on 5 th February 2025 who determined that it should be decided by the papers alone.
Possible decisions	(a) To allow the scheme to proceed as drafted; (b) To decide that the scheme should not be made; (c) To refer the scheme back to the Bishop for further consideration; (d) To agree to exercise its powers to allow the scheme to proceed subject to certain amendments being made under section 10(1) to which the Bishop has to agree

Attached are:

- Annex A: A copy of the draft Scheme;
- Annex B: A map showing the area of the existing and proposed parish boundaries;
- Annex C: A copy of the letter referring the representations to the Bishop together with a copy of the reply from the Bishop of Shrewsbury on his behalf;
- Annex D: Parish information form
- Annex R: A copy of the representations and related correspondence between the representor and diocese;
- Annex S: A copy of the letter referring the supplementary representations to the Bishop together with a copy of the reply from the Bishop of Shrewsbury.

Introduction

1. The Committee is invited to consider the draft Pastoral Scheme providing for the dissolution of the benefice and parish of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury and the creation of a new benefice and parish of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury and a new benefice and parish of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury, and associated matters.
2. The draft Scheme attracted **one representation against** and **14 in favour** (although one of the representations in favour is only on the basis that the proposed new benefice of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury receives a full-time stipendiary post).

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3. The diocesan rationale for the proposals is set out in the draft Scheme at **Annex A**.

Summary of the themes in the Representations against the draft Scheme

4. One representation against the draft Scheme was received from a parishioner and former treasurer, churchwarden and PCC member (**Annex R**). Mr Vine says the proposal to divide the parish into two smaller ones is against Church of England practice of consolidating/grouping parishes. He describes the characteristics and geography of the proposed new parishes. Mr Vine says that there has been provision for an assistant curate in the benefice in recent years, but the proposed arrangement reduces clergy provision to 0.7 FTE (0.5 for Holy Cross and 0.2 for St Peter's) despite there being no change in the number of souls nor total area of the parishes. He considers the proposed clergy deployment arrangement as insufficient to meet the pastoral needs of the two proposed parishes.
5. Mr Vine says that there has been no parish-wide consultation; there has only been one separate meeting for each congregation. He says that the proposals are being driven by special interest groups which seek to maintain their current patterns and styles of worship (with the Abbey pushing for more Anglo-Catholic choral styles of worship, and St Peter's wanting separation) and reduced levels of parish share. The congregation of the Abbey is mostly come from outside the parish, and less than 50 (plus the choir) attend the main Sunday service. The administration for the parish, which includes two paid staff, is based at the Abbey and covers both churches.
6. Mr Vine asks how the 'careful assessment' of parish finances has been constructed, given that the APCM had met and adjourned, and the accounts had not been properly examined. He says that the current Parish Share has never been apportioned between the two congregations and there has been a single parish account from which the Share is paid.
7. Mr Vine notes that the benefice has been in vacancy for two years and says that it needs good leadership to enable the whole parish to embrace a viable future.

Summary of the themes in the Representations in favour

8. Thirteen representations in favour of the draft Scheme were received plus an additional representation which was in favour, providing the proposed benefice of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury receives a full-time stipendiary post. Mr Lester and Mr Williscroft wrote in favour of the draft Scheme on behalf of Historic England because they support the aim of providing a viable and vibrant future for both churches. The Bishop of Shrewsbury supports the proposals because she says both churches need to move forward with freedom to pursue missional activities enabled by separate financial arrangements. She says the vocation of each church is distinctively different. Ms Megan Smith, a member of the Abbey choir and congregation, believes the proposals will allow both churches to thrive without the pressure of the other. The Reverend Prebendary Jo Farnworth, Acting Archdeacon of Salop, is fully supportive of the proposals. Mr Bryan Covington also supports the proposal to create the two parishes, particularly St Peter's becoming an independent parish to become the mission church for which it was originally built.

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9. Mrs Hannah Smith, a PCC member, deanery synod representation and worshipper thinks the churches are at a stage where they need to 'stand alone'. They both have different worship styles and there is little relationship between the two. Mrs Diana Morgan says the churches originally had similar worship styles but, since 2003, the worshippers at St Peter's have preferred a different style. She says the Abbey is considered as the county church and welcomes many visitors/tourists each year as one of the most visited buildings in Shrewsbury. St Peter's plays a different role, offering more outreach to an area which has higher social needs. She says these differences make it impossible for one incumbent to cover all the requirements. Mr Michael C Duckett also describes the different and distinct ministries of the two churches and believes that the Holy Spirit is leading the formation of the two new parishes.
10. Ms Katherine May outlines the history of St Peter's as a mission church in the 20th century. Although the current congregation is small, she says they are active and offer regular worship, discipleship/house groups and prayer group, as well as weekly and monthly outreach activities, such as a weekly coffee morning and Forget-me-not Tea for carers and those living with memory loss. There are good links with a parent and child group which help promote Messy Church and information about baptism. She describes the style of worship as 'middle-of-the road Anglican' which varies with the high church practice at the Abbey church. She also says that the requirements for the buildings are different, with the constant and expensive upkeep of the ancient Abbey, compared with the modest structure of St Peter's church and hall. She thinks that St Peter's is increasingly being held back because the church and hall would lend themselves to practical eco-friendly improvements.
11. A former incumbent, and worshipper, the Reverend Paul Firmin, describes the two churches as 'chalk and cheese'. He says that St Peter's was always intended to be a parish when it was planted by the diocese in the 1930s and St Peter's serves the relatively deprived people of its area, in contrast to the more eclectic flavour of the Abbey,. He does not think a continued link with the Abbey will help the mission and outreach in the wider community and also references the difference in maintenance/responsibilities with regard to the different buildings. He considers the Abbey mission to be more related to tourism which needs a specialist skillset to manage which differs to the skillset required for St Peter's.
12. Ms Bernice Firmin, a churchwarden and worshipper, writes in support, particularly of the formation of the parish of St Peter's. Ms Firmin says that the two churches recently shared the same form of service, with some additional sung set pieces at the Abbey, but the Abbey has now moved to a full Anglo-Catholic service conducted by male clergy, with acolytes and incense. She thinks that the Reverend Stephanie has been excluded and side-lined. She says the Abbey excels at choral worship and continues its mission to visitors, many of whom come because of the Brother Cadfael stories. Like other representors in favour, she considers the Abbey building to be a drain on resources but notes that the size lends itself to concerts (contrasting to the 120-person capacity of St Peter's, which is less than a quarter of the size). She also lists the activities arranged by St Peter's. Ms Firmin says that a new parish of St Peter's means it will have an incumbent of its own who can focus on its needs because she thinks that the church has previously had a smaller proportion of the incumbent's input due to its being the daughter church.
13. Mr Alan Harley supports the proposals, but with much regret because he has enjoyed worshipping in both churches within the same parish. He notes the different

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types of service, mission outreach and congregations, but said he has had pleasure in both approaches. Mr Harley says that finance has not been addressed in the draft Scheme, and he is unsure about how several trust funds will be split/apportioned.

14. Mr Brian Newman supports the proposals, but only if there is deployment of a full-time clergy person for the new benefice of Holy Cross. He believes they have regained its strength and transformed their finances so that they are now able to afford a full-time incumbent. He says that, should the decision that only a 0.5 incumbent be provided, his support is withdrawn. Mr Newman notes surprise when the Archdeacon of Salop had told them that they were unable to afford a full-time incumbent, especially when its income had been reduced significantly due to the impact of being required to close in the covid pandemic. He outlines objectives given to the Abbey church when discussing the possible models for the parish split and details how each of these have been met. Mr Newman says he met with the two acting Archdeacons of Salop in March 2024 to discuss their reasoning for a full time incumbent and followed up with an email which also included plans for outreach to the parish, which would require a full-time stipendiary vicar. He also notes that they had two full-time stipendiary clergy until January 2022, which had reduced to none by May 2022, so he says the Church has saved a great deal of money during the vacancy. Mr Newman also suggests that it might be simpler to create a new benefice of St Peter's Shrewsbury, rather than dissolving the existing benefice and reconstituting a new one with the same name as simpler for the Charity Commission.
15. **Annex R** also includes a copy of the correspondence between the diocese and representor outside of the formal representation process under the Measure, following which the representor confirmed his concerns still remained.

Summary of the Bishop's initial views

16. Following normal practice, the correspondence received was sent to the Bishop of Lichfield to respond. The letter to him and the response from the Bishop of Shrewsbury on his behalf are attached in **Annex C**.
17. The Bishop of Shrewsbury says that the proposals emerged following discussions between the PCC and former Archdeacon and from consultations as part of the diocesan-wide *Shaping for Mission (SfM)* programme. The main consideration of the SfM programme was missional effectiveness alongside recognition of financial realities. The deanery SfM team, the Deanery Synod and the PCC identified a priority to review and reshape Shrewsbury town centre ministry and mission, with the aim for each church to have a clearer purpose and vocation. Specifically, St Peter's was identified as needing to step out of the shadow of the Abbey and find local missional purpose. The Bishop attached a summary of SfM focus groups to her response.
18. When determining the division of the area of the parish into two, the Bishop says the following factors were taken into account: natural community boundaries, population figures, schools, nursing homes and sheltered accommodation.
19. The Bishop says the Abbey is considered to be the county church with many civic functions and significant tourism. She says that it needs a missional approach which acknowledges its history and heritage but also speaks of Christian hospitality

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and hope. Clear missional thinking has emerged over the past five years. Ministry at the Abbey is supported by a considerable number of clergy with Permission to Officiate (PtO) and a self-supporting minister. The Bishop considers that the proposed benefice needs a missional leader and a 0.5 post is currently what could be afforded.

20. The church of St Peter's has, according to the Bishop, a clear identity as a Mission Church with a more deprived section of the population. She describes the congregation as very active and engaged with a heart for mission and service. There is also support from clergy with PtO, as well as growing lay ministry. There are fewer occasional offices, so the Bishop says this means there is less of a need for ordained ministry support. Overall, she thinks the benefice need oversight, pastoral care and support and guidance. Financially, the proposed benefice could afford a 0.2 House for Duty post.
21. The Bishop describes the alternative configurations and links with other parishes and benefices in Shrewsbury: (i) St Peter's was considered for a link with St Giles', Shrewsbury but it was considered that this post would be too demanding and St Peter's would not have the focussed support it needs; (ii) a link between St Peter's and Holy Spirit and Emmanuel, Harlescote was considered due to shared borders and demographics but such a post was also considered to be too demanding; and (iii) a link between the Abbey and St Chad's, Shrewsbury due to the timing of vacancies and similar issues with Common Fund payments but there was little enthusiasm for this, and St Chad's turned their position around and made a full-time appointment.
22. The Bishop confirms that the benefice as existing currently has a deployment of 1.0 and the proposed new benefices would together have a deployment of 0.7 (0.5 for Holy Cross, Shrewsbury and 0.2 House for Duty for St Peter's, Shrewsbury). She says these proposed deployment figures are a reflection of financial reality but that they are sufficient due to the support from those with PtO and developing lay ministry. The Bishop also says that the deployment figures could be increased over time and sets out how this could be requested, using the example of St Chad's, Shrewsbury as evidence that clergy deployment can be increased.
23. Responding to a question about the pastoral dynamics between the two churches and whether this was a driver of the Scheme, the Bishop says that the rationale is about vocations and missional effectiveness, rather than relationships.
24. The Bishop's response includes Common Fund payments for the past five years. The figures show some arrears, but the Diocesan Director of Finance explains that the remaining arrears for 2022 will be written off. The figures could not be split into the two churches.
25. In response to the concern that the parish had not been able to finalise or submit their joint accounts since 2022, the Bishop has supplied a copy of the 2023 accounts. The diocese helps the parish to get the accounts ready on time. It has not been possible to identify what assets belong to what church because it has always been one PCC, but the new parishes will have their own accounts which, according to the Director of Finance, will make the process easier. He also says that there is dedicated diocesan staff to help with matters of finance and governance.

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26. The division of assets between the parishes is still to be agreed and the Bishop and Director of Finance think it is very likely that the Charity Commission will need to be involved. The Director of Finance says that the factors to be considered for any trust funds where the original area of benefit is unclear include population, size and deprivation. Although unlikely, he also says that another possibility is that the area of benefit of the ecclesiastical parish of Holy Cross will still remain.
27. The Bishop says that there was no reason that the proposals include the dissolution of the existing benefice and parish, rather than taking a new parish of St Peter's, Shrewsbury out of its area, but they think the net result would have remained the same.

Summary of the Representors' supplementary views

28. Following receipt of the Bishop's response, two further comments were received from those in favour of the draft Scheme. The Reverend Paul Firmin sustained his representation in favour. Mr Firmin says that there was, in fact, a joint and open meeting of both churches in early 2022 which was well attended by members of the St Peter's congregation but less so by members of Holy Cross. Mr Firmin also says that not all the schools lie in the proposed area of St Peter's Shrewsbury parish because a significant campus of the Shrewsbury College Group is close to the Abbey. In addition, Mr Firmin believes that St Peter's could develop beyond 0.2 clergy in due course and is confident it would be able to maintain the church and hall. He then goes on to address each of the questions posed to the Bishop in the original letter of 11th November 2024.
29. Mr Brian Newman also responded to the correspondence. He notes that the number of attendees for the main Sunday service is a misleading number because many more also attend Choral Evensong, as well as around 17 Wednesday communicants. Mr Newman explains the issues with 2022 and 2023 accounts, including delays to examination by the Diocesan Director of Finance, so they have changed Examiners in order to prevent such delays. Mr Newman says that it is expected that the Holy Cross parish would continue to be able to meet a £46,000 Common Fund payment, which he says would be sufficient for a 1.0 post. He says that they have not had confirmation that the 2022 arrears (£4,000) have been written off, as they were for St Chad's, Shrewsbury, which was able to appoint a full-time priest. Given the current parish has paid its full Common Fund requests in 2023 and 2024, without the benefit of any large bequests as at St Chad's, Mr Newman says that the Holy Cross parish has also shown it has turned itself around and should be permitted a full-time priest. Mr Newman was surprised by the Bishop of Shrewsbury's comments that the Charity Commission was more than likely to be involved in the division of assets due to previous conversations relating to the division of a historic trust. The parish is keen to avoid Charity Commission involvement because it understands this process would be very time-consuming; it is still awaiting advice from the Assistant Registrar on associated matters. Mr Newman remains of the view that the proposed parish of St Peter's Shrewsbury should be 'hived out' of the area of the existing parish because it would make the process of setting up new accounts etc. more straightforward than the proposed dissolution route.

Summary of the Bishop's supplementary views

30. The Bishop of Shrewsbury responded to further questions arising from the supplementary views of the representors in favour of the draft Scheme. The Bishop says that her responses are based on the information available to her and other diocesan officers; she notes that the former Archdeacon of Salop was directly involved in a number of conversations and meetings which have been referenced in the correspondence. For example, the joint and open meeting referred to by Mr Firmin is not documented by any notes or diary appointments, but it may well have been attended by the former Archdeacon.
31. The Bishop says the presence of the significant Shrewsbury College Group campus close to the Abbey is undisputed and she was not aware that there was a suggestion that all the schools lie in the proposed parish of St Peter's, Shrewsbury.
32. The suggestion that the benefice of St Peter's, Shrewsbury could develop beyond 0.2 clergy provision in due course is described by the Bishop as aspirational but says that, should the benefice be able to sustain an increase in ministry provision financially, it would be warmly considered. She refers to her previous letter where she outlines the process for increasing ministry provision.
33. Referring to the comment about attendance for the Abbey by Mr Newman, the Bishop says that the Statistics for Mission provide a clear record, but she sees no reason to dispute his viewpoint.
34. The Bishop refers to further comment by the Director of Finance in relation to the 2022 and 2023 accounts. There is reference to some confusion as to when the work was finished, particularly in relation to the 2023 accounts, but she says that there has been no signed copy of the accounts received from the Diocesan Finance Team so far. The Bishop was not aware of the health issues of the former treasurer as outlined by Mr Newman because she had not discussed the matter with the former Archdeacon.
35. The Bishop confirms her and the Director of Finance's advice regarding the involvement of the Charity Commission, saying she agrees that it is something all would wish to avoid. She also says that progress is being made in relation to the advice being sought from the Assistant Registrar.
36. In response to Mr Newman's comments about the Common Fund payments, the Director of Finance confirms that £4,000 has been written off from their arrears. He also says that the 2025 Common Fund request has been reduced due to the length of the vacancy. The Bishop says that comments relating to bequests left for St Chad's are irrelevant to this case. If the Abbey were financially able to demonstrate the resources to sustain an increase in ministry provision, this would be warmly welcomed and again references her previous reply which set out the process for doing so. The Bishop says that this needs a clear, financially realistic and sustainable pathway, which should not rely on money from trust funds and that this has not yet been achieved. Conversations can begin with the acting Archdeacon and Director of Finance and then be brought together with the new Archdeacon when he starts in May. The Bishop confirms that this review of ministry provision can certainly be done before an appointment is made to the substantive post in the proposed new benefice.

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37. Referring to the suggestion of ‘hiving out’ the proposed parish of St Peter’s Shrewsbury from the existing benefice of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury, rather than dissolving both as proposed, the Bishop says that there are concerns that this route could create difficulties in relation to trust fund distribution. If St Peter’s is ‘hived out’ the Bishop is concerned there could be less clarity legally as to the distribution of funds.
38. In response to some further questions which arose from the sifting panel, the Bishop confirms that the 0.2 FTE House for Duty post which is proposed for St Peter’s Shrewsbury is understood in the Diocese of Lichfield to be the provision of housing, council tax and water rates, but no stipend. The office holder would keep all DBF fee income earned. In terms of a track record for appointing to such a post, she says it is difficult to evidence because each episcopal area is very different, so each post can attract different responses. However, she says that from her experience, there have been appointments made to House for Duty posts and full-time positions, and everything in between. House for Duty posts may be combined with other posts, such as school chaplaincy, teaching, hospital chaplaincy, etc, or two different benefice ministry posts which are both less than full-time. The Bishop also confirms that she believes that 0.5 FTE clergy provision is adequate to meet the needs of the Abbey and is informed by financial reality.

Information for the Committee

39. Under section 10(1) of the Measure, the Commissioners may, as a result of the representations, amend the draft Scheme but only with the agreement of the Bishop and following any consultation the Commissioners think appropriate. In this case, the alternative suggestion raised by a representor (Mr Brian Newman) was that, rather than dissolving the current parish, the proposed parish of St Peter’s, Shrewsbury should be created out of the area of the current parish of Holy Cross, Shrewsbury.

The Issues

The main issues to be considered are as follows:

- Has the proposal been brought forward for a proper purpose?
- Has the consultation process met the requirements of the Measure?
- Will the proposals further the mission of the Church and make provision for the cure of souls?
- Do the diocesan proposals have regard to the “traditions, needs and characteristics” of the individual churches and proposed parishes?
- Are there alternative suggestions in the representations that the committee need to consider, for example creating one new parish of St Peter’s, Shrewsbury out of part of the area of the existing parish rather than dissolving the existing parish and creating two new ones?

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- Will the proposals lead to a more sustainable approach for clergy and volunteers? Is the workload realistic?
- Is the clergy provision for the proposed new benefices sufficient and appropriate in both cases?

For decision:

The possible outcomes are:

- (a) To allow the scheme to proceed as drafted;
- (b) To decide that the scheme should not be made;
- (c) To refer the scheme back to the Bishop for further consideration;
- (d) To agree to exercise its powers to allow the scheme to proceed subject to certain amendments being made under section 10(1)



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20 February 2025