

Coventry Diocesan Synod – 8 July 2025 – Minutes

The minutes for a meeting of the Coventry Diocesan Synod, which took place on Tuesday 8 July 2025
7pm at St Nicolas, Nuneaton, CV11 4AZ.

The opening of the meeting of the Diocesan Synod of the Diocese of Coventry, under the Standing Orders 2024

1. Opening prayer and worship

Led by St Nicolas, Nuneaton

The President, the Right Reverend Sophie Jelley, Bishop of Coventry took the Chair

2. Presidential Address

Bishop Sophie thanked St Nicolas, Nuneaton for their warm and generous welcome and hospitality.

Bishop Sophie spoke and sang with synod of the song that affirmed her call to be Bishop of Coventry, shared her plans for the rest of this year and prayed that God would share his love with us in this diocese. The address can be read [here](#). A recording of the address can be listened to here: <https://soundcloud.com/user-115697796/s-synod-presidential-address>

The Chair of the House of Laity, Phil Sowards took the chair

3. Welcome, notices and apologies for absence

Apologies received from 10 clergy, 7 laity and the 2 chaplains.

4. Minutes (DS 25-07)

A point of clarification was raised: In the General Synod feedback at the March meeting, it was reported that an online discussion opportunity for CNC issues did not happen. It was clarified that it was attempted but due to previously agreed diocesan policies it was not possible for the DBF to distribute the meeting details. General Synod representatives are available for discussion.

The minutes of the Diocesan Synod meeting held on 15th March 2025 were **approved**.

AGM AGENDA**The Annual General Meeting of the Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd****5. As the members of the Board of Finance, Synod were asked to consider the following items:**

- i) The minutes of the AGM held on 2 July 2024 (**DS 25-08**) were **approved**.
- ii) The Chair of the DBF proposed that:
 - *The Annual Report & Financial Statements for the year ended 31 Dec 2024 be received* (**DS 25-09**)

Steve Coomber, DBF Chair reported key highlights and observations from 2024:

“The Annual Report & Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024 before you were scrutinised by a combined meeting of the Diocesan Finance Group, the Audit and Risk Committee and Crowe, the appointed auditors after they completed their audit. Once again, the audit was clean with no matters raised by the auditors. They were approved by Bishop’s Council in their role as directors at their meeting on June 9th and are now presented to Synod in their role as members of the Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance.

This past year has been one of significant transition for the Diocese of Coventry. We began 2024 under the leadership of Bishop Ruth, whose gifts and service we deeply appreciate. Bishop Ruth concluded her time with us in December. We offer our heartfelt thanks to Bishop Ruth and extend a warm welcome to Bishop Sophie.

At a national level, safeguarding has rightly remained a major focus across the Church of England. The publication of the Makin Report brought with it significant consequences, including

the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. In the Diocese of Coventry, we continue to take safeguarding with the utmost seriousness. We are committed to creating safe environments across our parishes and institutions, and we have a range of robust safeguarding measures in place to ensure this commitment is upheld.

I would like to thank all those involved in the preparation of these accounts – Karen Birch and her finance team, Jacqueline Ladds, Andy Waddams, Helen Grocock and to those who made contributions in other ways.

These continue to be financially challenging times for our parishes and we are immensely grateful to our congregations for their generosity and for the exceptional work of our volunteer treasurers. Their combined efforts meant we received £5.2m in parish share, which represents a small increase from 2023. This, combined with the income from our investments, enabled us to maintain our clergy and curate numbers, look after their vicarages, and provide ongoing ministerial development and support for them and our self-supporting ministers, lay licensed readers and clergy with permission to officiate.

The financial result for 2024 was a deficit before investment gains of £1.2m. This was offset by both investment revaluations gains of £2.2m and the surplus on sale of investments of £4.7m leading to an overall increase in total funds for the year of £5.7m. Total funds at the end of the year were £102.1m.

Income during the year, before the release of historic funds, was £11.0m versus £10.3m in 2023. At £5.2m parish share income represents a significant proportion of our income and we are working with Deaneries to improve communication and encourage positive dialogue where there are difficulties in meeting obligations.

Total expenditure in 2024 was £12.2m, an increase of £0.5m compared to expenditure of £11.7m in 2023

Financial sustainability remains a concern. While parish share contributions have remained relatively static over the past several years, our costs have continued to rise, resulting in a real-terms decline in available funding. Fortunately, the diocese currently benefits from healthy reserves, which allow us to meet our short- to medium-term obligations. However, this is not a long-term solution.

A review of parish share is now underway, and we anticipate the CDBF Finance Team will bring forward recommendations later in 2025 on how it should be facilitated in the future to better support our shared mission. More information and detail regarding our financial position can be found in the notes to the financial statements.

As part of our wider work, we also undertook a full review of diocesan committees. This review will help ensure our governance is more efficient, enabling us to make the best use of our volunteers' time and expertise. The outcomes of this work, alongside the results of the recent triennial elections, have brought fresh voices and renewed energy into our structures—offering great potential as we look ahead.

We are especially grateful to the diocesan staff and volunteers whose dedication, energy, and faithfulness underpin all that we do. Their commitment has been instrumental in supporting the Bishop's mission and in sustaining our ministry during a time of significant change.

We give thanks for all that has been, and pray for wisdom, courage, and faith as we move forward together in Christ."

Questions and comments:

None

The Annual Report & Financial Statements for the year ended 31 Dec 2024 were **received**.

- *The appointment of Crowe UK LLP, auditor of the company, shall be renewed until the next Annual General Meeting, and that the Directors be authorised to fix the remuneration of the Auditor*
No objections
Approved

DIOCESAN SYNOD AGENDA

6. Diocesan Board of Education Annual Report & Financial Statements (DS 25-10)

Mike Draper, Chair of the DBE, updated synod on the work taking place in schools across the diocese. Speaking to DS 25-10 he highlighted that the DBE continue to build on Alive, working in partnership with ISingPOP. They have been able to respond to requests such as developing the Rugby Deanery Schools Stepping Up Programme which has a view to build a Christian community within Harris Academy, Fosse Deanery held a mini jamboree including a camp out and sessions have been held in schools. St Gabriel's in Rugby hosted an immersive Easter Story and prayer stations and songs were shared with parishes over the Easter period. The second focus of the DBE has been on SEND [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities] and alternative provisions with the Beacon Project reaching its second phase, enhancing SEND needs identification in primary schools and looking at children at risk of exclusion from mainstream schools. In response to the Government reducing the obligation for schools to become academies the DBE have been exploring the support they can offer CofE schools that are still voluntary aided or Local Educational Authority schools, this support is due to launch in September to bring them into the 'family'. The new school improvement approach will enable the DBE to suggest school improvement partners so that Christian foundations can be preserved. The Deputy Director gives pastoral support to Head Teachers and Governors, 100% of Schools are signed up to the support agreement which gives support to Head Teachers and there is deep gratitude to the 300 governors that support schools across the diocese. The DBE continued to work with a planned deficit budget owing to the continued use of unrestricted funds to continue Alive and the Beacon Project. Diocesan Synod were thanked for their support.

Questions and comments:

How many Christian Unions are there in schools?

The secondary schools, Blue Coat and Harris Academy both have Christian Unions and Chaplain support. Primary schools are different, April Gold will be asked to submit a formal response.

Diocesan Synod **noted** the Report and Financial Statements of Coventry Diocesan Board of Education for the year ended 31 Dec 2024.

Bishop Sophie requested Synod to share their greatest joys and challenges in written notes over the coffee break, responses to be encompassed into her listening phase.

7. Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DS 25-11)

The director of Operations, Steve Davenport, introduced the Church Buildings Team to Diocesan Synod and provided an overview of their work, highlighting that they are the people to speak to should anyone need help with their church buildings.

The DAC Secretary, Tim Latham, spoke to the DAC Annual Report (DS 25-11).

Questions and comments:

What is the progress on Net Zero by 2030?

There is a pleasing response on the ground from parishes. The DAC takes a practical approach of not forcing parishes into taking paths they cannot afford. [Secretariat note: a net zero annual update will be brought to synod in November 2025]

Does the DAC have a sense of what is to come in the next 5 years in terms of upgrading church buildings?

No two buildings or missional situations are the same. The DAC take a reactive rather than proactive approach. The team are here to help shape and develop faculty applications.

Parish Buying are changing their suppliers – parishes need to take care to make sure they are signed up to the correct supplier.

The team will look into how this can be supported.

8. Nuneaton Deanery Synod motion – Local Government Reorganisation (DS 25-12)

Rev'd Alison Evans introduced and moved the motion:

In response to the English Devolution proposals this synod:

1. *Welcomes the proposals for simpler local government structures which benefit communities and local accountability,*
2. *Affirms that any change must take account of consultation with existing local authorities and communities,*
3. *Recognises that existing disparities in resources and opportunity within Warwickshire should be addressed in any new arrangements,*
4. *Requests the Diocesan Board of Finance facilitate an information session or sessions, open to the whole diocese, to increase awareness of the devolution proposals and provide guidance on how to contribute to the conversation and prepare for the changes envisaged.*

Alison Evans highlighted that the paper DS 25-12, written by David Porter, explains the current situation of the local government and the implications of the proposals to simplify the local government structure. Decisions on how the changes will be implemented can be influenced during the consultation based on the needs of our communities in which there is huge disparity. The motion is asking the DBF to distribute information so that individuals can find out how to engage with the consultations should they wish to do so.

Questions and comments to Alison Evans:

To what extent does part 3 of the motion already set the outcome given the context?

This is why information is needed, the request is for information in order to address the situation.

When we use the phrase ‘for the whole diocese’, it is all people who live in Warwickshire, not just church people. How can this be carried to all people?

As we engage, we could engage others, we are not the only church, people within our communities will have links with other communities, we need to encourage people to become involved. Details of the information sessions will be shared across the diocesan communication channels, reaching a wide audience.

Why the diocese and DBF? Who do you mean?

The DBF will facilitate and promote the information sessions, to be hosted by David Porter.

Speaking to the motion:

The south of Warwickshire is a prosperous area while the north of Warwickshire is a deprived area, Coventry is not within this consideration. County Councils are thought to be too remote and unresponsive although there is the advantage of strength in unity. A two-tier system is seen as inefficient and can lead to tensions between local and county councils. The impact to the DBE will need to be considered as potential new council(s) will form the Local Education Authority.

Speaking in favour of the motion:

This sits at the heart of our mission: reconciliation, healing wounds and the historical culture of justice and peace mandates us to get involved. The disparity between north and south is not an elephant in the room, this is a good opportunity to demonstrate that we are for the people and not inward looking.

Speaking against the motion:

We did not act in this way for Brexit, the church should not be involved with politics, this is breaking precedence.

Motion **carried**

9. Questions received under Standing Order 69

No questions received.

10. 2025 Meeting Dates – locations to be confirmed

Sat 22 November

Bishop Sophie closed the meeting in prayers based on living and breathing worship in every aspect of our lives and finishing by sharing The Grace.