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- 1. Welcome & Introduction** – Revd James Turk, Co-Area Dean, warmly welcomed everyone to our Deanery Synod meeting, particularly our Speaker Nic Tall, coming to speak to us on the mysteries of C of E Finance. Also, to any Treasurers or Churchwardens joining us this evening, you are very welcome, and to Sarah Turk and St Laurence for their hospitality and welcome refreshments.
24 members attended the meeting, along with 3 Treasurers and 1 Churchwarden, as per the Register and apologies were received from: Mike Lambert, Pam Smith, Margaret Sheather, Alison Wood, Lydia Savage, Andrew Pemberton, Jai Carr, Laurie Miller, Elaine Venning, Revd Lea Collins, Revd Peter Francis, Revd Simon Howell, David Groom, Val Regel, Jennie South & Diane Martin.
 - 2. Opening Prayer** – led by Revd Coral Francis
 - 3. Minutes** - Minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 21st January at Lakefield School, Frampton were accepted as a true and accurate record. There were no matters arising, not already covered elsewhere on the Agenda.
 - 4. Deanery Strategic Pathway**
 - JT confirmed that, following the discussions at our last Deanery Synod meeting back in January, feedback has now been included in this latest version of our DSP document, which is now ready to be taken back to your parishes for further discussion and questions. We feel that this streamlined, living document, is something we can now move forward with. The Core Deanery Leadership Team (CDLT) will be meeting shortly with Bishop Robert and the Senior Staff to hopefully rubber stamp our Pathway document so that we can start working towards our goals and priorities.
 - We have not received any responses so far following our request for volunteers to join the priority groups for Communications; Ministry & Leadership; Buildings, Assets & Finance. Do please consider coming forward if you have enthusiasm or a particular skill you can offer.
 - Please feel free to use the Prayer Resources leaflet circulated with the Agenda in your parishes, created to under-pin our DSP, as we begin this journey together.
 - Our DSP document will be intrinsically linked to any longer-term Deanery decisions, particularly to parish ministry and managing our resources. With this in mind, you are reminded that Deanery Synod elections will be taking place at APCMs this year, so do please stand again, and encourage others to fill any vacant places, to have a voice in any future decisions made.
 - Highlighted again that this is very much a 'living, working document' that will be added to and updated as it evolves and shifts with need. *(Possibility that any future grants will need to be linked to our DSP).*
 - 5. Presentation – The Realities of Church of England Finance – Nic Tall**
Please see attached a detailed precise of Nic's excellent presentation, along with his supporting Power Point slides.
Questions and comments following the presentation included:
 - **Benefices with multiple churches** continue to struggle with complicated finances, with each PCC having its own Treasurer and independent examiner etc.

which is extremely expensive. Any chance of coordinating that to make accounting easier and simpler and cheaper/more help from the centre to help lower overall costs?

NT suggested sharing information with other Treasurers/shared buying schemes for insurance/contractors for shared tasks etc. Some centrally coordinated guidance available for larger works, e.g. phone masts to ensure this is managed fairly. Suggested contacting the Finance Department direct for more specific advice.

- **The Church Commissioners** have made some historically bad investments in the distant past. The position is considerably different now – how do we ensure that funds are distributed down to rural parishes. This is the rainy day and more help is needed now to support parish ministry, particularly in smaller communities. General Synod really ought to be working on this.

NT – The method by which stipends have been paid has changed over the years, with Church Commissioner assets significantly improved from the late 90's. Having one central body does not work with the current legislative framework we have.

What happens to the money when it leaves them?

The Archbishops Council, a charity set up to co-ordinate, promote, aid and further the work of the CofE, plan how monies from the Church Commissioners are allocated.

- **Church Buildings** – Who actually owns the asset? If the Church Commissioners have the benefit of the asset, why do they not help to maintain them?
NT – The Church Commissioners are the 15th largest land owner in the country – asset value at the end of 2024 was around 11.1billion – some of it is historic land, but it does not include church buildings. A more precise response would require a longer, legal answer! 8% of churches have been lost over the last 50 years.
- **Links with the wider church around the world** – is there any funding for that work?

NT - No, there is no central fund giving out grants.

Our grateful thanks to Nick for an excellent presentation, which has certainly shed some light on this complicated subject.

6. **Proposed Motion to Diocesan Synod** by David Groom, deferred from previous meeting. Unfortunately, at the last minute, David was unable to be with us but, in light of the presentation this evening, and the time scale restraints, he was happy for it to be paused, in case it was superseded by Nic's talk.

Lengthy discussions followed, including ongoing concerns over the continuing delays and postponements on this very important issue, and the frustration and strength of feeling at grass roots level, which has not gone away, and needs to be addressed.

NT confirmed Ben Preece-Smith is continuing to work nationally with other Diocese to bring about change on how income derived from the Church Commissioners is used and distributed more fairly. We need to ensure that the 2029-2031 triennium funding includes greater direct financial support for parishes to help ease the continuing financial burden of Parish Share. NT has offered to contact Ben Preece-Smith for advice on our exact wording that would be most effective and helpful, and will report back to our next meeting.

7. Parish & Benefice update

Green Shoots from the parishes:

- The Beacon Benefice have just completed an Alpha course with over 50 attending, with a waiting list already for the next one – really good, positive vibe all around.
- Paganhill have opened their church and welcome the Archway Drop-in sessions a couple of times a week, with upwards of 60 young people attending. There is also a Youth Group that meets up each week and it is a joy to see them grow in their faith. The Youth Group recently made a beautiful, much admired, Easter Garden enjoyed and by all the different groups that now use this 'shared space'.
- Brimscombe, Woodchester & Rodborough - Churches Together initiative on 'Aging Gracefully' course – Very positive feedback and a waiting list already for the next one!
- **The Bisley Benefice** – Revd Sue Murray confirmed that 4 of the 5 parishes are continuing to work towards a joint Benefice Council, but they are not quite there yet. There are still some amendments needed for all 4 parishes to agree.

8. Reports - *As circulated with the Agenda*

8.1 Diocesan Synod - 31st January 2026

8.2 General Synod – 9th-13th February.

8.3 Deanery Financial Update - *Mike Lambert*

8.5 Deanery Eco Report – Jennie South

There were no questions raised at the meeting

9. Confirmed meeting dates and venues for 2026:

Core Deanery Leadership Team Meetings (CDLT) 9.30am-12 noon all at The Porch Room Minchinhampton	Deanery Synod all at 7.30 pm <i>Coffee served from 7pm</i>	Suggested Speaker/Topic
June Tuesday 9th	June Tuesday 30 th <u>Painswick Church Rooms</u>	Church Buildings & our Mission & Ministry
October Tuesday 6th	October Tuesday 20 th <u>Minchinhampton Church</u>	Digital Communications Katherine Clamp – Head of Communications & Sam Cavendar – Senior Digital Communications Officer

10. Chair's Announcements

- **Deanery Synod Elections** – Please re-stand for election at your APCM and encourage others to stand to fill your allocation. This is your opportunity to have a say and influence the decision-making process in this time of change, particularly as we continue work on our DSP vision for the future.
- **Confirmation Services**
 - 3rd May - Bisley Benefice**
Revd Sue Murray confirmed that the Communion Service planned for the 3rd May has now been **cancelled**.
 - 30th September, 3pm in The Stroudwater Team** – Venue now confirmed as St George's Church, Kings Stanley.

- **General Synod Elections**

Elections take place again this year on the 5-year cycle. The Electorate will be all Deanery Synod members across the whole of Gloucester Diocese. The process will begin July/August, with results in mid-October. Allocation: 3 Clergy and 4 lay to be elected. Further details will come out from the centre in due course.

11. AOB – There was none

12. Closing Prayer led by Revd James Turk, taken from the Prayer Resources leaflet.