

Minutes

Meeting on: Saturday 31 January 2026
 Time: 9.30am
 Location: Clearwater Church of England Primary Academy, Clearwater Drive
 Quedgeley, Gloucester, GL2 4GH

Item	Action
1.	Refreshments
	Members were invited to join the meeting starting with refreshments.
2.	Opening Prayers
	<p>Members welcomed Father Fadi Diab, Rector of St Andrew’s Church in Ramallah and St Peter’s Church in Bir Zeit, within the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem.</p> <p>You can read the article and see pictures from Bishop Rachel’s recent visit to Isreal and Palestine here: Bishop Rachel calls for justice in West Bank – Diocese of Gloucester</p>
3.	Welcome and Apologies
	<p>Bishop Rachel noted 24 apologies.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel welcomed Harry Bennett, (Gloucester City Deanery) to his first meeting.</p> <p>She noted that this was Nicki and Giles Arthy’s last synod and offered immense thanks for all they have given in so many ways.</p> <p>She also recognised the work Susan Cooke is currently undertaking as interim assistant Archdeacon, supporting Archdeacon Katrina.</p>

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4.	Notices and Questions	
	None were noted.	
5.	Minutes of the previous meeting	
	The minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 October were proposed by Chris Hill, Severn Vale Deanery and seconded by Richard Neale, Cheltenham Deanery. The minutes were approved <i>nem con</i> .	Approved: Members approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 October 2025.
6.	Matters arising	
	<p>Bishop Rachel shared that there has been a newly appointed Director to the West Midlands Racial Justice Initiative, Jenny Jones.</p> <p>She highlighted that Racial Justice Sunday will take place on 8 February.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel shared that the new Deanery Operations Leads are now in post, Lydia Knight, Gloucester City Deanery, Emma Anderson, Cirencester Deanery, and Claire Coleman, Wotton Deanery.</p>	
7.	Annual Safeguarding Update	
	<p>Bishop Rachel welcomed Debbie Innes-Turnill, Brett Riches and Bishop Robert.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel shared that Bishop Robert will be taking on the role of national lead Bishop for Safeguarding.</p> <p>Bishop Robert gave a brief update on what is happening nationally.</p> <p>He highlighted the work happening in response to the General Synod approved reforms to Church safeguarding structures. There is a clear focus to progress this work at speed, whilst getting the processes right.</p>	Received: Members received the Annual Safeguarding Update (DS26/01) from Debbie Innes-Turnill, Chair of the Safeguarding Advisory Panel and Brett Riches, Safeguarding Manager.

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<p>He continued to describe how there have been Charity Commission warnings issued to Chelmsford and Liverpool regarding failures to handle safeguarding allegations appropriately. These warnings raise issues for every diocese to explore and reflect on.</p> <p>He added that we should be confident about the work we are doing in our diocese, and the support our Safeguarding Team provide.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel offered prayers for Bishop Robert in his new role.</p> <p>Debbie Innes-Turnill echoed what Bishop Robert had said and described how Safeguarding is the golden thread that runs through everything we do.</p> <p>She described that there is a clear direction of travel nationally and that Parish Safeguarding Officers (PSO) and Clergy are at the forefront of Safeguarding across our communities.</p> <p>She described how the national 'Safeguarding Standards' are a key focus for how we reflect, review and take forward safeguarding work. They aim to highlight strengths, identify areas for development, and consider what support may be helpful.</p> <p>Debbie shared that she is currently working on a PHD around safeguarding culture and how some of the key themes she is seeing is the importance of relationship, and professional love. She described how in the Church this is absolutely key, to ensure that everybody thrives and flourishes.</p> <p>She requested that if anyone knows of people with expertise in safeguarding, either current or recently retired, that would be interested in being involved with DSAP that they contact her on debbie@debbieinnessafeguarding.co.uk</p>	

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<p>Brett Riches gave highlights from the Annual Report. He reported an increase in the case work, which they see as a positive as this most likely means an increased understanding of safeguarding across the diocese.</p> <p>He described the safeguarding training offer and the take up of people becoming parish trainers, which is a huge positive.</p> <p>He highlighted the increase in the use of the safeguarding dashboard and asked that members encourage others to continue to champion the dashboard.</p> <p>He shared how he was looking forward to working with the Deanery Operations Leads.</p> <p>He continued to describe that there have been lots of changes and developments nationally and reminded members to sign up to the safeguarding newsletter, as this is a key method they use to translate and communicate the latest news.</p> <p>Brett highlighted that the team will be hosting a 'one day conference' on 1 May 2026 at All Saints Academy. This one-day gathering is for everyone who plays a part in safeguarding work: parish safeguarding officers, clergy, youth and children's workers, pastoral visitors, and anyone who cares about creating safer spaces.</p> <p>To book on or for more information email safeguarding@glosdioc.org.uk</p> <p>He then asked Members to discuss the national safeguarding standard - Culture, Leadership, and Capacity. How are these standards being 'lived' well locally, where are the challenges and what support would worshipping communities like more of?</p>	

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<p>Members were brought back together for questions and comments.</p> <p>Andrew Smith, Severn Vale Deanery commented how the whole approach to safeguarding proactively, seems to hinge on PSOs and how PSOs are now feeling negative about their role being too onerous.</p> <p>Michael Storey, North Cotswold Deanery, commented on the statistics of cases and felt it would be helpful to have an analysis of what these cases were.</p> <p>Elaine Venning, Stroud Deanery, shared how the heart of safeguarding is supporting the vulnerable. Christian faith is to trust and we need to look at the importance of offering advice and support to the hurting, rather than pointing the finger.</p> <p>Brett responded to Michael Storey's comment. He shared how there is more detail provided at DSAP. Brett would review level of detail provided to Synod Members.</p> <p>He further explained that the increase in the number of cases reflects lower level concerns, and serious concerns have remained fairly consistent.</p> <p>Brett responded to Elaine Venning's comment and agreed that it is important to consider the theology of safeguarding. He shared that he has recently received some national funding to develop some training/learning around this, linked to his Masters.</p> <p>Debbie Innes-Turnhill appreciated the comment made by Andrew Smith, but noted that culture is not held by one person, but by all of us. She urged members to share with the Safeguarding Team if their PSO is feeling overwhelmed.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel thanked Lucy Taylor who holds oversight and management of HR and Safeguarding</p>	

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	and also thanked the DSAP, Debbie, Brett and his team.
8.	Break
	There was a short break for members to have coffee and biscuits.
9.	Environment
	<p>Carole O'Donnell introduced Erica Siddall, the Net Zero Carbon Project Manager and invited her to give a verbal update.</p> <p>Erica began by encouraging members to talk about personal decisions and drivers and shared her personal driver is fuelled by the quote "... The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it." (Gen Ch2v15)"</p> <p>She described how well we are doing in this diocese, but we still have a long way to go.</p> <p>She shared that research has shown that environmental credibility is a key driver to bring people back to church and how that credibility can also encourage clergy to posts in the diocese.</p> <p>Erica outlined the Eco strategy timeline and how we need more churches to register for Eco Church, and for those already registered, to improve their status.</p> <p>She shared how the new Church House has been refurbished with NZC in mind and we are very close to the Silver Eco Diocese award.</p> <p>She encouraged churches, if they haven't yet done so, to complete the The Energy Footprint Tool The Church of England; It's easy to do and due by the end of June 2026.</p>
	Received: Members received a verbal update around the work on Net Zero Carbon annual update from Erica Siddall, Net Zero Carbon Project Manager.

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<p>She explained that there is funding nationally, but you are only eligible if you have completed your energy footprint tool.</p> <p>She asked that any good news stories are sent to her so we can share more widely.</p> <p>Erica gave the example of our partnership working with Hereford and Worcester, providing excellent support across the dioceses.</p> <p>She challenged members and asked them 'What can you do to embed these principles further? What one action will you take? And what can you celebrate?'</p> <p>She ended her update and asked for any questions or comments.</p> <p>Gerald O'Brien, Stroud deanery commented how a lot of parishes are pretty cash strapped, and most have difficulty paying Parish Share. He asked what can be done for a parish where the old gas boiler is 'clapped out', and replacing with a heat pump means costs are vastly higher. Where can people look to for help or support?</p> <p>Erica mentioned there are funds available to help those very cases.</p> <p>Adam Klups, Senior Church Buildings Officer – Care of Churches and DAC Team Leader, responded to Gerald's comment. He recognised the financial struggles, and the challenges that parishes / benefices face.</p> <p>He shared that the team can offer advice, and there is usually regional and national funding that can be sourced. He shared stories of some churches being awarded 100% of the money needed.</p>	

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	<p>He highlighted that the Bulletin always has information about available grants etc and that there is a dedicated funding newsletter that they produce and distribute. If you would like to receive a copy or require any support please be in touch with the team.</p> <p>Carole O'Donnell thanked Erica and Adam.</p>
10.	Finance
	<p>Jo Pestell introduced David Roberts to give a verbal update on Finance.</p> <p>David Roberts began by highlighting some of the recent changes in the Finance Team. Lisa Gardner left for a new role, and Carolyn Lolley has taken early retirement.</p> <p>He described how in December an Interim Head of Finance, Joe Thomas was appointed.</p> <p>He shared how in the context of all the changes, the numbers are provisional. He highlighted how Parish Share is £300k down on the budget, other income is £150k down, and for the nett position, the deficit is £100k worse than budgeted. 0.6% as a variance.</p> <p>Archdeacon Katrina gave an update regarding Parish Share 2025 and asked that members take a huge thank you back to the PCCs for their generous giving.</p> <p>She explained that the new process is much more about listening and dialogue. She described how there is a hope for 'realist generosity' to cover the cost of ministry.</p> <p>She shared that, as of yesterday, £6.51million had been received of the £6.7million commitments made. She urged PCCs to contribute their commitments if they hadn't already done so.</p>
	<p>Received: Members received a verbal update on the GDBF's initial financial outturn for 2025 by David Roberts, Chair of the DBF.</p> <p>Archdeacon Katrina provided a short verbal update on the Parsh Share model.</p>

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<p>She encouraged dialogue with the Finance Team, Lisa Jayne, our Giving and Stewardship officer and for herself and Susan Cooke who are happy to support in anyway needed.</p> <p>Jo Pestell thanked Archdeacon Katrina.</p> <p>She reminded members that part of their role as a Diocesan Synod member is to feed information back into the deaneries, and asked them please flag with Deanery Leadership Teams about the commitments and the possibility to cover that £200k gap.</p> <p>Jo Pestell added a final thought on the Deanery Synod elections and to encourage people to put themselves forward.</p> <p>Luke Falvey asked if that information can be disseminated to everyone.</p> <p>LT agreed she would make sure everyone receives the communication that has already been sent to PCC Secretaries.</p> <p>Bishop Rachel thanked David Roberts for all he supports and Archdeacon Katrina.</p>	
<p>11.</p>	<p>Bishop's Council Update</p>
<p>Carole O'Donnell introduced the item.</p> <p>The item is for information only and asked that any questions or comments are directed to Benjamin Preece Smith or any member of Bishop's Council.</p>	<p>Noted: Members noted a digest of the business conducted by Bishop's Council since the last Synod is circulated for information (DS26/02)</p>
<p>13.</p>	<p>Date of next Meeting</p>
	<p>The next Diocesan Synod will be held on Wednesday 1 July at All Saints' Academy.</p>