

SEVERN VALE DEANERY

Minutes of the meeting held on the evening of Thursday 28th July at St Lawrence, Sandhurst

Attending:

Clergy: J Hyde (Area Dean), J Longuet-Higgins (Assistant Area Dean), L Bloom, J Knight, S Mason
Laity: S Padfield (Lay Chair), S Riddick (Secretary), D Wright (Parish Share Officer and Treasurer),
R Parker, L Ashenden, D Ball, R Blandford, J Brown, K Carpenter, S Carpenter, H Cotton, P Cotton,
G Davies, P Davis, F Down, R Ensor, G Goodman, E Harbottle, C Hill, N Hogg, D Holton, N Johnson,
C Langham, G Limbrick, R Mair, C May, M McGhee, T Moore-Scott, H Murphy, S Parks, S Phelps,
Janine Smith, A Spence, J Starr, K Starr, C Steadman, E Stevenson, C Stewart, S Trapnell
(some by invitation due to DAC presentation, below)

Apologies:

Clergy: S Cooke, J Monaghan, J Scholes, M Smith, R Spear
Laity: J Bates, R Cottell, M Cowdrey, H Dunsford, D Elson, A Herbert, C Hitchins, E Lovell,
Jean Smith, L Ward

After the usual welcomes then opening prayers led by the Revd Joe Knight, the **Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th April 2022** were approved as a correct record; and it was noted that there were **no Matters Arising** additional to subsequent agenda items.

The Reverend Canon Jacqui Hyde next gave a brief update on the status of the **Deanery Strategic Planning Process** – including that our draft Plan was further refined taking into account comments received at the last Synod, and that she and Sue Padfield then presented it at a Diocesan Meeting held on 18th May. Initial reaction from the Archdeacons was favourable, and we are continuing to develop our thoughts. It is hoped we might be able to start enacting at least some of our ideas in the not-too-distant future, subject to final approval from Church House. It was agreed that the Secretary would send out the “presented” version of the Plan with the minutes of today’s meeting, and this should be shared with all interested parties. Comments and suggestions are still more than welcome – and of course we ask for everyone’s prayers as we move forward.

One of the key parts of the Plan is of course the **Future of our Church Buildings**. In this respect Jacqui noted there are 49 church and similar buildings in the Deanery, of which 22 are Grade I Listed and 20 Grade II. This is a both a joy and a major responsibility, and means we should use all the experience and expertise available to us when determining how to maintain and improve them – which led into a presentation about the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) by Adam Klups (Team Leader and DAC Secretary), supported by David Ball (former DAC Chairman).

Adam started by explaining that the **DAC’s principal statutory duty is to advise the Chancellor** on whether to approve faculties (effectively planning applications) submitted by parishes across the Diocese. However, the bulk of its time is spent assisting parishes, to ensure any proposed work is properly considered and appropriate to needs (including mission). In general terms all church buildings have an ecclesiastical exemption from matters such as listed planning consent, and the DAC/Chancellor are the final decision-makers. However, there are occasions when “external” planning consent is also required (including work on trees in conservation areas), and the DAC Team will advise on this as necessary. The DAC will also liaise with bodies such as Historic England where appropriate, but is not obliged to accept their recommendations.

The DAC currently **consists of 19 members**, and is now chaired by the Reverend Dana Delap.

Both Archdeacons are on the DAC, while other members (all of whom are volunteers) have extensive and wide-ranging experience of subjects such as architecture, archaeology, engineering art history, etc. A number of consultants assist where necessary. The Committee meets six times a year, and is supported by a **small DAC Team** led by Adam which is based **at Church House**.

Essentially all work needed at church buildings falls into one of **three categories – faculties; List A** (“de minimis” work); and **List B** (“routine” matters). The DAC Team can advise which heading any proposed work falls under, and this will affect how approvals are made (for example List B items will only require sign-off by an Archdeacon). All faculties require detailed Statements of Needs and supporting documents (such as photographs, detailed plans etc); and everything can now be submitted online. The DAC Team can help parishes to register on the system if necessary.

Adam and David noted that there are some things parishes can do to facilitate the approval process: (i) firstly, to **involve the DAC Team** at an early stage, to avoid wasting time further down the line; (ii) to focus on the **specific need** for any work; (iii) where **public buy-in** is necessary, not to leave that to the end of the process; and (iv) to think very carefully about **community use**, especially as in smaller villages the church building is often the only public space. The DAC may also be able to give advice on grant opportunities, although sadly such funding has become more difficult in recent times.

After Adam had given some examples of recent projects and answered a number of questions on matters such as quinquennial inspections, Revd Jacqui advised parishes to always liaise closely with the DAC. She also asked if all parishes could **email the Secretary with details of any projects valued at over £10,000** – and perhaps even plans or ideas currently being discussed – so the Deanery Team can both be aware and possibly assist. And finally she requested parishes to share any good fund-raising suggestions or opportunities, again via the Secretary.

In the interests of time it was decided not to now have a detailed discussion on the possibility of the Deanery employing a **Buildings Project Officer**; but the Secretary will send out various documents prepared in the recent past, and comments would be very much appreciated.

Derek Wright (Parish Share Officer and Treasurer) then made a brief presentation following a recent meeting on **Parish Share**. In general terms the parish share calculation is cumbersome and the process arguably “unfair”. Various alternatives such as equal sharing, affordability, and a request-based arrangement have been put forward as alternatives to the current system, but sadly there is no easy answer. The Secretary will send out further details, and this is a subject we will return to in future. As regards current year payments, we are broadly on track versus commitments.

As regards **Deanery Funding**, we at last have a new bank account, and details will be sent out to Treasurers very soon. Meanwhile a number of parishes are yet to pay this year’s subscriptions.

There were no comments of note on the summary of the recent **Diocesan Synod**.

Under **Any Other Business**, Revd Jacqui noted that she has recently done a few spot checks on the website for “**A Church Near You**”, and many details are out-of-date. She would appreciate it if all churches would please check and update where necessary.

Finally **Bishop Rachel will be in our Deanery** all of Thursday 10th November, finishing with that evening’s Synod (which will be open to everyone). All clergy are already suggesting ideas for how to use her time, but suggestions from Benefices in vacancy would be appreciated.

The meeting closed at 9pm with thanks to all.

Steve Riddick, 31 July 2022