



Synod Questions – February 2026

Jake Eggertsen

In the light of the DAC & Church Buildings Team Review, will the Bishop's Council and DBF commit to representing to the national church the need for simplification and redesign of the Online Faculty System and associated processes, and to collaborating with other dioceses to advocate for a more proportionate, user-friendly system that supports rather than hinders parish mission?

Answer: +Andrew

Thank you for your question. In short, the answer is **yes**.

The Bishop's Council and DBF are committed to representing the learning from the DAC and Church Buildings Team Review to the national church and to advocating for a system that is more proportionate, accessible and supportive of parish mission.

The review has already been shared with colleagues at national level, including the Head of the Church Buildings and Cathedrals Department, who has welcomed it as a fair and constructive assessment. National colleagues have recognised both the usefulness of the evidence gathered and its contribution to wider conversations about diocesan support, national systems and the sustainability of current arrangements. We will continue to build on this engagement by sharing learning through national and regional networks, and by collaborating with other dioceses to strengthen the case for reform.

We recognise that an easy-to-use Online Faculty System is one of the greatest concerns for those responsible for local church building projects. While the faculty process must remain sufficiently robust to sustain the Church of England's ongoing exemption from secular planning legislation, it is also clear that increased support is needed for volunteers who understandably struggle to navigate the system. As Lead Bishop for Church Buildings, I will continue to advocate for this at national level, as requested.

It is important to note that there are two related but distinct elements. The **Online Faculty System** is the national digital platform through which the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules are administered. This system is due to be replaced by a new Buildings Management System, which is intended to improve usability and integration. However, the **Faculty Jurisdiction Rules** themselves are set nationally through General Synod and brought into law by Parliament.

Meaningful reform therefore requires both continued national engagement by dioceses and the effective use of synodical channels. The Diocese of Salisbury will continue to use its voice – locally, nationally and through General Synod – to advocate for a more proportionate, user-friendly system that supports volunteers and enables, rather than hinders, the mission of the Church.

James Menzies

Ministry in Low Income Communities

In light of the experience of clergy here and in other dioceses I am concerned that when diocesan finances are under pressure, ministry in poorer parishes is often cut. I don't think this reflects well on the church, and as I have seen at General Synod, often there is an ignorance about the reality of ministry in deprived areas.

In the context of the financial planning taking place in the diocese, can Synod please be briefed with:

- *Detail of what, if any, deployment strategy is currently used regarding LINC parishes in this diocese*
- *Data which shows current levels of ministry provision in the poorer parts of the diocese compared to other areas*
- *Details of what, if any, financial support is currently or is planned to be made available to support mission and ministry in these areas, both internal (i.e. diocesan) and external (e.g. DIP, charity grants etc).*

Likewise, in this context, will Bishops Council bring forward a substantive agenda discussion on the unique challenges of ministry in LINC parishes at the June Synod so that this can be explored fully by the Synod before the 2027 budget is voted on later this year?

Answer: +Karen

We are aware in Salisbury diocese that areas of wealth and areas of deprivation often share parish boundaries, and our own share scheme helps create a common fund whereby ministry is sustained across the whole. In some multi-parish benefices or team ministries we would expect there to be mutual support across poorer areas by combining the share.

Ministry in our areas of greatest deprivation has, wherever possible, been sustained even in situations where the parish share has not been fully met. As we look ahead, we remain committed to giving careful and prayerful attention to how these vital resources can be maintained and strengthened.

The new Share scheme also brings additional support for areas of deprivation. This is informed both by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data and by a deeper, more local understanding of parish neighbourhoods. Under this approach, financial support was given to 15 parishes totalling £88,250 in 2025 and 17 parishes totalling £136,000 in 2026, with further increases expected in 2027 and 2028 as the four-year transition period of embedding the new share scheme concludes.

We recognise that more can and should be done. Bishop's Council will continue to reflect carefully on how best to support those communities facing the greatest challenges, particularly parishes within the poorest 10% nationally, including Littlemoor, Bemerton and West Howe.

We would welcome an opportunity for parishes to share their 'stories' at a forthcoming Synod meeting, which will demonstrate the contrast with some of our areas of wealth. Partnerships between parishes across the diocese in supporting posts (clergy and lay) in our poorest areas may also be a creative way forward.

Impact of Diocesan LLF messaging

I have been contacted by a clergy colleague who describes themselves as Same-Sex Attracted (SSA). They have asked me to raise the following question on their behalf:

"Given that there are a number of SSA Christians in the diocese, who choose to live a life in obedience to the church's received teaching, why does diocesan messaging on LLF and its impact not reflect this?"

Answer: +Andrew

The bishops have sought to share updates from the LLF process primarily through pastoral letters to clergy. They recognise the conclusion of the LLF journey has brought pain to many, including those who hold very different views and approaches to same sex relationships.

In each of their letters, the bishops have sought to stress their support for each person and acknowledge the integrity and good faith of clergy who hold different views, understanding and interpretation of scripture.

Their latest letter read: "We wanted to write and express our prayerful concern for the way this update will inevitably impact the lives of many in our diocese. We recognise that the reality of the LLF process evokes a wide range of responses and emotions across our diocese—pain, frustration, hope, fear, and uncertainty among them. For some, the statement released today will be deeply discouraging; for others, there will remain concerns about future direction. We continue to be committed to walk alongside you in your ministries, to support you and those you serve with hope and understanding."

The bishops respect the integrity of SSA Christians in our diocese and celebrate the gift that celibacy offers to church and society. They also find integrity in those who are not called to this path and who seek to live in love and faith with another. At the conclusion of the LLF process, this is the pastoral reality in which we must serve God together. As Archbishop Stephen said at General Synod:

" let us continue to reach out to one another; to recognise the face of Christ in each other (and) let us continue to pray that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.

Oliver Iliffe

Please would the **Diocesan Registrar** confirm whether she approved the decision not to provide written answers in advance of the meeting of diocesan synod on 11 October 2025 to written questions submitted beforehand under standing order 69?

Answer Sue

I was not asked about the decision by the executive committee not to provide written answers in advance of diocesan synod, and I do not have an approval function- my role is to advise if asked. I was informed several weeks prior to the synod that a procedural decision had been taken by the executive committee to move in future to a model where the questions are shared in advance but responses are not shared prior to the meeting. The Standing Orders do not require written answers at all, but in practice written answers are placed on the diocesan website after synod. It is for the executive committee to make such decisions, being a procedural rather than a legal point.

Please would the **Diocesan Registrar** confirm whether she approved the attempt by the Chair to put the question on the budget motion to a vote without moving the motion for debate at the meeting of diocesan synod on 11 October 2025?

Answer Sue

I have no role in the decision to put any question to a vote without moving a motion for debate as this is the decision of the chair of the meeting, in accordance with Standing Order paragraph 8. It is not for me to approve their decision and I was not asked to do so.

Jonathan Baird

Please would the DBF Chair explain why the actual total expenditure figure (£16.1 million) published on Tuesday (17 February 2026) has overshot the forecast published for Synod on 11 October 2025 in the Budget Guide (£15.1 million, see page 3) by £1 million?

Note that actual Total Income came in at £14.8M – also nearly £1M more than forecast in October [£13.9M]

From October 2025:

| A 'chronic' operating deficit (income shortfall) | | | | | |
|--|-----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Total DBF budget | 2024 Actual | 2025 Forecast | 2026 Budget | 2027 Plan | 2028 Plan |
| Parish Share request | £12.2m | £12.6m | £12.9m | £13.3m | £13.7m |
| Parish Share receipts** | £10.4m | £10.6m | £10.9m | £11.3m | £11.6m |
| Other income | £3.5m | £3.3m | £5.3m | £5.3m | £5.3m |
| Total expenditure | (£14.9m) | (£15.1m) | (£18.2m) | (£18.6m) | (£19.0m) |
| Operating deficit | (£0.96m) | (£1.2m) | (£2.0m) | (£2.0m) | (£2.1m) |

From Tuesday:

2025 Financial Results – Detail (pre-audit)

| £m | Total Income & Expenditure (incl External Grants) | | | Core Income & Expenditure (excl External Grants) | | | | |
|--|--|----------------|----------------|---|----------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| | 2025 Actual | 2025 Budget | 2024 Actual | 2025 Actual | 2025 Budget | 2024 Actual | | |
| Parish Share | 70% | 10.3 | 12.2 | 10.1 | 80% | 10.3 | 12.2 | 10.1 |
| Other Income | 30% | 4.5 | 3.6 | 3.8 | 20% | 2.6 | 2.7 | 3.2 |
| Total Income | | 14.8 | 15.8 | 13.9 | | 12.8 | 14.9 | 13.3 |
| Direct ministry cost (stipends, pension, training, housing) | 67% | 10.8 | 10.7 | 10.2 | 72% | 10.7 | 10.7 | 10.2 |
| Resourcing local ministry (DBF services) | 20% | 3.2 | 3.0 | 2.8 | 16% | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.4 |
| Administration, HR and IT | 7% | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 8% | 1.1 | 1.1 | 1.0 |
| Other non parish-costs | 6% | 1.0 | 0.9 | 0.8 | 4% | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.6 |
| Governance | 0% | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0% | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Total Expenditure | | 16.1 | 15.8 | 14.9 | | 14.8 | 14.9 | 14.1 |
| Operating Surplus / (Loss) | | (1.3) | 0.0 | (1.0) | | (2.0) | 0.0 | (0.8) |

Answer: Jane

The actual income is c.£800k higher than forecast primarily due to external grants that were awarded after the forecast was finalised. These grants were not included in the forecast because there was insufficient certainty at the time about their successful award.

A significant contributor was an unexpected final receipt of £564k from the winding up of the St Denys Community in Warminster (following the initial £1m received in 2023). This additional funding is welcomed, as it strengthens the DBF's capacity to provide seed-funding mission grants to parishes through the restricted Aldhelm Mission Fund.

Rental income also exceeded both forecast and the prior year by c. £178k, reflecting 48 clergy houses being let. However, this improvement should be viewed alongside higher-than-budgeted property costs and the preparatory works required before properties could be let.

Actual expenditure is approximately £1m higher than forecast. This variance is primarily driven by timing effects, forecasting maturity and activity linked to externally funded work, rather than any loss of control over core costs.

The largest driver is property expenditure (c.£600k above forecast). This includes three substantial and unplanned clergy property works (c.£324k), alongside higher levels of rental property improvements and quinquennial repairs as we continue to address the COVID-era backlog. Rental activity and associated improvements were deliberately increased to support income generation and should therefore be viewed alongside the corresponding uplift in rental income noted above.

Grant expenditure was also higher than forecast (c.£110k), particularly through the Aldhelm Mission Fund and Sudan-related grants. As with income, the timing and volume of grant awards remain inherently uncertain. Importantly, these costs are fully matched by restricted income and therefore do not place pressure on core unrestricted funds.

Other variances reflect the normal bedding-in of improved financial forecasting, for example: the timing difference on the final phase of Emmaus House works (within the overall budget approved by Bishop's Council), the later-than-expected relocation of the Ramsbury office, increased glebe agency fees and the timing of consultancy costs for the externally funded Flourish programme.

Taken together, these movements do not indicate underlying cost drift in the DBF's core operations. Cost

discipline remains firm; clergy and staff vacancies have helped contain stipend and salary costs; and work continues with budget holders and restricted fund owners to strengthen forecasting accuracy. We are also increasing financial transparency through periodic briefings to Diocesan Synod members and parish officers, while maintaining our primary focus on expenditure that supports ministry provision.

To ask the Diocesan Secretary why the budget papers from autumn 2025 indicate that the £ 5.5 million of SMMIB grant funding will be spent on an extra 6.4 FTEs in administrative posts plus the LOSS of one stipendiary clergy (as Rev Canon Andy Perry is being plucked out of a busy parish after a thirty-year ministry in order to be Dean of Leadership and Church Growth, which is an administrative role that appears to be externally funded)?

Answer: David

The DIP award is £5.15m, of which...

- £3.75m is allocated to Mission Hubs and this includes the Dean of Leadership and Church Growth as directed by National Church.
- £1.4m is for DBF team roles

The £1.4m helps fund 7 full time roles. I would not describe these as administrative.

- 3 roles are for the 'Growing Younger team' to primarily address our challenge of Missing Generations these are critical frontline roles about building a younger future for the church with our parishes and mission hubs.
- 2 roles are designed for 'Foundations for mission' to address support needs to parishes in giving, church buildings, and our other challenges.
- 2 roles within programme office team – these are the only roles which I would describe as are administrative roles for planning and accountability. They are mandatory roles insisted upon by National church to ensure the total £5m fund is well managed and reported upon. We would not get funding at all unless these roles were included.

The Dean of Leadership and Church Growth is a new fully funded role to which the Bishop has appointed Andy Perry. Priests are called into many roles, not just those with parish responsibility. Andy has deep experience of leadership and a successful track record of church growth; Andy expressed a deep calling to this new role and he was not 'plucked' from a parish role. I would not describe this as an administrative role. This is not a loss of a parish clergy role as he will be replaced at St Mary's Longfleet.