

## Woodbridge Deanery Synod

<https://www.woodbridgedeanery.org/>

Minutes of the meeting of Woodbridge Deanery Synod held at 7.30pm on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October at St John's Woodbridge.

28 people attended: 4 Clergy, 22 Lay Representatives 2 visitors. There were 9 apologies.

1. Rev Mandy Reynolds, Rural Dean welcomed everyone and introduced Edward Creasy Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance and Gary Peverley Diocesan Secretary.
2. Rev Charles Trefusis led the opening prayers.
3. Diocesan Board of Finance – Edward Creasy began by introducing himself as the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF). As Chair of the DBF his role is to ensure that the financial management of the Diocese keeps the Church in Suffolk sustainable for the future. Having lived in East Suffolk for many years he was appointed High Sheriff of Suffolk in 2021/22. Edward said his work with charities had highlighted the large number of people who needed help in the county. For example, he remarked that the majority of foodbanks in his experience were run by people of faith in the local community and considered it likely that the Church of England in Suffolk was the largest network of local charities and volunteers in the county and was underpinned by people working together and giving up their time. He thanked the Clergy and the Laity in the Diocese for their continued support in his current role.

Gary Beverley outlined the role of the Parish Resourcing team. Safeguarding continued to be a key area of support and management, and he referenced "A Church Near You" website as the main internet based communications channel for churches across the country. Working with Church of England Schools (which have 14000 pupils in Suffolk) and governors was a major activity and financial management and the work of the Diocesan Investment Programme ensures the Church's vision and strategy becomes a reality for churches and local communities.

Gary presented slides detailing the current and previous years funding and expenditure. He explained that finances were fragile currently and the challenge was to create financial sustainability against a background of ageing congregations and fewer donations whilst maintaining clergy numbers. An issue was the imbalance of Parish Share receipts across the financial year and suggested regular monthly payments would greatly assist the payment of stipends. Recent budget setting was able to freeze Parish Share payments until 2027. Gary went on to detail the trends in the split between full time and part time posts and the effect of increases in safeguarding resources over recent years.

Questions were then taken from the meeting on the quality and problems with Church housing, the effects of net-zero policy on finances and the imperative of improving the frequency of payments of Parish Share.

4. Apologies for absence – the attendance book was circulated.
5. Minutes of the meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> July were agreed and signed – there were no matters arising.
6. Diocesan Synod report – The next Diocesan Synod would be held on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2025. Tony Allwood reported that at its residential meeting The House of Bishops recommended the Prayers of Love and Faith would remain unaltered for now and clarification would be made at future General Synod meetings
7. Financial and Parish Share update. – Clive Willetts reported that in 2024 98% of the Parish Share of c.£500K was received, Current figures indicated that 61% (£337K) of the target share had been received so far in 2025 but with 75% of the year passed by with some parishes already having paid in full. It was suggested that Deanery Synod representatives should reiterate to their PCCs the need for more regularised payments of Parish Share where possible.

8. Parish News –

- Rev Mandy told the meeting of a good news story of a Parish Church that was in danger of closing due to low attendances having been transformed following appeals to the local community who organised a large working party to clear the churchyard and decorate and clean the church. This enabled a Harvest Festival service which was attended by more than forty people.
- St Andrews, Melton has a new ordinand training for the priesthood.
- All Saints Sudbourne had achieved their fundraising target of £40K for new under-pew electric heating.

9. Standing Committee – it was agreed the next meeting will be on Wednesday 12 November at 2pm in Orford. Mary Hare asked for suggestions for speakers or subjects at future meetings.

10. Future Deanery Synod Dates - DATE OF NEXT MEETING TBC

11. AOB – None

Rev Many Reynolds closed the meeting with prayers at 8.52pm.