

Bishop's Council & Standing Committee

Update to Diocesan Synod June 2026

This note summarises the recent work and decisions of the Bishop's Council & Standing Committee (BCSC) since March 2026 and is shared with the Diocesan Synod for information. Synod will be invited to raise questions at the meeting.

The Bishop's Council has met twice since their last update. This paper does not include reference to items on the Synod's agenda that have come through the Bishop's Council.

Review of Diocesan Team

The Diocesan Team Review Group has continued their work, keeping the BCSC updated at each meeting. To date the Group have identified the following strands that are shaping their work:

1. Purpose (why)
2. Aligning activity with strategy (what)
3. Culture (how)
4. Capacity (what next)

Charity Commission & Compliance

In light of the recent Charity Commission investigations into the dioceses of Chelmsford, Liverpool and into the Archbishops' Council, the BCSC have been reviewing practices to ensure they are fully compliant with the emerging themes from the Charity Commissions' work.

Discussions continuing at a national level, but it is clear that the Charity Commission are taking a more focused view on the charitable status of all ecclesiastical bodies (including PCCs) than they have in previous years.

As such the Directors of the WDBF have made the following changes with immediate effect:

1. Adopted a new (interim) protocol for assessing how and when potential serious safeguarding matters or other complaints relating to members of the Diocesan leadership structure should be shared with the wider Trustee body, balancing the need for Trustee involvement, against the need for due confidentiality.
2. The BCSC receive an update on all Serious Incident Reports made on behalf of the WDBF at each meeting.
3. Commissioned a skills audit of the Trustee body, seeking to identify any gaps that may need to be addressed through use of co-options.

The BCSC has also been made aware of the new resources provided by the National Church Institutions for PCCs to help keep people safe and meet basic governance requirements:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/safety>

The Diocesan Secretary will shortly be writing to all PCCs encouraging them engage with these resources and remind them of the significant legal responsibilities that come with their charitable status.

Energy Performance Certificates

In light of the new requirements in the Renters Rights bill, the BCSC have considered proposals for ensure all our houses have Energy Performance Certificates of at least level C. With advice from Savills, it has been estimated that it will take around £1m to ensure all 200+ properties under the care of the WDBF can reach this level.

This work will be commissioned over the next few years, linked where possible to planned maintenance arising from quinquennial inspections.

Land sales and development opportunities

The BCSC has considered two potential land sales with development opportunities. These are often tricky matters to consider. On one side is the need to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to their care, the challenging financial context our diocese is in, and the obligations to achieve best value placed on them by both Ecclesiastical legislation and Charity law. Set against this can be strong local views opposed to any housing developments in their communities.

BCSC
May 2026