

GENERAL SYNOD

ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL

1. The Archbishops' Council presents this report on its activities since the July 2011 Group of Sessions in accordance with the requirements of the National Institutions Measure 1998.
2. The Council is chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury or, in his absence, the Archbishop of York and has met on two occasions since its last report was prepared – on 27 September and 29-30 November. In addition the Council met jointly with the Church Commissioners' Board of Governors on 10 January to review current expenditure plans in support of the Church's mission and to identify issues that will need consideration in developing spending plans for 2014-2016.

STRATEGY

Challenges for the new Quinquennium (GS 1815 and GS Misc 998)

3. The Council and the House of Bishops have established a small working group to assess credible options for reducing the time spent by parish clergy and church members on the management of structures and processes. The group is due to report to the Council and the House by September. Suggestions can be sent to:

task.group@churchofengland.org

National Mission initiatives

4. To support the themes identified in the Archbishop of Canterbury's Presidential Address in November last year, the Council has appointed a new Head of Special Projects and Development to take forward two new mission initiatives to build on the success of the Weddings Project. The new Beginnings and Bereavement Projects are now at the planning stage.

Consequences of the Government's Higher Education funding changes for theological training

5. Following the Synod debate in July of a report (GS 1836) from a working party chaired by the Bishop of Sheffield on the possible consequences of the Government's Higher Education (HE) funding changes for theological education, the Council received a further report from the working party. The Council offered views on the further proposals before they went to the House of Bishops. The report as endorsed by the House is circulated to Synod members as GS Misc 1008 and will be the subject of a presentation to the Synod on 9 February.

PENSIONS AND CLERGY REMUNERATION

6. The Council has considered reports from the Archbishops' Pensions Task Group and the Remuneration and Conditions of Service Committee and in the light of them has produced material now circulated to Synod as GS Misc 1010.

FEES

7. Following debate at the July Synod, the Council has revised its proposals for the new-style Fees Order. The revised proposed Fees Order will be presented to Synod as GS 1852.

APPORTIONMENT

8. In light of savings against the 2011 budget, the Council has agreed to freeze the overall level of the 2012 apportionment at the 2011 level and to recalculate the amount apportioned to each diocese on the basis of that figure. This represents a variation from the apportionment agreed at the July Synod (GS 1842) and a saving to the dioceses of around £0.5 million.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

9. The Council has continued to receive regular updates on the position around the dioceses in the light of the difficult economic context.

GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT

10. The Council discussed a number of current legislative and other public affairs issues of particular relevance to the Church, including the Council's response to the Government consultation on reform of the House of Lords and the Government's intention to legislate for same sex marriage.

GOVERNANCE

Number of meetings

11. On order to promote more efficient working and use of resources, the Council has agreed to reduce the number of its meetings from the present four 1-day and two 24-hour residential meetings to two 1-day and two 24-hour residential meetings annually though is for the moment retaining additional dates for contingency meetings and, as noted above, has had an additional, joint meeting with the Board of Governors this month.

Church House
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William Fittall
Secretary General

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