

LEDBURY DEANERY SYNOD

22 August 2011

Dear PCC Secretary,

Parish Share

At its first meeting on 3 August the reconstituted Standing and Business Committee (SBC) of the Ledbury Deanery Synod (membership annexed to this letter) considered the question of Parish Share and we are writing to you with the agreement of SBC. The immediate background was a note that had been presented to the first meeting of the new Deanery Synod on 28 July by the previous Standing Committee, and of which your Synod representative has a copy. Synod asked the SBC to look at the issues raised as a matter of urgency. The SBC had before it a paper from Mr Nat Hone (SBC member from the Hop Churches in the Ledbury Team).

SBC recognised the vital need to improve communications about financial matters within the Deanery, and more generally. It is not only PCC and Deanery Synod members who to understand the difficult and important issues, and why they are being asked to contribute money, but every church member. PCCs and Synod representatives have essential roles to play in that and we must all make great efforts to that end. SBC believes that the necessary elements are now in place and, after long and careful consideration, agreed to put to parishes a threefold proposal to resolve the immediate difficulties, to prevent them worsening over the coming months, and to open the possibility of an agreed way forward in future. You are asked to put this proposal before your PCC and, if possible, obtain their formal agreement to it.

The immediate difficulty is that for 2010 the contributions received by the Deanery from parishes fell some £4,000 short of the sum that the Deanery had to pay to the Diocese. This was mainly because seven parishes in the Cider and Hop Groups had contributed towards the Ledbury Benefice total less than it needed to meet its full contribution. The Deanery had, therefore had to take this sum from its common reserves in order to secure the 2% rebate offered by the Diocese to those paying in full. Obviously, that could not continue indefinitely: the whole Deanery stood to lose over the coming years unless Benefices were able to meet their full share.

The 2010 Deanery Budget and its allocation between benefices had been agreed by Synod in accordance with principles accepted and recently reaffirmed by Synod. Nevertheless, in some parishes there was a move to operate in accordance with a different system, not accepted by Synod. This was largely responsible for the £4,000 shortfall. SBC considered whether in the circumstances the parishes concerned should be asked to make good the arrears, with due allowance in any case where there was a real inability to pay.

As stated above, after careful deliberation, SBC unanimously concluded that it was extremely desirable to draw a line under the past and to move on in a united and harmonious way which will allow us to get a generally accepted agreement that would deal with 2010; stabilise 2011; and open the way for a longer-term arrangement that would avoid such difficulties.

This agreement, to which your PCC's consent is sought by 31 October, comprises the following elements:

- i. For 2010 the shortfall would be borne on Deanery Reserves.
- ii. For 2011, Benefices would pay in total the sums allocated to them by the Deanery Treasurer under the Deanery Share formula. The division of

those sums within each benefice would be for that Benefice but in no case would a parish seek to apply to itself a calculation not formally agreed by its Benefice. Any parish that had genuine difficulty in raising its share would alert its incumbent and the Deanery Treasurer, and they would seek ways to help with the problem.

- iii. For the future, no parish or group would take unilateral action in calculating or withholding Parish Share. However, SBC is prepared to consider, and if it were acceptable, to recommend to Synod, a comprehensive review of Deanery financing proposed by a Benefice. To be recommended, any such proposal would need to include not only formulae for the calculation of Parish Share but also issues arising from Stewardship, and any other matters.

The Deanery Treasurer would be pleased to discuss the contents of this letter with you, and you should consult your Benefice or Group coordinator, keeping the Incumbent and (if applicable) your Team Vicar closely involved. May we repeat, we look for a formal reaction, we trust full acceptance, by your PCC to the proposal by 31 October.

It remains, simply, for us to thank you for all that you have done, and are doing, to help the Deanery to meet its share. It is not an easy time for the Diocese and we realise it is an even more difficult time for many Parishes. Anything we can do to help you we will try to do, especially in the way forward through Stewardship as a way to commit ourselves, through prayer, in the Christian use of our time, talents and money.



M D Vockins

Rural Dean



I D S Beer

Lay Co-Chairman

Annex

Ledbury Deanery Synod: Standing & Business Committee, July 2011

The Rural Dean
The Lay Co-Chairman
The Secretary
The Treasurer

Rector C,M&S
Rector Colwall
Team Rector Ledbury

**C,M&S
Colwall
Ledbury**

Mr Ian Bailey
Mr D Longman
Mr Nick Hills
Mr Nat Hone
Rev'd Preb Sue Strutt.