



Diocese of Nottingham: The St John Paul II Nottingham Parish Finance Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 18th September 2025

In attendance: Martin Foulds, Michael Gemson, Philip Martin and Canon Philipp Ziomek (Chairperson).

1. Opening Prayer

The meeting opened with a prayer led by Canon Philipp.

2. Welcome to new members

A warm welcome was extended to Michael Gemson, who was attending his first meeting of the committee as one of the representatives of St Anthony's Church.

3. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received prior to the meeting from Julie Blazewicz-Bell and David Staiano.

4. Parish contribution to diocesan central support services 2025/26

David Lawes, the chief operating officer for the diocese, attended for this item at the invitation of the committee.

A lengthy discussion took place during which members of the committee outlined the parish's concerns, viz:

- The parish's contribution for 2025/26 towards the diocese's central support services (known as the Curia) has been assessed in total as £42,504.65. This represents an exceptionally large increase of £10,385.15 on the parish's contribution for 2024/25- equating to a 32.3% increase.
- It was noted that the calculation underpinning the assessment is based on 16% of a much broader base of parish income than hitherto (including parishioner donations made specifically for the parish's building fund), as well as a new 2.5% charge on parish reserves totalling in excess of £150,000 held in the parish's current account and its set-off account with the diocese (which is earmarked to help fund the urgent work required to remedy the defective concrete affecting the Good Shepherd Church building).

- Our parish is not “rich” by any definition in that it has a range of ongoing maintenance and other essential costs which it must meet.
- Our Parishioner Forum has formally expressed its concerns about the increased contribution the parish is being asked to meet, which it considers to be excessive.
- Questions have been raised by parishioners about the increase in the Curia’s staff costs, in the light of the data provided at the diocesan roadshows earlier in the year showing that these costs had increased by £448,000 (51%) from 2024 to 2025. Parishioners have asked whether these services provide value for money and have queried whether any review of the services and their costs was conducted in line with normal practice in, for example, public sector organisations, before the additional funding requirements from parishes were determined.
- The Parishioner Forum and individual parishioners have also specifically questioned the legitimacy of our building fund related donations and the parish set-off account being used in the calculation, as these funds have been donated by parishioners to help fund the parish’s building work project and should be treated as “restricted income” in accordance with Charity Commission expectations.
- Parishioners have also queried how the money pledged under the Enabling Our Mission initiative juxtaposes with the additional contribution towards the Curia’s costs which are now being sought from the parish. In particular, the funding priority headed “Supporting Our Clergy” in the Enabling Our Mission campaign literature seems to significantly overlap with the funding being required from parishes under the new quota arrangements. A number of parishioners have indicated that they may cancel their pledges to the initiative if satisfactory clarification is not forthcoming.
- In the light of the feedback received from our parishioners, the committee is genuinely concerned that the new arrangements have the potential to alienate our parishioners and that this could have a harmful effect on future parish fundraising efforts. This concern was expressly raised by the parish’s representatives at the deanery roadshow held at the Good Shepherd Church in February 2025 but does not appear to have been acknowledged in the funding model which was subsequently adopted by the diocese.

In response, David explained that:

- The Curia’s role is to serve the Bishop and the diocese’s parishes, within the overall context of the Bishop’s continuing exhortation that parishes should move from maintenance to a more missionary, outward facing approach.
- Within that context, the Curia currently provides a range of expertise and support in areas such as safeguarding; HR and payroll support for parish employees; property, legal and compliance advice; finance and Gift Aid; IT and cyber security; training and formation for clergy and lay people; and communications and fundraising. These services free up priests to focus on their pastoral mission and also serve to protect them from personal legal and financial risk.

- The number of staffing posts in the Curia has increased from 18 to 36 since 2019, reflecting the role it is expected to provide to address increased regulatory expectations and to support the diocese becoming more missionary and outward looking as expected by the Bishop.
- The Curia's increased costs could not be met from the existing funds available to the diocese. Diocesan reserves had previously been used to cover the deficit in funding, but this could not be sustained indefinitely and there was no alternative therefore but to seek increased contributions from parishes.
- The previous formula used to calculate parishes' quota payments was inequitable, in that smaller parishes with relatively limited income sources were potentially contributing a greater proportion of their disposable income than other larger parishes that had access to a broader income base. The new funding formula seeks to address these inequalities and has resulted in about a third of parishes paying less in 2025/26 than in 2024/25.
- The diocese would argue that although restricted income in parish accounts is used to calculate the overall contribution required of each parish, the funding that is transferred to the diocese under the new quota arrangements comes from the unrestricted funds available to each parish.
- It is recognised that the diocese needs to communicate better to parishes its funding issues and the rationale for the changes that have been made to the contribution required from parishes.
- The Bishop has said that the new formula approach will be reviewed at the end of the current financial year.

In the light of David's response, the committee advised that it may wish to write to the Bishop outlining the issues from its perspective so that they can be considered in any review which is undertaken. David asked if he could in any event receive a copy of the minutes of this evening's discussion. **ACTION 16/25: Philip** to provide David with a copy of the minutes.

Finally, David tabled copies of two documents for the committee's information: the report of the February 2025 diocesan roadshow which has only recently been produced, and a document explaining the support provided to parishes by the diocese and how that support is funded.

In conclusion, Canon Philipp thanked David for attending the meeting and for his input to the discussion. David left the meeting at this juncture.

It was subsequently agreed that Philip will write to the Bishop on behalf of the committee drawing his attention to the concerns of the parish so that these may be considered when the review of the funding arrangements takes place. **ACTION 17/25: Philip** to draft an appropriate letter to the Bishop and copy it to the committee.

An appropriate response will also need to be made to the detailed queries raised by the Parishioner Forum. **ACTION 18/25: Philip** to confer with Canon Philipp and arrange for a response to be made.

5. Minutes of the meeting on 12th June 2025

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and will now be posted on the parish notice board and website. **ACTION 19/25: Philip** to action accordingly.

6. Matters arising from the minutes

- a) **Parish finance update-** it was reported that Sarah Benedek is continuing to explore the possibility of grant aid from the National Churches Trust, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other external bodies towards the cost of repairing the defective concrete affecting the mullions and other parts of the church building. Meanwhile, it has been confirmed that the proposed building project has received approval from the diocese's building and sites committee. It has also been confirmed that if the parish does not obtain sufficient grant funding, the diocesan finance committee would be agreeable to granting the parish an interest-bearing loan upon application to make up any shortfall in funding.

7. Parish finances 2025/26-update

Philip provided an update on the parish's current finances:

- There is a credit balance of £23,779 in the parish's current bank account as at 17th September 2025.
- The parish's separate set-off account, held by the diocese, is currently in credit to the sum of £333,887. Transfers of £3,950 into the set-off account continue to be made each month from the parish's current account.

Canon Philipp explained that he had not yet been advised of the funding relating to St Anthony's which will in due be transferred to our parish following the dissolution of the former parish of Southwell and Calverton. Jonathan Gamble, the diocesan accountant, is currently pursuing this with Newark Holy Trinity (now part of the St Francis of Assisi Parish, Sherwood).

Martin advised that parishioners at St Anthony's have asked for details of the transfer, including the calculation that underpins it, and for assurances that the money is to be ring-fenced for St Anthony's future use. It was agreed that Philip will pursue this with Jonathan Gamble and that the diocese will be asked to open a new set-off account to enable the funding to be ring fenced. It was confirmed that it would be inappropriate for the funding to be added to the parish's existing set-off account with the diocese which is earmarked to fund the proposed building project at Good Shepherd Church. **ACTION 20/25: Philip** to pursue this accordingly and to arrange for feedback to be provided to the parishioners concerned at St Anthony's in consultation with Martin.

8. Analysis of income 2025/26

Consideration was given to the report circulated with the agenda.

Current projections suggest that the parish's income for 2025/26 from the measurable sources covered by the report will total £181,327- a net increase of £16,631 (10.1%) on 2024/25. When inflation (currently running at 3.8%) is factored in, the increase in real terms is estimated at about 6.3%- which, if correct, still represents a considerable

improvement on the two previous financial years when real terms reductions were experienced.

It was agreed that the position should continue to be carefully monitored and to that end updated reports should be brought to each meeting of the committee. **ACTION 21/25:** Philip to action.

9. Any other business

- a) **Church organ-** Canon Philipp explained that the organ at the Good Shepherd Church is overdue for a specialist clean which reportedly could cost in the region of £25-50,000. The organ will probably need to be partly dismantled when the church's building work is undertaken and that would be an opportune time for the clean to take place, if the required funding can be found. Further consideration will be given to this in due course. **ACTION 22/25:** Canon Philipp to consider further at the appropriate time.

10. Date of the next meeting

It was confirmed that the committee's next meeting will be from 6.30-8.00pm on Thursday, 11th December 2025, with consideration to be given at the meeting to a review of the parish centre hire charges for 2026/27. **ACTION 23./25:** Philip to ensure this item is included on the agenda for the meeting.

11. Closing Prayer

The meeting was closed with a prayer led by Canon Philipp.