

## **DIOCESE OF ARGYLL AND THE ISLES**

### **Development of the Diocesan Governance Structure**

Note: This paper and its recommendation will be fully considered by Synod in March 2015, but is being circulated now via Standing Committee and the Diocesan Newsletter in order to get wide coverage and input. If you are reading this in the Diocesan Newsletter and have comments, please discuss them with your Lay Representative to ensure that they are raised at Synod. The reason we have a Diocese and committee structure is to serve our congregations, so it is important that you have your say so that the Diocese can respond to your needs. If you have questions, again raise them with your Lay Representative, who can get answers at Synod.

The Diocesan governance structure was extensively modified in 2012, with the adoption of the present Governing Regulations in place of the 2002 "Diocesan Constitution". The main features of the new structure were:

1. To create a coherent structure with a small number of committees, defining their membership and interactions. The basic structure is a Standing Committee, which acts for the Diocesan Synod between its annual meetings and is the Charity Board of Trustees for the Diocese, with two Boards reporting to it: Finance and Property, and Mission and Ministry. Each meets quarterly, with the two Boards meeting about a week before Standing Committee to facilitate a timely of recommendations / decisions.
2. Clear delegation rules and conventions about what business is considered by the Boards / Standing Committee to attempt to remove the temptation to discuss everything at every level. For example, decisions on Canon 35 matters are totally devolved to the Finance and Property Board. Although the Standing Committee retains ultimate responsibility for the financial health of the Diocese, detailed discussion takes place in Finance and Property Board, which makes recommendations to Standing Committee, supported by a full examination of options, preferences etc. Actual decisions on the allocation of Block Grant lies with the Standing Committee (acting on behalf of Synod), but financial aspects are fully examined by Finance and Property Board beforehand by Finance and Property Board, while mission / ministry aspects are similarly discussed by the Mission and Ministry Board, with both providing informed advice to Standing Committee.
3. There is an explicit mapping between the various Diocesan bodies specified in the Provincial Digest of Resolutions / Canons onto the three Boards / Committee. Thus Standing Committee acts as the Diocesan Administration Board as well as being the body Synod is required to set up to examine congregational returns, Finance and Property Board acts as both the Diocesan Property Committee (for Canon 35 purposes) and, if required, would act as the Diocesan Boundaries Committee, meeting in that case under the chairmanship of the Dean. There have been minor changes to the Digest of Resolutions since 2012, in most cases taking account of the changes we had already made.

4. A majority of the full members of each Board comprises members elected by the Synod, rather than Diocesan Officers, in order to encourage full and effective participation by Synod representatives. The constraints of charity law, coupled by the desirability of keeping it small prevent this applying to Standing Committee, but it includes more elected members than previously.
5. Changes in charity law since the 2002 constitution, mean that there is now an explicit understanding with OSCR that the Diocesan charity constitution is the Canons, with the Governing Regulations subsidiary and providing clarity when necessary.

While much of this has been successful, there remain a number of issues:

1. We have not been as successful as we hoped in minimising the number of times an issue is debated – too much is being handled by more than one Board / Committee. This is exacerbated by:
  2. The Governing Regulations do not automatically make all Officers members of every Board / Committee, at least in part to ensure that non-Officers are in a majority. They do allow for non-member Officers to be “in attendance” and this is frequent practice. They also allow for the Bishop to appoint someone else to chair the Boards (common practice in other, larger Dioceses). In practice, in a Diocese as small as ours, Officers, and especially the Bishop and Dean are involved in many matters and in practice have to attend every meeting; this seems unavoidable, but it is leading to meeting overload and the same people discussing topics more than once. .
  3. The Standing Committee’s time is largely taken up with governance matters, especially finance, and has rarely discussed issues raised through the Mission and Ministry Board. Since mission is our business, this is unfortunate. Having said that, though, the leader of mission in the Diocese is the Bishop, not the Standing Committee, so the primary function of Mission and Ministry Board is to support the Bishop.
4. Despite these issues, a valid test of the Standing Committee’s work is the attitude of the external auditors, and in 2015, their report was almost entirely complimentary.

### Recommendations

It is proposed that two changes are made to the operation of the Boards / Committee as an experiment during 2016, subject to ratification / modification by Standing Committee and Synod.

1. Standing Committee and Finance and Property Board will meet quarterly as a joint body to handle financial and related matters (which in reality take up the bulk of Standing Committee’s time). Either before or afterwards, Standing Committee will consider its other issues, while Finance and Property Board will meet as the Diocesan Buildings Committee.

2. Mission and Ministry Board will also continue to meet quarterly but should use its first such meeting to consider carefully how best to support the Bishop in his over-arching role. It might do well to restructure in order to mirror the re-structured Provincial Mission Board, now based around a number of functional Networks, on which every Diocese is represented.

If these steps are found successful, proposals for modification of the Governing Regulations will be brought to Synod in 2017.

Diocesan Secretary

January 2016