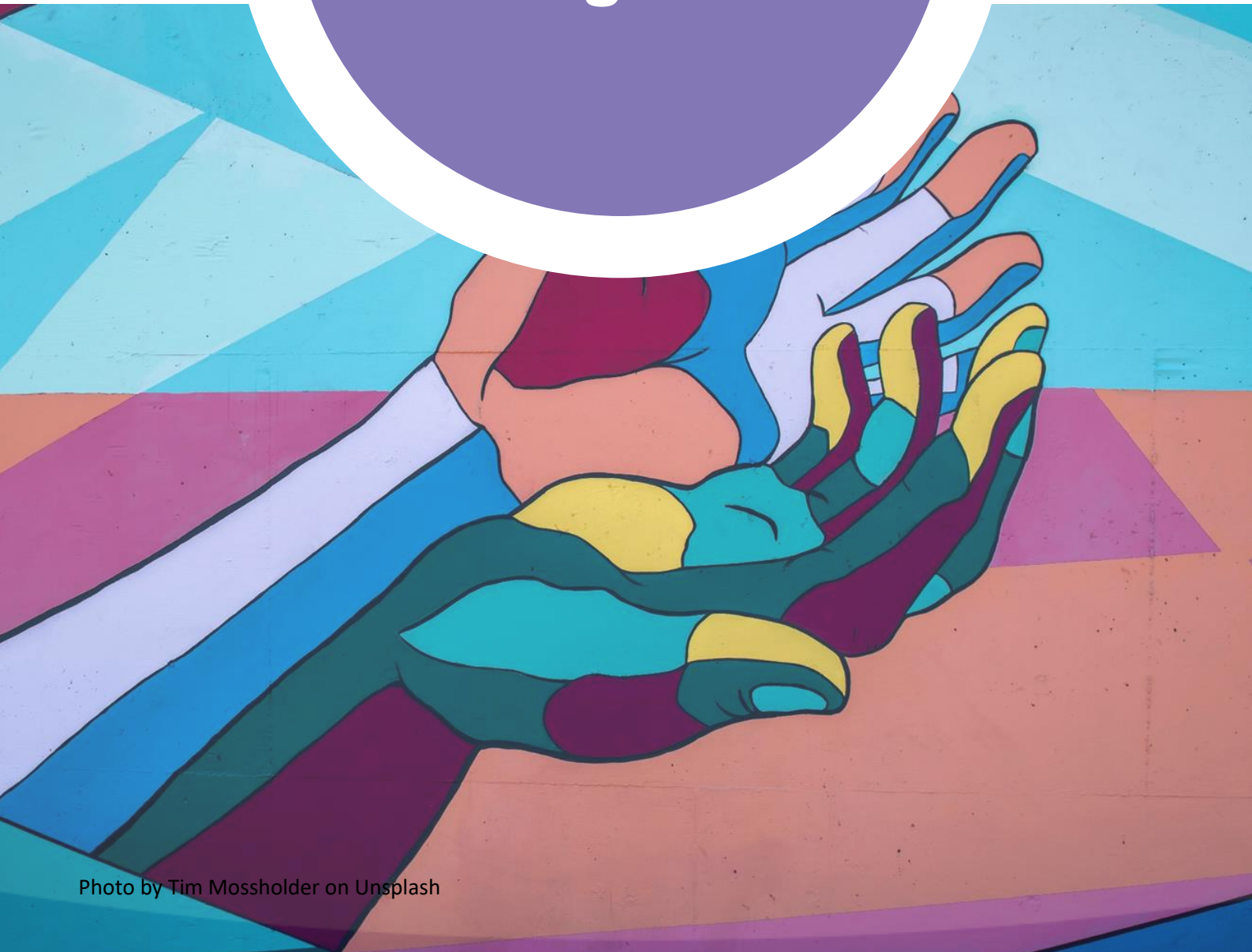


**Fairer Share
Survey
Digest**



Contents

What is Fairer Share and what does share pays for?	3
Fairer Share Survey Results – Summary of Findings	4
Fairer Share Survey Results in Numbers	5
Core principle: Membership	6
Core principle: Relative Affluence	7
Core principle: Modification	9
Suggestions from PCCs: options and alternatives	10
Membership count – alternatives.....	10
Assessing relative affluence - alternatives.....	10
Ministry Provision modification - alternatives.....	11
Proposed next steps.....	12
Appendix 1: Graphs – Parish Responses	1
Appendix 2: Graphs – Parish Responses by rural/urban demographic	2
Appendix 3: Graphs – Parish responses by single/multi church.....	3

Issued: February 2022

Comments and questions to:

Liz Ashmead

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Parishes are invited to:

Disseminate and discuss the survey results
at meetings and Deanery Synods

Contact Liz Ashmead and Elizabeth Harvey
if there are members that would like to
participate in focus group discussions in
May-June

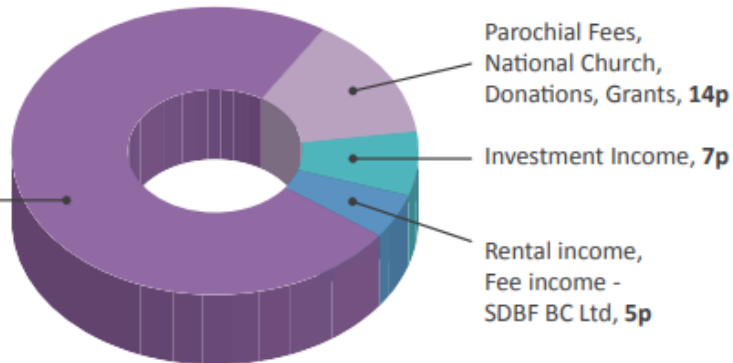
Participate in a follow-on Share Options
(online) survey in June-July

What is Fairer Share and what does it pay for?

Contributions through 'fairer share' enables God's ministry and mission in our Diocese; without the generous giving from our parishes, clergy could not be paid and supported.

**Total Income
£13 million**

Fairer Share from parishes **74p**

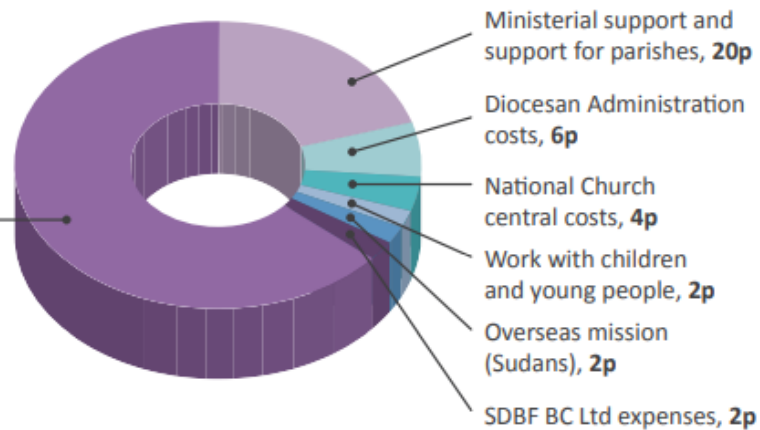


74 pence in every pound of our total incomes comes from Fairer Share contributions from parishes.

86 pence in every pound of total income comes back to parishes.

**Expenditure
£14.5 million**

Direct Ministry (stipend, pension, housing), **64p**



Footnotes

Income and Expenditure taken from 2020 audited accounts (see Appendix 2 for detailed expenditure)

We received £9.6m in share from parishes

We spent £12.3m on parish ministry and support

See [Treasurers Guide to Fairer Share](#) pages 17-18 for detailed Diocesan cost breakdown

Fairer Share Survey Results – Summary of Findings

Thank you

**313 PCCs
(72%) participated**

**120 pages of
additional comments**

The purpose of the survey was to **seek views about the current system**. Is it still 'fit for purpose', or do we need to replace it with a different system?

Within this digest we have included PCC comments and suggestions that reflect majority views.

The next phase of the consultation is to generate and consider options and alternative systems.

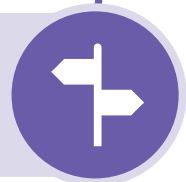
Support for a membership-based system



Many questions **how relative affluence is measured**



For both membership and relative affluence, **look at other methods and systems**



Modification for ministry provision is not widely understood;
wide range of issues when linking share to ministry provision



Feedback highlight **differences between the rural and the urban context**



Fairer Share Survey Results in Numbers



313
Parish responded to the survey;
 a **participation rate** of
72%



17,858
Members represented by the responses;
 is **74%** of the membership
 count for fairer share

71% of **rural** parishes responded
(as a %age of our total rural parishes)



81% of **urban** parishes responded
(as a %age of our total urban parishes)



Agree some form of **membership-based system**

84%

Agree some form of **membership count to determine relative size**

73%



53%

Agree with **current way membership is counted**

Rural parishes are more dissatisfied with the current way membership is counted than urban parishes

69% **Agree** with the **principle of relative affluence**

Rural parishes are more dissatisfied than urban parishes



43% **Disagree** with the **current way relative affluence is assessed**

Rural parishes are more dissatisfied than urban parishes

64% **Agree** with an adjusted in light of ministry provision received

Rural and urban parish have responded very similar to this question



Core principle: Membership



Does the PCC agree that the Diocese should continue some form of membership-based system as a method to divide the total sum the Diocese needs to raise between its parishes?

- **84% agree** with some form of membership-based system
- Many expressed a desire to have more information on alternatives systems available. Options and alternative schemes will be explored during the next phase of the consultation

“A system that’s heavily weighted towards membership numbers is seen as a tax on growth”

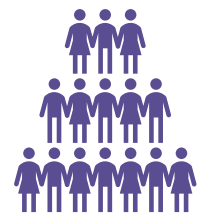
“membership and assumed affluence of parishioners does not equate with means or willingness to donate”

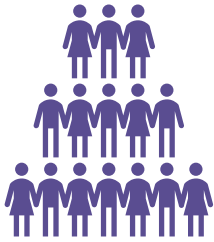
“our ability to pay share cannot be solely dependent on our number of members or indeed that they donate to the PCC”

Does the PCC agree that some form of supporter (membership) count is an acceptable way to determine the relative size of the parish?

The use of ‘supporters’ in the survey caused confusion. Many asked for clarity of definition

73% agree with some form of membership-based system as an acceptable way to determine relative size of the parish





Does the PCC agree with the current way supporters (membership) is counted for the Fairer Share assessment?

53% agree with the current way membership is counted

- Rural parishes are more dissatisfied with the current method than urban parishes
- The way in which we currently count membership generated the second highest number of comments with many parishes expressing that it is **not fit for purpose**, is **open to interpretation**, **considered a cumbersome process and welcomed clearer guidance**
- Several parishes expressed the desire to **abolish or change the 3-year rolling average (smoothing effect)**

“current **membership count is complex and open to interpretation** ... we need much clearer and consistently applied criteria and guidelines”

“3-year rolling average of count figures means that the system is too slow to respond to changed circumstances. ...to base 2023 share on average count....would accord far too much weight to pre-pandemic figures”

Core principle: Relative Affluence



Does the PCC agree that parishes whose supporters (members) are better placed to provide financial support should be asked to pay a little more than parishes whose supporters (members) are more financially constrained?

- **69% agree** with the principle
- Rural parishes are more dissatisfied with the principle than urban parishes, asking ‘what would be reasonable’ or how best to define ‘a little more’

“Capping the share, so it more closely approximates ‘a little more’ would allow growing churches to continue to grow, using locally raise tithes to invest in local mission and ministry.”

“importance of our Christian generosity to others”

Does the PCC agree with the current way relative affluence is assessed for Fairer Share?



- **43% disagree** with the current way we assess relative affluence
- **Rural parishes are more dissatisfied** with the method than urban parishes
- **The current way relative affluence is assessed generated the most comments**
- If an assessment of relative affluence is to remain part of the system, it should be done in a **transparent and objective way using published indices of relative socio-economic indicators**
- Many highlighted that these **socio-economic indicators do not necessarily reflect the individual church members' wealth**

"The church should not be seeking to means test its supporters"

"It is not reasonable to expect parishes to assess how affluent they are relative to other parishes or even the relative affluence of their own congregations."

"current way ...the system tries to take account of the relative affluence...is **hopelessly subjective. If an assessment of relative affluence is to remain part of the system, it should be done **scientifically and objectively with regard to an accepted and published statistical index of relative socio-economic deprivation.**"**

"Social wealth demographics do not necessarily reflect individual church members' wealth, many who can be capital rich but revenue poor."

"...it is not possible to estimate the relative affluence of members/supporters nor the relative affluence of the parishes in comparison with others in the Diocese"

Core principle: Modification

Does the PCC agree that Share contribution from a parish should be adjusted in light of the number of stipendiary clergy and House for Duty clergy there are in the benefice to which it belongs?



- **64% agree** with the principle of an adjustment in light of ministry provision
- Many parishes felt that they did not understand the current way by which modification is made and therefore opted for a neutral response (neither agree/disagree)
- **Rural and urban parishes responded very similarly** to this question
- PCCs highlighted wide-ranging challenges when linking share to ministry provision

“The formula for modification has a ‘cliff edge’ causing small changes in membership numbers to have a disproportionate change in contribution.”

“PCC has no control....over ministry provision...”

“as a benefice which includes a number of churches spread over a wide rural area, we need more clergy than would be the case in an urban benefice. We should not be penalised because our clergy to supporter ratio is higher than elsewhere.”

“an adjustment was made which increased the share payment for churches with the lowest membership, feeling that it was almost penalising them.”

“not the right way of allocating resources as it takes no account of relative need and other clergy resources available, such as retired or self-supporting clergy, lay leaders...”

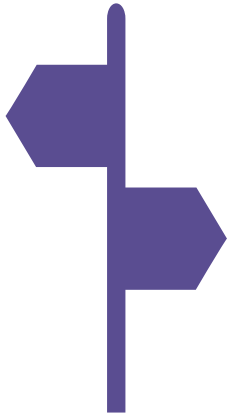
“large thriving congregations with one minister should be able to make a larger contribution to share rather than have it reduced under the category modification”

“allocation of clergy and the allocation of share should be distinct”

“The ministry of clergy is not always related to the membership...the membership may not be able to pay for the clergy but the clergy may be vital in the village, town or city”

“if the church aspires to remain present in these places, it must find sustainable and fair mechanisms to fund the ministry without penalising the faithful few who labour there”

Suggestions from PCCs: options and alternatives



From the feedback received, PCCs have suggested we investigate the following options and alternatives:

Pledge system – voluntary contribution based on what PCCs feel they can contribute / afford, the diocese budget accordingly

Ability to give – Income system – using PCC annual accounts to derive ‘ability to give’ contribution

Membership-based systems – consider alternative methods to count membership, assess relative affluence and adjust for ministry provision

Membership count – alternatives

- Regular Sunday attendance using the church service register and count over a longer period, i.e. 1 Sunday per month
- Membership defined as those contributing over a sufficiently meaningful minimum threshold amount (e.g., £5/week)
- Civic electoral role “use CofE own estimate of 5% of the adult population nationally as church members. On this basis each parish could readily calculate 5% of its civil electoral role”
- Church Electoral role
- Mission statistics – using the definition as per CofE statistics and data from the October count
- Membership defined as attendance and planned giving
- Count at benefice level
- Worshipping community defined as those who attend church at least one a month
- Broaden the definition to reflect “the number of people in the church community who you would think would be in a position to support the church financially”
- Allowance made for couples / households, to be counted as one member

Assessing relative affluence - alternatives

- Use parish annual accounts to assess ‘ability to give’
- ‘Giving bands’ – establish bands centred around the national average member’s giving per week compared to the parish’s average member’s giving per week. This will reflect the actual affluence of givers in a parish, include relativity to the wider CofE community and be indisputably determinable by the PCC
- Church urban fund index

- National Statistics / Council data on deprivation
- Experian Mosaics (taken from the census and HMRC data)
- Council tax bands
- Use existing categories, but simplify to just 3
- Anonymous income survey

Ministry Provision modification - alternatives

- “...contribution should be adjusted in light of the number of actually in post, not merely allocated”
- “...ratio of churches per priest....also, if the priest is a training incumbent or has other additional roles this should be taken into account”
- Relate to the % engagement of the clergy in a parish, maybe with some adjustment related to the size of a parish sharing resources within a benefice
- Reflect at parish level by number of clergy-led services (as a proportion of total services)
- “...discount if a parish has a vacancy for a long time”

Might the Diocese have it the wrong way round in the Fairer Share Guide (Oct 2021), stating that “Every year Fairer share is calculated for each parish based on the diocesan annual budget”? It would be normal and more prudent if the diocesan annual budget is based on the income that it can realistically receive from parishes and match what it wants to do within that. It must live within its means”

“It is important that parishes try to pay as much as they can afford towards the overall cost of their clergy. That affordability is best judged by the PCC, who must also acknowledge their statutory requirement as a charity trustee to maintain the fabric of their church and support its normal running, as well as to contribute to share the cost of their clergy.”

Proposed next steps

We need to manage the expectations of change: changing the fairer share scheme and apportionment to parishes, does not address the fundamental issue that the diocesan budget, which is mainly the cost of ministry provision and support (84%) is fixed and not very flexible.

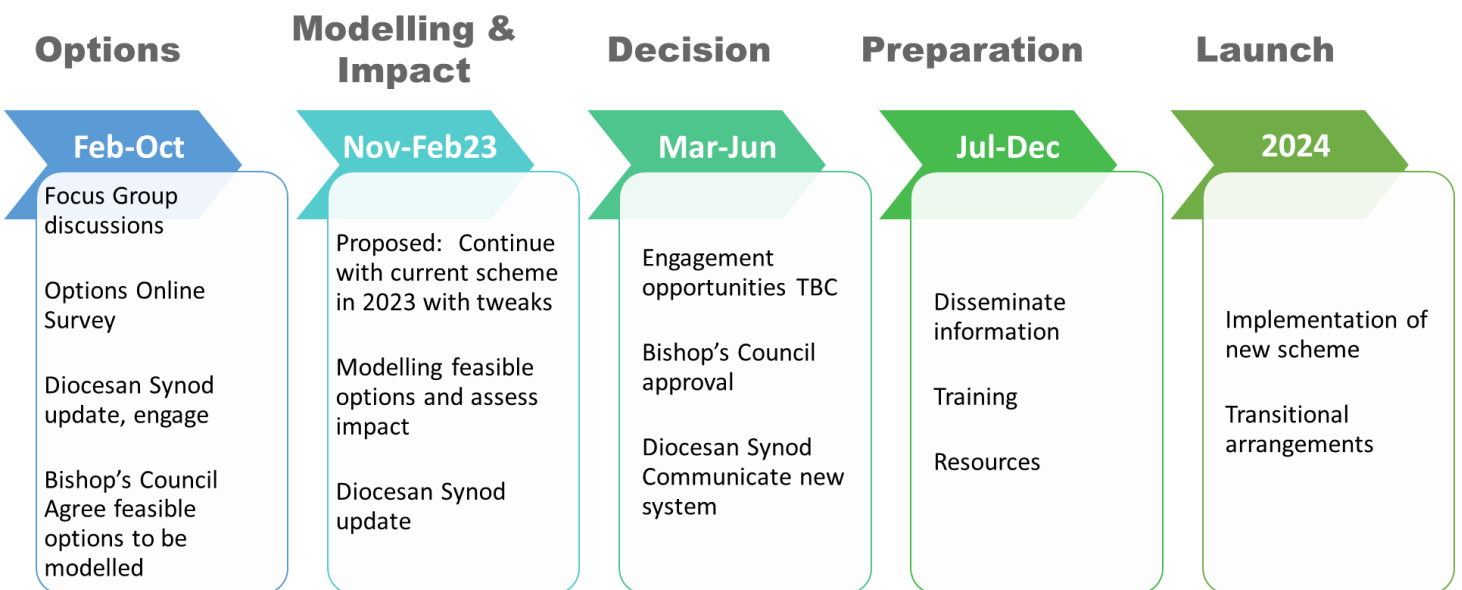
It is important that Share reflects ministry and mission provision - with our Mission and Pastoral Plan and with the Bishop Designate signalling his intention to lead us into a new vision and strategy we need to leave space to align the Share system to any changes that might be upcoming.

We want to explore different scheme options and the impact of these in the next phase of the consultation. We want to do this well and leave plenty of time for parishes to give their views, have discussions.

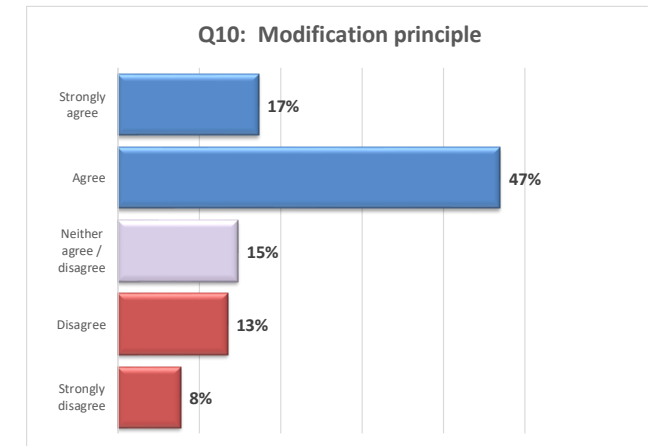
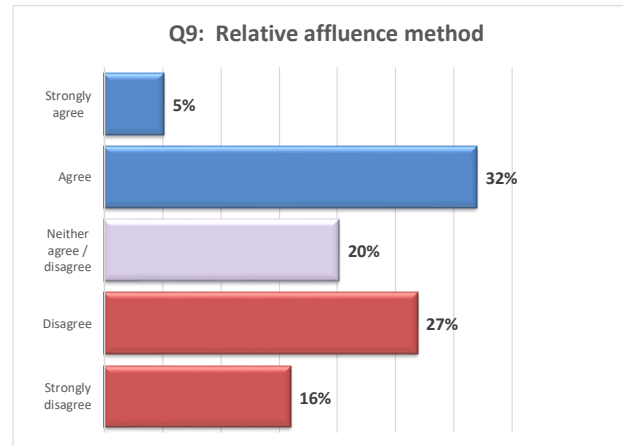
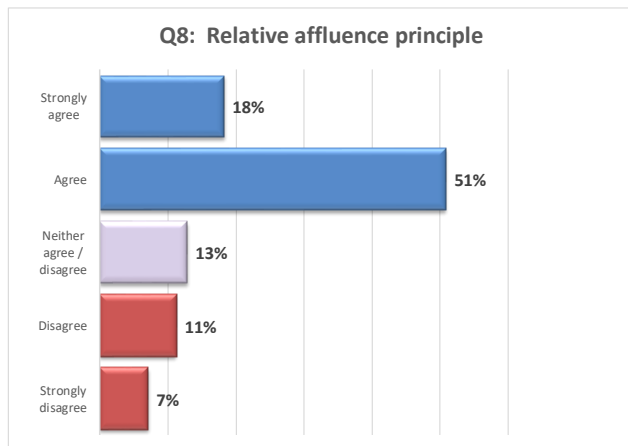
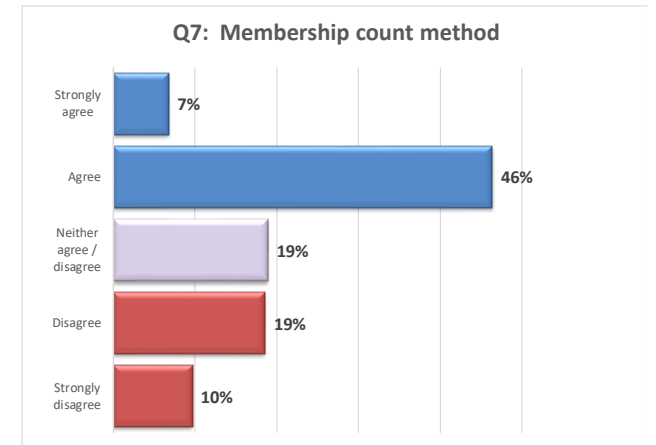
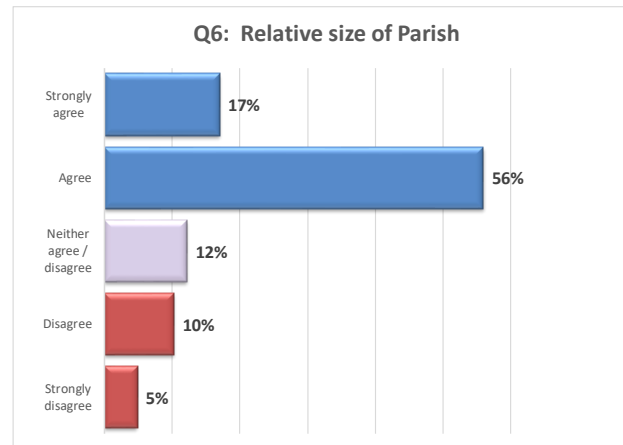
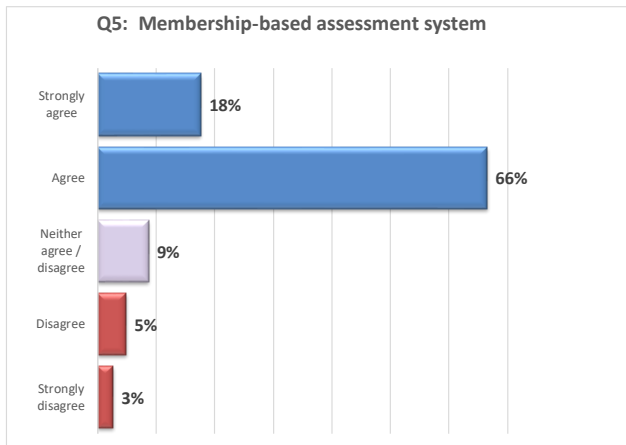
2023
Current share system with tweaks

2024
Wider changes / new system

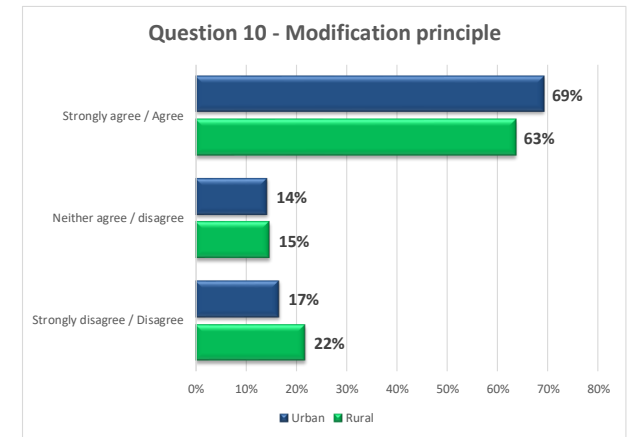
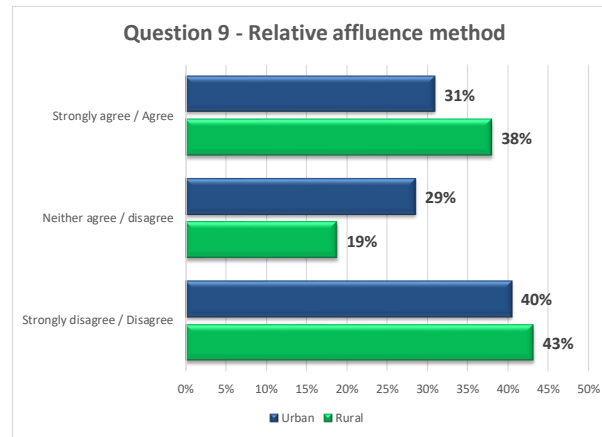
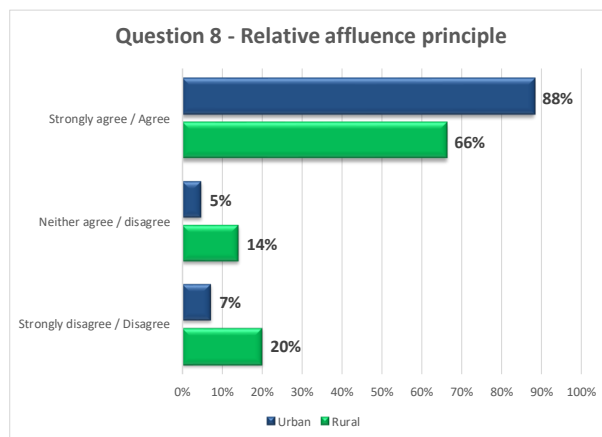
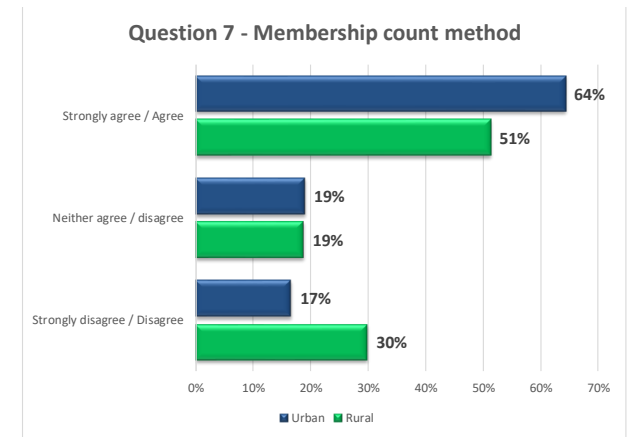
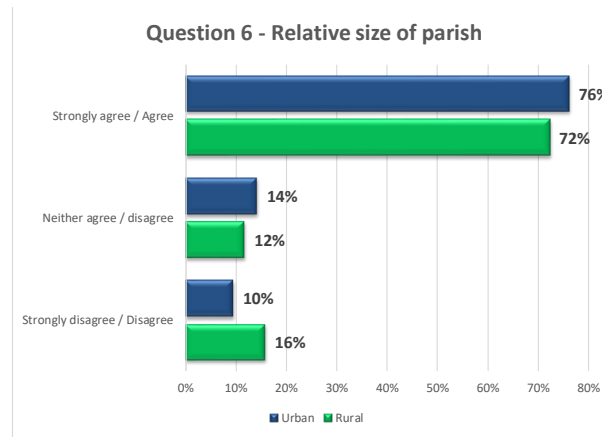
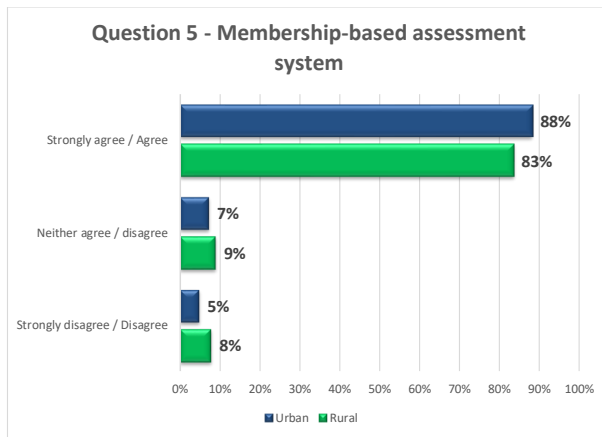
Therefore, we are asking Bishop’s Council to support the recommendation of the Fairer Share Review Group to continue with the current system in 2023, but with some tweaks based on the feedback you provided through the survey. Furthermore, to introduce wider changes or a new system in 2024, giving plenty of time for parishes to give their views and have discussions.



Appendix 1: Graphs – Parish Responses



Appendix 2: Graphs – Parish Responses by rural/urban demographic



Appendix 3: Graphs – Parish responses by single/multi church

