From your Parishes Support Team

Diocesan IT Investment Programme

We learn more in the first 5 years than at any other time in our lives.

The last 6 weeks have been another learning peak as we grapple and adjust to the impact of coronavirus in our personal lives and society as a whole – not to mention navigating the bewildering array of apps to help us stay connected!

Overnight, applications like Zoom, WhatsApp, Teams, Skype and WebEx have become household names, enabling us to stay in contact with loved-ones and continue with our personal and professional lives, at least virtually.

These unprecedented times underline the value and importance of investing in secure, flexible and scalable IT architecture that enables the Diocese to respond and adapt working practices whilst continuing to serve our churches and schools.

With the support of Bishop's Council, our diocesan offices have embarked on an ambitious diocesan-wide IT programme, enabling the Diocese to move forward as an active part of a developing and modernising Church of England. The programme includes the implementation or upgrade of 7 IT initiatives:

1. **NEW Microsoft Business Central** – DBF Accounting and Property Management software package

2. **NEW "People System"** – adopting national CofE integration software as part of an initiative to create a national clergy database and meet legal requirements

3. **NEW CMS** – a contact management system that will integrate with "People System". In time, this will replace most of SALDIMS, the existing diocesan contacts database

4. **NEW Pathways** – an online clergy recruitment tool as part of the "People System"

5. **NEW National safeguarding case management database** – a national online database as part of the "People System"

6. **UPGRADE Diocesan Website** – a contemporary, simpler website that is easy and intuitive to navigate and find information

7. **NEW Microsoft 365** – implement a cloud-based operating system and rollout the use of Teams, SharePoint and OneDrive for effective collaboration and storage of information

Whilst making the diocesan IT architecture 'fit for purpose', we also recognise that the Church of England is increasingly focussed on safeguarding and ensuring transparency and consistency of staffing information across all Diocese. The proposed new legal obligation for Diocesan bishops to provide regular, accurate clergy data demonstrates this. In turn, the Church of England is investing in national systems to help ensure dioceses can meet these increased demands, and is encouraging engagement and commitment with these developments.

The Diocese will adopt core national functionality such as the People System, Pathways, and National safeguarding case management database in order to support new ways of working and align with the national focus and direction of travel.

All solutions are scalable and cloud-based to ensure that we can provide support to our churches and schools in the most appropriate local context.

For example:

Online Faculty system: PCCs can arrange a church site visit with the DAC officers; the DAC officers are able to take photos, record details and assist the PCC with the faculty application using the online system; all happening onsite and in "real-time". This improves the quality and likelihood that the application will be approved, as well as reducing the processing time for the PCC, DAC office and other stakeholders.

Meeting and events attendance: we are working on ways to provide participants with the choice of joining meetings and events virtually; making training and meetings more accessible (particularly in the current context), reducing the need for travel, and reducing the carbon footprint of diocesan meetings and events.

Administration: the DBF is implementing cloud-based accounting and property management software that will significantly improve the speed and efficiency with which the Accounts department can service our parishes in matters like Fairer Share and paying of expenses and invoices, whilst the Property team will improve their capacity and capability to instruct, track and conclude repairs and works on clergy houses. This new system will create the opportunity to provide accounting services and support to parishes.

National "People System": the national clergy database is an integral part of making our churches and schools a safe place for everyone, and will ensure a consistent, transparent, national approach and response to safeguarding issues/ cases, while delivering administration efficiencies. 'One version of the truth' will ensure clergy details are up to date in all relevant and key national systems.

Should you wish to contribute or have any questions on the programme, please do not hesitate to contact the Programme Manager, Elizabeth Harvey, via parishsupport@salisbury.anglican.org.