

Salisbury Diocese – A summary of *Fairer Share*

Fairer Share rules are set out in the definitive *Fairer Share* booklet found on the Diocesan web site at www.salisbury.anglican.org go to: Parishes > Finance > Fairer Share in the Diocese and select “Fairer Share Guide (Word)”. This summary seeks to address some of the most asked questions relating to the scheme.

A parish’s annual Share assessment is the amount that it is asked to contribute towards the costs of ministry and mission for the whole Church within the Diocese. Diocesan Synod approves the Budget for Share assessment each year and has approved the method for determining Share apportionment, which in this Diocese we call *Fairer Share*. The scheme is the means by which the burden of Share is distributed as equitably as possible between all parishes in the Diocese. The fundamentals rely on two factors only, a parish’s self-declared membership and a self-assessed category based on its relative ability to pay Share. This means that two similar parishes in different parts of the Diocese will have a similar Share assessment. No account is taken either of works to the fabric of church buildings, or of stipendiary vacancies (for example during an interregnum) since these are common factors for every PCC from time to time.

Each spring, every parish is asked to complete a form on which it reports its *Fairer Share* membership and one of five categories (A-E) determining its relative ability to pay Share. It is the Incumbent and a churchwarden who must sign the form, after the PCC has been consulted and agreed with the return; then the form is sent to the Rural Dean. Every Deanery operates a Review Group that considers all parish returns for its Deanery and may make amendments, after making enquiries with the relevant parish. Each deanery submits its forms, with amendments where necessary, to the Diocesan Office, where the information on the returns is collated and an assessment calculated for each parish according to the scheme rules.

The appropriate Archdeacon may be asked to review exceptional changes in a parish’s return, if count numbers have changed significantly, if there is a category adjustment in either direction, or both. Inevitably any change involves a conversation with the Incumbent. For some parishes it may be necessary to examine the service attendance register and also statutory returns to check whether an error may have been made. Normally this would be done by someone visiting the parish and discussing the return. In smaller parishes it is likely that their members are known, so in some instances no count may be necessary. It is important that every parish keeps a record of the return submitted each year, together with a full list of its members. Notifications of Share assessments for the following year are sent to parishes in October.

Number of services is not a factor accounted for in *Fairer Share*. Each Incumbent has responsibility for the Cure of all Souls, churchgoers or not, irrespective of the number of services held on a Sunday. As such he or she is at work throughout the week and the benefice is responsible for his/her care and wellbeing. Share covers the cost of stipend, pension and housing as well as a range of Diocesan wide resources and support services; it is the mechanism by which each parish meets those responsibilities. The costs occur monthly in the main and so parishes are encouraged to pay on a regular basis. Factors used for Share assessment are:

- The annual Budget for Share assessment
- A three-year rolling average membership for each parish
- The category each parish has selected for itself
- The number of stipendiary ministers per benefice

An element of the cost of ministry is retained by adjusting a category, up or down, in cases where the total benefice membership per stipendiary post is outside an average range, presently 131-170, with bands of 40 on either side of this bracket. For example a parish’s category in a benefice with total membership of 120 will increase by +1, effectively moving it to the next higher category. An amount per head by category is determined; currently Category “B” represents 92.5% of “A”, while “C” is 85% of “A”; the progression is by cumulative 7.5% steps.

The Diocese’s Fairer Share Review Group has responsibility for keeping the Scheme under review and for making any scheme changes that may be needed from time to time.

We recognise that paying the Share is a significant challenge for every parish in the Diocese, which is why the Diocesan Finance Committee tries to control the annual budget increase to as low a figure as possible. As with any human construct, situations may arise where the strict application of the rules, vital for the integrity of the *Fairer Share* scheme, could produce anomalies. Any perceived anomaly should be brought to the attention of the appropriate Area Stewardship Group, who will consider the matter and make a recommendation to the Diocesan Finance Committee. The Finance Committee is the sole body with the authority to amend a parish’s assessment after it has been notified.

There is nothing to prevent parishes within a benefice agreeing to different allocations between themselves, provided they arrive at the same overall total. Indeed such local mutual support is encouraged.