

YORK DIOCESAN SYNOD

Property Sub-Committee
of the
York Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd

GUIDELINES FOR OCCUPANTS OF PARSONAGE AND OTHER DIOCESAN PROPERTIES

22 September 2009

Amended February 2020

www.dioceseofyork.org.uk/housing

PROPERTY COMMITTEE PRAYER

The love of God has been poured into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

We dwell in him and he in us.

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples.

Sing to him, sing praises to him,
and speak of all his marvellous works.

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God almighty,
who was and is and is to come.

Look on us, Lord, as we carry out our responsibility
for the lands and buildings held in trust for this diocese.
Give us wisdom and insight in our work;
vision in our stewardship,
care for those affected by our decisions,
and boldness in taking our part in your mission.

[Especially today we pray that / for...]

We ask this for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who taught us to
pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us this day our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the Kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.**

Amen.

INTRODUCTION

The following information is intended to inform and assist clergy and lay people living in Parsonages and other properties in the Diocese of York.

It is not intended to be comprehensive as the Property Committee is continually reviewing policy, and individual situations may sometimes require special consideration.

The stewardship of housing is a partnership between the occupant, the Property Committee and the Parish.

The staff members at Diocesan House are always happy to answer questions about the care and upkeep of these properties, and are eager to be helpful. Please feel free to contact the property team at:

**Property Team
The Diocese of York
Amy Johnson Way
Clifton Moor
York YO30 4XT**

Telephone (01904) 699500

Some other useful addresses and telephone numbers are to be found at the end of this document.

**Canon Peter Warry
Diocesan Secretary & Chief Executive**

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Property Committee of the Diocesan Board of Finance

AMENDED

29 September 2010	To incorporate guidance on Carbon Monoxide Poisoning
17 July 2011	PCC responsibility for service charges during a vacancy added
25 January 2011	Policy on heating modified and a new policy on secondary heating implemented.
1 November 2013	Heating policy revised in the light of servicing and solid fuel fires.
21 January 2014	Gas/electric fire grants raised to £500 excluding fitting

PREAMBLE

This section of the document sets out the terms on which, subject to the general provisions of the law, you will occupy your home, whether as a freeholder or under a license agreement. The remainder of these guidelines are written to help you understand the context and framework within which these rights and the diocesan policy and objectives are framed.

Your Rights & Duties

If you are a Freeholder you have certain rights and duties in respect of the parsonage house and the land on which it stands. Some of these are set out in the Repair of Benefice Buildings Measure 1972 which includes the following general statement: *'The incumbent shall have a duty to take proper care of a parsonage house, being a duty equivalent to that of a tenant to use premises in a tenant-like manner.'*

If you are a License Holder then your rights of occupancy will be framed within the Landlord and Tenants Act 1985.

Diocesan Policy and Objectives

The diocesan policy in relation to parsonage houses and other houses is set out in detail in this document and you will also find useful information in the diocesan clergy households handbook.

The diocesan property team based here at the Diocesan Office is ready to help with any queries that you may have about your parsonage. During your occupancy, the team will be responsible for ensuring that the property is wind and water tight, and for the state of the essential services – water, power, drainage, sewage, and heating. The team is also responsible for any forest-type trees in the garden.

Your Obligations

Your obligations as occupant include the following:

- To inform the property team if there is any damage or defect requiring the team's attention.
- To be responsible for fruit trees, shrubs etc in the garden.
- To keep the garden in reasonably good order, and not allow rubbish etc to collect in the grounds.
- Not to make or allow any alterations to the property which have not been authorized by the Diocesan Surveyor, including modifications to the essential service installations.
- To must consult the property team if you intend to take in a lodger who is not a member of your immediate family.
- To vacate the property on leaving office and leave it in a clean and tidy state. If not, the Diocesan Board of Finance has the right to recover from you the cost of clearing and cleaning the property.
- The Diocesan Board of Finance has the right to recover from you the cost of repairing any damage caused during your occupancy.

Please contact members of the Property team or your Archdeacon if you have any queries or encounter any difficulties at any time. We want to do all that we can to enable you to be comfortable and feel secure in your new home.

THE GUIDELINES

ADMINISTRATION

The Property Portfolio

The Diocese of York is a large diocese covering an area of 2,661 square miles. There are three archdeaconries, which are organised into 475 parishes. Around 320 of the 500 diocesan clergy have housing provided as part of their terms of service. These properties include 199 Parsonage Houses, 6 Diocesan Parsonage Board Houses, 24 Diocesan Houses and 38 Glebe houses. (Whilst the majority of the estate is valued at historic costs, the estimated value of the properties is in excess of £100 million.)

The Diocesan estates also include a large property portfolio in the form of glebe land (book value, as the result of a desk-top valuation, of £17m). In addition, the Archbishop's Council administers parish investments (estimated value in the region of £9.6m) for Custodian Trustee investments and church properties (over 150 church halls). The diocese also has its own investments in the region of £10m.

The Council, through its officers, is committed to enhancing the service it offers to those who live in its properties and to the custodianship and husbandry of its property and land assets.

The Property Sub-Committee

The Property Sub-Committee has directly devolved responsibilities from the Archbishop's Council. The group has a broad representation drawn from across the Diocese of York. The members are elected as representatives of both clergy and laity in each Archdeaconry and as members of other sub-committees. Co-opted members bring external professional expertise to the committee. They meet quarterly to fulfil the following objectives:

To ensure that property is used and managed effectively as a support to the mission and ministry of the Church.

To provide houses which are of a satisfactory standard, and which are maintained and, where necessary, improved in a manner that is timely and consistent with good value for money.

To recognise the impact on Diocesan Clergy, their families and other occupants of timely maintenance and repair as part of the pastoral care offered by the Archbishop's Council.

The Archdeacons

Particularly with regard to clergy housing, the Archdeacons have an important role in ensuring that the housing stock is fit for purpose. Primarily this is achieved through effective liaison with occupants, all interested parties in the parishes and the Diocesan Officers. Each Archdeacon meets regularly with the Diocesan Officers to ensure that matters are being addressed particularly during the appointments process as vacancies arise.

Note: Glebe properties and other clergy housing not in use for ministry are administered directly by the Diocesan Officers and through estate agents. Where parsonages and Assistant Ministers' houses are being let out on a temporary basis the Archdeacons are, of course, more directly involved.

The Property Team

The diocesan property team consists of five officers:

- Charles Anelay, Property Portfolio Manager and Diocesan Surveyor
- Jamie Rotherham, Operational Property Surveyor
- Lisa Whitley, Clergy Housing Co-ordinator
- Bevil Edwards, Senior Glebe, Property & Trusts Officer
- Rebecca West, Administrative Assistant

The Team reports directly to the Chief Executive who is the senior officer of the Diocese and as such attends both the Archbishop's Council and is a member of the Archbishop of York's Staff.

The team is based at the Diocesan Office in York and has responsibility for the maintenance and administration of the various Diocesan Property Estates on behalf of the Archbishop's Council and advising PCCs in relation to the properties for which the DBF acts as Custodian Trustees.

The Property Portfolio Manager, Charles Anelay, has oversight of the property team and is the budget holder. His primary role is to provide direction to the management of the estate's assets and ensure that property complies with Diocesan policy and legislative requirements.

The Diocesan Surveyor and the Clergy Housing Co-ordinator (Lisa Whitley) provide the primary contacts for matters of maintenance and repair of the housing portfolio.

Bevil Edwards (Senior Glebe, Property and Trusts Officer) have responsibility for the legal aspects of the housing portfolio (including acquisitions and disposals).

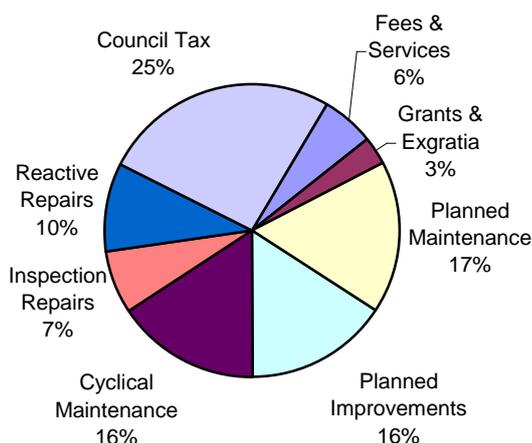
Rebecca West (Administrative Assistant) supports the Clergy Housing Co-ordinator in tasks relating to the maintenance of our operational properties.

Contact details are given at the end of this document.

FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

Budget

The DBF is committed to providing realistic budgets for the maintenance and improvement of the property portfolio. The source of this income is through the freewill offering. The budget holder is the Diocesan Surveyor and Estates Manager. Whilst elements of the budget are not directly related to maintenance and repairs the majority of it is.



Works are carried out within four headings:

Planned Maintenance: Works of maintenance and repair that are programmed and do not involve 'improvement value' for occupants. Generally, therefore these are non-cosmetic works. (i.e. roofs, gutters, electrical re-wires etc.)

Planned Improvements: Works of maintenance and repair that are programmed and include 'improvement value' for occupants. (i.e. kitchens, bathrooms, internal decorations, new central heating systems, double glazing, insulation etc.)

Cyclical Maintenance: Planned Maintenance works running on short defined cycles to meet requirements of legislation or definable maintenance cycles. (External Decorations – 5 yearly; Electrical Periodic Tests – 10 yearly; Electrical Visual Inspections & Gas safety checks – at changes of occupancy; and, Landlord's Certificates & servicing of boilers & heating appliances – annually.) Generally these cycles are driven by legislation.

Reactive Repairs

Inspection Repairs: Works of reactive repairs identified at the time of the Quinquennial Inspection or other visits carried out by the surveyors. (Generally minor repair need.)

Other Reactive Repairs: Unforeseen reactive repairs to breakdown identified by occupants.

Broadly the aim is to undertake work in a structured way within planned maintenance. The nature of reactive work should generally be minor and may involve an element of a 'holding repair' until major maintenance can be programmed.

Contractors

When contractors are working under the supervision of the Diocesan Surveyor, or some other appointed architect, surveyor, engineer or other individual; clergy, members of their families, and PCC officers, should normally address concerns about the work being undertaken, preferably in writing, via the Property Team to the Committee. There may be exceptional circumstances where direct contact is necessary between the occupant of the property and the contractor to avoid a crisis situation.

Council Tax

Normally Council Tax in respect of the occupation of the Parsonage House is paid from the Diocesan Office. Clergy and PCCs should refer correspondence regarding Council Tax to the Diocesan Office. Council Tax is not paid when a house is temporarily unoccupied pending reoccupation by a Minister of Religion. Moving in and moving out dates must be communicated to the Clergy Housing Co-ordinator so that the appropriate reimbursements are claimed.

When houses are let, tenants become responsible for Council Tax.

The Diocese is also able to claim a Council tax rebate for **Single Occupancy**. Where occupants live alone, or circumstances change this must be communicated to the Clergy Housing Co-ordinator otherwise the Diocese will be in breach of the law. Where appropriate such matters are dealt with in absolute confidentiality.

See also 'Lettings and Lodgers' (p.14)

Damage

The Property Committee will adopt a pro-active approach in recovering the cost of damage caused during an occupation of a Parsonage. The provisions of section 13(4) of the Benefice Buildings Measure 1972 (the exact wording of which can be obtained from the Diocesan Secretary) will be activated with regard to the occupier paying for repairs resulting from a lack of reasonable care of the property.

See also 'Pets' (p.17)

Grants

Internal Decoration: A grant of up to £200 is offered to occupants towards the cost of materials for decorating in the first year of occupancy.

The Diocese also offers grants of up to £100 per annum to assist with the cost of decorating materials. Both grants should be claimed from the Diocesan Office with the submission of receipts.

PCC owned property used to house stipendiary ministers (AMHs): Grants are available from the DBF for maintenance and improvement works to this class of housing on application to the Diocesan Surveyor. The committee agrees applications providing the following criteria have been met: The work specification has been agreed with the Diocesan Surveyor or his deputy; work has not been commenced prior to the application being approved; Freewill Offering has been paid in full; and, the PCC does not have other assets (trusts etc) that could be disposed of to finance the work. The grant payment is made retrospectively once work is completed and following a satisfactory inspection by the Diocesan Surveyor.

Insurance

The Committee insures the Parsonages buildings together with their fixtures and fittings for standard risk including third party claims. Any damage or any claim for compensation should be reported immediately to the Clergy Housing Co-ordinator who will advise, and who will, if appropriate, notify the insurers.

Household contents including TV aerials are not covered. It is important that clergy make their own arrangements for the insurance of their personal possessions.

Repairs: External

External repairs, agreed by the Committee to be necessary, are the responsibility of the Committee. The Committee, in consultation with the clergy concerned, reserves the right of discretion to remove unnecessary items and demolish superfluous buildings where this is agreed to be more appropriate.

Repairs: Internal

The Committee expects clergy to do very basic jobs such as replacing a missing screw. Care should be taken not to undertake any work which would put people at risk, nor to embark on repairs which are beyond the capabilities of those concerned. All matters involving the Committee in expenditure must be approved through the Property Team before work is put in hand.

It is a legal requirement that work to the electrical installation should only be carried out by a 'Competent' Contractor¹. Work to the gas installation must

¹ "Competent Contractor" includes any Full Scope Part P Competent Contractor carrying certification from NICEIC, ECA, ELECSA and NAPIT.

not be carried out except by Gas Safety Register approved contractors. (Formerly CORGI.)

Water Rates

When a Parsonage house is occupied in the normal way, then the PCC will be responsible for water rates. If a house is occupied by a full time sector minister, then the water rates can be paid by the Property Team. Tenants are responsible for water rates in respect of the houses which they rent.

Water rates are not paid when a house is temporarily unoccupied. As the rates are normally paid six months in advance, those who have paid their water rates can claim a refund.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Quinquennial Inspection

These are carried out every five years. The Surveyor & Maintenance Manager normally undertakes the survey. The inspection will review the condition of the house and its grounds. The surveys are not intrusive and occupants are not asked to undertake special preparation prior to the survey. However, the surveyor will need to see right round the property and access should be afforded accordingly.

The survey will review the fixtures and fittings list and the Tree List.

See also 'Trees' (p.28)

Following the survey a short report will be issued including a list of minor and holding repairs that will be undertaken as a result of the inspection. Proposals for planned maintenance and improvement works will be carried forward to the maintenance programme.

PCC owned Assistant Ministers' Houses: QIs will be undertaken of these properties where they are in use to house stipendiary clergy or lay officers of the DBF. Where recommendations are made for repairs or improvements to property the Committee will consider grant aiding these works in accordance with the policy referred to previously.

See also 'Grants' (p.12)

Alterations

Incumbents should be aware that under the Repair of Benefice Buildings Measure 1972 no additions or alterations may be made to a Parsonage house without the prior written consent of the Property Committee.

See also 'Self-financed Improvements' (p.18)

Others who occupy houses owned by the Diocese should note that their occupation gives them no right to alter or add to the property.

Green Guide

The Church Commissioners publish a book on parsonage standards and good practice known commonly as 'the Green Guide'. The guide is applicable to new build parsonage housing. The Property Committee has drawn up its own addendum, which has some slight adaptations.

The Committee also uses the document as a broad guide to assess the suitability of existing housing or new acquisitions but, for a variety of reasons, it is unrealistic to expect that all parsonages will comply exactly with all the guidelines within the latest edition.

Lettings and Lodgers

The law governing the letting or leasing of a Parsonage house or its grounds is complex and numerous approvals are required. If clergy or PCCs believe there are special circumstances that will make a tenancy or lease appropriate they should, in the first instance, contact the Property Team for advice on procedures.

There are legal considerations to be taken into account when clergy take in lodgers. The Property Committee must be consulted and agreement reached before any such arrangement is made. In the event of an interregnum all lodgers must vacate with or before the incumbent.

See also 'Council Tax' (p.12)

See also 'Lodgers' (p.17)

Listed Buildings

Some houses are listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as being of architectural interest and are required by law to be kept in good order. Alterations or major repairs require planning permission and Listed Buildings consent.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE: When a building is listed, it is **listed in its entirety**, which means that both the exterior and the interior are protected. In addition, any object or structure fixed to the building, and any object or structure within the curtilage of the building, which although not fixed to the building, forms part of the land and has done so since before 1 July 1948, are treated as part of the listed building.

It is a criminal offence to carry out work which needs listed building consent without obtaining that consent beforehand.

Occupants of Listed Building will be informed of this fact at appointment.

FROM MOVING IN TO MOVING OUT

Acceptance of an Appointment

During a vacancy a visit will be made by the Diocesan Surveyor, who may be accompanied by the Archdeacon and others, to inspect the house and make recommendations about work that is required under the headings of maintenance, improvements, repairs and vacancy decorations.

The Committee will consider the recommendations and authorise a schedule of work. It will finance all the repairs and improvement and decorating thought to be necessary.

Before anyone is offered a post in the Diocese, where the occupation of a house is part of the appointment package, the individual will be shown the house and made aware of any work that the Property Committee are planning to carry out during the vacancy.

It will be made clear at interview that the appointment is offered on the basis of acceptance of the house for residence and that no extra work will be done other than that which has been already planned, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Prior to Moving In

Once an appointment has been offered the Diocesan Officers are normally informed of a pending appointment and some informal discussions may then take place regarding the property.

Certain financial assistance is offered and this is dealt with by the Finance Officers of the Archbishop's Council who are contactable at the Diocesan Office. This assistance includes arrangements for removal quotes, moving grants, where applicable first incumbency grants and arrangements for the payment of stipends or salaries.

Formal discussions are only possible once a clear DBS check has been received and the appointment has been formally announced by Bishopthorpe Palace.

All occupants of diocesan and parsonage property are required to sign documents agreeing to certain terms and conditions.

- Freeholders are required to countersign a letter that sets out the basic principles of occupancy and confirms that they have been issued with and read a copy of these guidelines.
- Non-freeholders, Assistant Ministers and other occupants sign a License Agreement authorising them to occupy the property to enable them to carry out their duties.
- Tenants of property occupy them under the terms of Assured Shorthold Tenancy agreements under part 1 of the Housing Act 1998.

Keys

These are kept locally and arrangements for their hand over should be agreed with the Diocesan Officers. Priests-in-charge, assistant clergy and lay occupants of properties will not be handed the keys until a **license agreement** or **tenancy agreement** has been signed and returned to the Clergy Housing Co-ordinator.

At the discretion of the Officers the committee may fund the replacement of locks if after review the whereabouts of all key sets cannot be reasonably ascertained.

Adaptations for the Disabled

It is the policy of the committee to undertake reasonable adaptation of property to accommodate the needs of clergy and their resident dependants. Grants from Social Services and other organisations will be utilised to enable these works to be expedited. It may not be possible to undertake all works prior to occupancy as the criteria for the award of these grants needs to be means tested and this test includes occupancy in the property.

It is not the policy of the committee to finance adaptations for occasional visitors to the house (whether family members or otherwise). However the committee will support self financed adjustments where these are both reversible and carried out to the specification of the Diocesan Surveyor.

See also 'Self-Financed Improvements' (p.18)

Parsonages and all other housing are private dwellings and, as such do not come under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005. It is not therefore appropriate or possible for the committee to make adaptations to properties for visitors. It is recommended that for the purposes of meeting the requirements of the Act that clergy make 'Alternative provisions' such as meeting individuals in their own homes or arranging meetings in other premises.

Fixtures List

The fixtures list is reviewed at vacancy and checked during the Quinquennial Inspection. It is designed to indicate the fittings in the property. Occupants are asked to consult with the Diocesan Surveyor prior to removing, altering or adapting items on the fixtures list.

Lodgers

Lodgers (i.e. a "sub-let") should not be allowed in a property. There may be, from time to time, the need for members of your extended family to be with you in your home for longer periods. (More than 6 weeks – for reasons of illness as an example.) In these situations you should notify the Archdeacon and you must notify the Clergy Housing Co-ordinator so that appropriate arrangements can be made for a license to be put in place.

Under no circumstances should people beyond your immediate family and dependants be allowed to occupy the premises without notifying the appropriate authority and you must never charge rent.

See also 'Lettings and Lodgers' (p.14)

Pets

If clergy families keep domestic pets they will be held liable for any damage that arises as a consequence and will be asked to pay for professional cleaning if deemed necessary. Under no circumstances should houses be modified, for example, by the fitting of cat flaps etc. unless prior written approval has been obtained from the Property Team Officers.

See also 'Damage' (p. 12)

Meter Readings

Upon occupation and vacation of houses occupants should read all meters. This is important for your own protection.

Self-Financed Improvements

Diocesan policies are broadly framed so that individuals are neither favoured nor disadvantaged by their own or local circumstances. There are occasions however where occupants wish to make improvements to properties that are outside the normal provision of the Committee. The Committee always considers requests for such improvements and applications should be made in writing to the Diocesan Surveyor who may then wish to visit the house with the Archdeacon.

In reaching its decision the committee will consider the effect of the improvement on the property in terms of both the local context and of the diocesan property portfolio. A key consideration will be the ongoing cost of maintenance once the occupant has moved on. The committee may stipulate that the improvement must be removed at the end of the occupancy if it is thought to be un-sustainable.

The improvements will only be allowed if they are carried out to a specification agreed with the diocesan surveyor and subject to inspection of the works on completion.

PCC-Financed Improvements

From time to time PCCs wish to support the ministry of their clergy (and indeed the work of the Committee) by funding improvements to the property. Such improvements must be approved by the Committee and will be assessed on the criteria outlined above and in accordance with the criteria set out under Grants to PCCs. In addition the improvements will only be sanctioned on the basis of full payment of parish share.

See also 'Self-Financed Improvements' and 'Grants' (pp. 18 & 12)

Vacating

When vacating a Parsonage the following advice must be followed.

Keys must be left with the Churchwardens

Meters must be read

All water (including the heating and hot and cold water systems) must be drained from the house unless otherwise agreed. A system is in place for this and arrangements are made through the Diocesan Office by the churchwardens immediately the house is vacated.

The house must be made secure

Fittings and fixtures must remain

The house must be cleared of all furniture and personal possessions. Carpets and curtains may be left for the next occupants by private arrangement.

The house must be left clean, tidy and in good repair.

There must be twice weekly internal and external inspections of the house made by a Parish representative (this is a prerequisite of the insurance policy).

See also 'Damage' (p. 12)

Spouses in Parsonage Houses Following Death In Service

The death of one's spouse is, in all situations, a great tragedy and time of difficulty for the bereaved partner and family. The Diocesan Officers and the Archdeacons in particular work carefully to balance the needs of the bereaved family with the needs of the parish and the house as a focus for future ministry.

Following the death of a serving clergy person, the spouse should be reassured that he/she will be able to remain in the house for a period of not less than six months. During that period, the relevant Archdeacon will work closely with the family to discuss and consider their future housing needs.

Any other specific requirements or expectations the family may have beyond this should be discussed fully and openly with the Archdeacon.

USE OF THE HOUSE

Policy Statement on Parsonage and other Clergy Studies

Background

The revision of this policy has become necessary because, in recent years, Parish Offices have evolved as a feature of parish administration and the tendency for these to be integral with the Parsonage Study particularly in larger benefices with no other facility is beyond the scope of the Parsonages Green Guide and the remit of the Committee.

Definitions

Parsonage Study: Every Parsonage must include a separate room designated as the study. This must meet the parson's need for a place of work and quieter activities, both pastoral and administrative, and to hold in privacy interviews and small meetings without disturbance. Sufficient space in the study for these activities will prevent their encroaching on family life elsewhere in the parsonage.

Crucially, the use of this space (as with the rest of the house) is under the control of any given incumbent and not the churchwardens, PCC or other members of the church. The study is not intended to accommodate parochial plant. Nor is it designed to be the administrative centre of parish affairs. However, any particular incumbent may engage, at their discretion, the services of a secretary or assistant to work from the parsonage study.

Parish Office: This facility, in the few instances where it exists, should not be integral with the parsonage house. It may therefore be the place of 'work' for an incumbent and Parish Administrator and will be a focus for administrative functions beyond the scope of the incumbent's private and personal matters. The size and nature of the Parish Office will vary greatly depending on the size and shape of ministry in the benefice. The provision of a Parish Office facility is a local matter and under the control of the incumbent, churchwardens, and other officers of the benefice or parish.

Study Policy

The Committee will identify and designate in each Parsonage House a room to serve as the Study. Each such room will be equipped with bookshelves, telephone point and adequate power points to enable the safe operation of a personal computer, fax machine and task lighting etc. Where practicable this room will be adjacent to the front door, a ground floor WC and, if layout allows, a lobby will be divided from the rest of the accommodation by some form of glazed partition.

Having met the criteria of providing a designated study space in each parsonage house the Committee does not feel that it is appropriate to define exactly how that space is used by clergy, except within the scope of the

guidelines offered in the above definitions. **The decision on how the study is used rests solely with the incumbent at the time.**

However, the committee encourages the Archdeacons and Diocesan Officers to meet with PCCs and Churchwardens at the commencement of a vacancy in order to reinstate the 'normal' use of the Parsonage Study and to reiterate the incompatibility of any existing uses of the study that may be construed as being more appropriate to a Parish Office. This is to avoid embarrassment for the local church and any successor in office as current practice may be incompatible with the new incumbent's expectations or requirements of how they choose to use the parsonage as a focus and administrative base for their ministry.

Guidance Note

The committee encourages all diocesan clergy to be careful in the use of terms. The preferred designation is 'Study' and the use of the word 'office' is discouraged as it confuses and raises local expectation as to the use of the study within the parsonage by others.

The 'Green Guide' applies to 'new build' parsonage houses. Certain compromises in layout may have to be accepted in houses that already exist on the estate or where a property is purchased to provide a new parsonage house. The Committee aims to move houses as close to the 'Green Guide' as practical within the physical constraints of any building. Clergy are encouraged to adopt sensible modes of operation within the context of their own local situation.

The Committee asks that practices are not set up locally that would be difficult to sustain during a vacancy or may be incompatible with the lifestyle or expectations of any future incumbency. It is the "right" of such use that is being cautioned rather than what is "acceptable use". Critically any uses of the 'private' accommodation (i.e. beyond the study and ground floor WCs) by others should be clearly defined as being at your personal discretion.

PCCs and church officers need to be encouraged not to see any accruing right for the study to become a centre for parish administration. The nature of the study and the rest of the house are essentially private. To give indication that it is otherwise is to open the door to complication in terms of insurances, public liability, employment law and so forth.

During a vacancy, it is not appropriate to have a parish secretary, administrator or parochial plant located in the parsonage. This is to enable preparatory works to be undertaken for the new incumbent or to enable the house to be let if practicable. The test applied by the committee and its officers to a locally designated 'parish office' on a Parsonage site is whether it is possible or appropriate to use the house independently from the 'designated' space by a party who is not the incumbent of the parish i.e. a tenant. In all instances

where this test fails the use must desist during any interregnum (unless agreement is made between the Archdeacon, Diocesan Surveyor and Churchwardens) and may only be reinstated at the discretion of the new incumbent.

Rights of access during a vacancy are reserved to a local key holder, the diocesan officers and any contractors they may engage. All keys held by others must be returned to the churchwardens and one set lodged, along with instructions for access, with the diocesan office for use by the Diocesan Surveyors and contractors. The diocesan key will be returned to the new incumbent once they have moved into the parsonage house.

PCCs and churchwardens should note that to ask prospective candidates how they intend to use the house if appointed during the interview process might be considered inappropriate.

Guidance on Study Layout

Clergy are asked to consider very carefully the layout of their study. As a general rule of thumb when meeting with other people in the study, clergy are advised that they should position themselves between the interviewees and the door. This is to enable you to escape from any difficult or threatening situation and to raise the alarm. Furniture layout may play a part in enabling you to protect your own person in the event of such a situation arising.

Similarly, in the current climate of allegations of improper behaviour by clergy and other individuals towards parishioners, do bear in mind that the placing and height of furniture such as chairs can impact on the impression gained by others of any situation. A 'professional and welcoming' appearance is probably more appropriate than 'homely and intimate'. Common sense should prevail but do give the matter serious consideration.

Reception Rooms

The Green Guide clearly states that: "one of the family rooms (generally the living room) should be sufficiently large to allow clergy to offer hospitality to their parishioners. However this room should not be regarded as a substitute for a proper parish meeting place elsewhere."

Guidance Note

In reviewing the use and designation of the Parsonage Study, the committee feels it appropriate to reiterate the above guidance and its clear emphasis on 'hospitality' rather than the normally assumed 'use for meetings'. Meeting facilities and arrangements for meetings are a local matter and are beyond the

scope and remit of the Committee and the proper use of the parsonage house. As with the Study, any existing arrangements involving the 'use' of the reception rooms should lapse with a vacancy. They may only be reinstated at the discretion of the new occupants of the parsonage.

Insurance

Local arrangements must be made for the insurance of any contents in the parsonage. This is normally the responsibility of the occupant but where any 'grey area' arrangements exist and parochial plant has crept into the parsonage, appropriate actions for insurance should be taken and clearly defined.

The Changing Shape of Ministry

The Committee recognises that the nature of ministry today is very different from past decades. It is the committee's remit to protect, where it may, the private nature of the Parsonage House. It also reviews, from time to time, the nature of that provision where opportunities for new build or alteration exist or become practicable.

The Committee and its Officers will always consider the existing parsonage houses within the context of pastoral or other structural reorganisation with a view to ensuring that appropriate provision is made in new benefices. The nature and shape of the 'built' provision in a benefice is crucial and the committee recognises the parsonage and its facilities as an important component in that provision.

GENERAL GUIDANCE (PROPERTY)

This guidance is offered so that you are able to assist in the maintenance of the property you occupy and to ensure that all that can be done locally is being carried out so as to avoid costly repairs arising from untimely notification of problems to the Diocesan Property Team.

Air Bricks and Damp Courses

Most houses have these. It is essential to see that earth and vegetation is prevented from blocking air bricks and that no earth is above the damp course. Walls should be kept clear of earth to a depth of about 9 inches (225 mm) below ground floor level or 6 inches (150 mm) below the damp course. In particular care should be taken if occupants are altering garden and/or paving levels.

Asbestos

The Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002 legislation is vague on whether it applies to Parsonage buildings. However the Diocese clearly has a duty of care, in its role as a property manager, to any contractors engaged to undertake work on vicarage premises. Best practice suggests that the spirit of the legislation should be followed. The Diocese already has some information on the location of asbestos-based materials in parsonages and this will be added to over the next quinquennial period. The result of the exercise will be that possible ACMs will be identified. It should be assumed that unless there is good reason to presume otherwise that all other materials should be assumed to contain asbestos.

In parishes where ministers and other church workers operate from PCC owned property the Diocese draws attention to the duty of care that rests with the building owner.

See also Appendix 1 – ‘Asbestos’ (p. 36)

Chimneys and Flues

The regular sweeping of chimneys used for open fires, or for any solid fuel burning stove, is essential. Blocked chimneys or flues can be fatal. Chimney fires can cause great damage to the house and unnecessary inconvenience to the family. Keeping chimneys clear is the occupant’s responsibility.

Where appropriate the sweeping of flues to open fires will be carried out by the Parish during a vacancy and before a new incumbent moves in.

Decorations – External

The Committee will arrange for the outside of the house, including its outbuildings, to be painted, stained or treated with preservative as appropriate as part of the quinquennial works at five yearly intervals.

Decorations – Internal

AT VACANCY: In addition to any consequential decoration required because of repairs and or alterations, the following areas will be decorated at Diocesan expense: hall, stairs and landing, the study, the main living room OR the kitchen (These areas are identified as being those that ensure that occupants are able to offer hospitality to parishioners in appropriately decorated interiors.)

HALL, STAIRS AND LANDING: Once a house has been occupied for ten years by an individual the Committee may, at its discretion, pay for the costs of the redecoration in full by professional decorators. Requests for these decoration programmes to be carried out should be submitted to the Diocesan Office and an inspection visit arranged for the Diocesan Surveyor and the Archdeacon.

If redecoration is necessary as a consequence of building works authorised and carried out by the Committee, then reasonable costs involved will be met.

If redecoration is necessary as the result of an insurable event such as fire, flood or structural improvement, then the Diocesan Office will make the necessary arrangements.

Many PCCs help with internal decorating. If volunteers carry out the work, care should be taken to ensure that they work safely and within their competence.

Fixtures and Fittings

The Diocese provides and maintains various fixtures and fittings in its properties. These are itemised on a list that is reviewed at vacancies and at the quinquennial inspection.

These items should not be removed, altered or adapted without first consulting with the Diocesan Property Team.

The fixtures and fittings are considered to include the electrical services (power points, switches etc), heating systems, kitchen, bathroom fittings and miscellaneous items listed for each property.

When necessary and appropriate the committee will consider the improvement of all fixtures and fittings (including kitchens and bathrooms) to bring them up to modern standards. Normally consideration is only given to this as vacancies occur or at the time of the quinquennial survey.

Gutters etc.

All gutters, down pipes, gullies and drains should be cleaned once a year during the autumn once leaves have fallen from the trees. A further clean in areas surrounded by trees may be beneficial earlier in the year. Clergy, or during a vacancy, the PCC, should make any appropriate arrangements with a local contractor and submit a claim for the expenditure to the Property Team at the Diocesan Office. Great care should be taken to ensure qualified contractors

carry out the work safely. People should not be asked to use ladders unless they have been properly trained and qualified for the purpose. The Property Team arranges gutter clearance at properties at the time of the renewal of external paintwork i.e. once every five years.

Under no circumstances should clergy or members of their family undertake gutter clearances themselves, particularly above single storey height, in the light of the risks to health and safety. If you choose to undertake gutter clearances yourselves it is at your own risk and liability for damages rests with you.

Insulation

All lofts should be insulated. Most lofts already have fibreglass quilt insulation to a minimum depth of 4 inches (100 mm). If a loft is lacking this insulation then the Property Team should be advised. The laying and subsequent disturbance of insulating material should only be carried out by personnel with the proper protective clothing including a mask.

Loft Ladders

It is not the policy of the Committee to install a Loft Ladder unless it is considered necessary to enhance storage provision which falls short of what might reasonably be expected to be available.

Replacement Windows

Most houses have single glazing. The Committee will consider replacing existing singled glazed windows with double glazed sealed units during a vacancy, at the time of the quinquennial inspection or where exceptional circumstances prevail. Priority will be given to replacement of windows where insulation is poor, the fabric has deteriorated or there is a security dimension.

Secondary glazing fitted inside an original window is seldom satisfactory. The Committee may not contribute towards the cost of secondary glazing and may not grant approval for such work unless it is the only option available.

Security

The Committee places a high priority on ensuring that houses have good physical security including high quality locks to British Standard on stout doors and windows that can be locked shut.

It is not appropriate or possible to seek to make Parsonage houses into fortresses, for inappropriate measures can single them out as targets and are therefore counter productive.

Clergy concerned about the security of their house are advised to consult with the Property Team who will be able to offer guidance on good practice.

See also 'Alarm Systems' (p. 29)

See also 'Lighting' (p.27)

GENERAL GUIDANCE (GROUNDS)

Driveways

Clergy families should keep all paved areas in good condition with weeds removed and drains kept clear of earth and other obstructions. Any deterioration of the surface should be reported to the Property Team.

Fences

When work is required to boundary fences, walls etc, the Property Team must first be consulted. Responsibility may be with the owner on either side, or it may be shared with them. If responsibility is with the property or partly with the property, then the Committee will meet the cost or its share of the cost.

Gardens

There is no Committee money for the maintenance of gardens except when a new house is provided and then there is a once and for all provision.

It is expected that gardens will be kept in good order by the clergy or, during vacancy, by the Parochial Church Councils.

There are certain tax concessions available to clergy for expenditure on garden maintenance. The appropriate form is sent to clergy each year in respect of this and is combined with the form for tax allowance on heating, lighting and cleaning of the Parsonage House.

Hedges

Hedges are considered as part of the garden and as such are the responsibility of the occupant, or, in a vacancy, the PCC. Expenditure on maintenance will not be reimbursed. In exceptional circumstances the Committee may consider a grant towards costs.

Occupants of Parsonages should not plant *Cupressus leylandii* as hedge screening because of its rapid growth. Hedges should be kept at a height that is easy to maintain. (Max 6ft or 1.8m)

Japanese Knotweed

There are increasing instances in parsonage properties where we have to deal with infestations of this difficult weed. First, it is important to note that it is illegal to plant or propagate this plant. Secondly, it is extremely invasive and causes serious damage to buildings and other structures.

The weed is difficult and expensive to deal with but it is vital that it is removed once it is seen on site. This is a task for a specialist contractor and should not be attempted by occupants. Please contact the Diocesan Office if you see the plant in your garden.

Typically the weed looks like a cluster of tall straight shoots and resembles bamboo. It grows with great speed.

Lighting

The outside of the house should be well lit for convenience and safety and to help with security. Each house is different and what is required will depend on local circumstances, the position of the house, the closeness of streetlights etc. Where additional security is required, the Committee will consider meeting the cost of automatically operated external lights controlled with passive infrared sensors. Consideration will normally be given to the installation of these as vacancies occur or at the time of the quinquennial survey.

Trees

Advice should always be sought from the Property Team before any tree is planted or replaced. Trees grown in proximity to buildings can cause severe and very expensive structural damage.

Written permission must be obtained from the Property Team before a tree is felled. Normally the work will be organised through the Diocesan Office, however, you may be required by the Diocese to remove sapling trees at a quinquennial inspection. These will normally be immature self-sown forest trees.

There are regulations in force concerning trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders and trees in Conservation areas. The Local Authority strictly enforces these regulations. Their written consent is required before any tree work is carried out even if the tree is diseased or dead. Unauthorised lopping or felling, or the causing of damage to a tree, will result in a fine and can cause much ill feeling. Normally when work to trees is required the Property Team will appoint a specialist contractor who will be required to conduct consultations with the Local Planning Authority before proceeding.

Notwithstanding the above, the Committee will give consent to work on trees listed on the 'Tree List' (which will be forest type trees as opposed to fruit trees) produced at the time of the quinquennial survey of the Parsonage and its grounds. The Committee will have discretion to make grants towards the cost of work to trees not on the Tree List **but the responsibility lies with the occupant or PCC.**

Any expenditure incurred may be offset by the sale of the timber.

MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL SERVICES

Alarm Systems

Intruder Alarm Systems

Nearly all Parsonage houses have intruder alarm systems. The installation of an alarm system, where there is none, will be considered by the Committee as vacancies occur or at the time of the quinquennial survey. In exceptional circumstances, where the need is clearly demonstrated, the Committee will consider installing an Intruder Alarm System.

The maintenance costs of the system will be paid by whichever body pays the occupant's expenses. An Intruder Alarm System should comply with British Standard 4737 and quotations will only be sought from reputable specialist contractors that are firms either recommended by the Police or on the official list of NSI registered firms (Formerly NACOSS).

Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms should be fitted to all houses. Maintenance of these, and the replacement of the batteries, is the responsibility of the occupant.

Boilers

The Committee has arrangements in place for the annual servicing of gas fired and oil-fired boilers. If servicing is not taking place on an annual basis, or is not satisfactory, the office should be advised.

Built-in appliances

In certain situations built in appliances may be found in kitchens (normally where houses have been bought into the estate). The Committee is committed to maintaining these appliances. However, a pragmatic approach will be taken towards removing these anomalies (normally at vacancy or kitchen refurbishment) and arrangements will be made where current occupancies exist to enable new appliances to be purchased. It is not the intention of the Committee to remove good operational equipment unnecessarily.

Electrical Installations

The diocese is required by law to undertake a periodic inspection (every 10 years) of the electrical installations. This inspection may highlight necessary repairs or upgrades to the system and these works are given a very high priority as not to undertake such repairs may affect occupant safety.

Additionally diocesan contractors undertake visual inspections of the installation at each change of occupancy.

Occupants are reminded that recent changes in legislation require registered contractors undertake all electrical works. Occupants must not adapt or alter the electrical systems installed in the property. (See footnote on page 13.)

Gas Installation

The Committee has in place arrangements for the annual testing of the gas installation including all appliances in the house. The testing will usually coincide with the servicing of any gas-fired boiler. If gas fires are found to be inadequate, then the Committee may meet the cost of replacing them up to a figure that is currently set at £500 excluding fitting.

The Committee, in consultation with the clergy family concerned, reserves the option of removing unsafe gas fires when it considers this to be more appropriate.

Gas fired cookers will be tested as part of the annual gas test.

PCC owned houses must also be checked and the details of the relevant certificate forwarded to the Diocesan Office.

Work to the gas installation and to gas appliances may only be carried out by Gas Safety Registered contractors. This is a legal requirement necessary on grounds of safety.

If there is a suspicion of a gas leak the following procedure should be followed.

Extinguish all naked flames. Do not switch on or off any electric lights or appliances because the spark in the switch may cause an explosion.

If possible turn off the gas supply at the mains.

Ensure good ventilation by opening doors and windows wide.

Seek help. Call TRANSCO – Tel: 0800 111999

The Gas Board should be immediately contacted. If this is not possible help should be sought from the contractor engaged to service the boiler and test the gas installation. If this is not possible then assistance may be sought from any CORGI registered contractor.

See also 'Cookers' (p. 29)

Heating

It is the policy of the Committee to provide all houses in its care with full central heating. Where gas is available this will normally be the fuel provided. Oil will be the secondary resort. In areas where gas becomes available the system may be adapted but this will be at the discretion of the Diocesan Surveyor within the context of the age and condition of the existing system.

Secondary Heating

It is the intention of the committee to provide secondary heating in the study and the principal living room. This heat source is designed to enable other areas of the house to be kept cooler through the day or to provide a boost in

cold weather or when hospitality is being offered. The secondary heating source should therefore be instantaneous in nature (i.e. a gas or electric fire).

The committee considers that secondary heating should be provided and replaced in line with the following prioritisation:

Gas Appliance – Electric Appliance – Solid Fuel Fires

The DBF will consider installing solid fuel fires (at its expense) where the primary heating system is oil fired.

Solid Fuel Fires (either open grates or stoves)

The committee recognises that solid fuel fires already exist on the estate and it is not intended that these should be removed. Where occupants request the installation of a gas or electric fire to replace an open fire this work will be undertaken as a diocesan expense. This expenditure is in the form of a grant which is capped. Details of the current grant are available from the Clergy Housing Co-ordinator.

The committee will consider the installation of the above appliances at the occupier's expense so long as the installation is undertaken in accordance with appropriate specifications approved by the Diocesan Surveyor. The committee accepts the ongoing maintenance and servicing of these appliances once they are installed.

Septic Tanks

The Committee will meet the reasonable costs of emptying septic tanks but arrangements for emptying should be made locally.

Showers

Showers are provided by the Committee as an improvement. The normal provision is an instantaneous electric shower over the bath, thermostatically controlled for safety, but some houses, for various reasons, have other arrangements.

Curtains and shower doors must be properly positioned to avoid water getting on to the floors. All seals should be regularly checked and any defects reported to the office early before significant water damage can occur.

WHAT THE DIOCESE DOES NOT PROVIDE

Carpets and Curtains

These items are not provided by the Diocese and are a private matter for occupants. At the end of your occupancy you may leave these items behind for the use of your successor in office. It should not be assumed by incoming occupants that carpets or curtains will be left for their use as a matter of course.

Carpets in particular are vulnerable to damage, particularly if the property has been let during a vacancy. Whilst the Diocese endeavours to vet its tenants through their agents it cannot be guaranteed that carpets will be left in a usable state once the property is returned to clergy use. Any serviceable carpets present within a house at the start of a new incumbency should be regarded as a bonus whether the previous occupant was a tenant of the Diocese or a predecessor in office. If outgoing clergy wish to negotiate a payment from their successors in office for carpets or curtains they should indicate their intention to do so to the Property Team at Diocesan Office.

The moving grant offered by the Diocese is intended to cover, in part, the costs of carpets and curtains.

The Diocese provides and takes maintenance responsibility for vinyl flooring surfaces in kitchens, WCs and bathrooms.

Cookers

The Committee is no longer able to provide allowances for cookers. At vacancies existing cookers will generally be removed from the property and the provision of the cooker will be the responsibility of the new occupant. The occupant will be responsible for ensuring that the appropriate engineer is engaged (Gas Safety Registered for gas or "Part P Certified" for electric) to fit the cooker and supply the Diocesan Office with a copy of the certificate. (See footnote on page 13.)

Transitional Arrangements (as of August 2008): The Committee has decided that it will consider the ongoing maintenance and replacement of existing cookers during current occupancies. At the point where a cooker is being considered for replacement occupants may, of course, wish to consider replacing the cooker themselves so that they have the possibility of taking that appliance with them when they next move. This is a transitional arrangement to enable cooker provision to be phased out. Alternative arrangements will continue for the time being with regard to built in appliances.

The normal provision for a space to put the cooker will be a 600 mm gap.

See also 'Built in appliances' (p. 26)

Telephones

The initial installation of telephone sockets for the 'public number' is the responsibility of the Committee. Where occupants wish to install a second line for personal private use they may do so but all arrangements for this are personal and local.

The repair, maintenance, and replacement of the telephone are the responsibility of the clergy or of the PCC as locally agreed.

The Committee is not responsible for installing, maintaining or providing extra points for answering machines, computers or other office equipment.

Cable Telephone. The installation of fibre-optic telephone cables is not permitted except on written application. Installation is subject to the written approval of the Committee and to an undertaking that the occupant and/or PCC formally accept the responsibility for any and all consequential costs arising.

Television

The Committee does not accept responsibility for the provision or repair of TV aerials and related equipment.

Cable TV. The installation of fibre-optic television cables is not permitted except on written application. It is subject to the written approval of the Committee and to an undertaking that the householder and/or PCC formally accept the responsibility for any and all consequential costs arising.

Satellite TV. In more remote locations cable TV will not be available and TV reception may possibly be poor. The installation of satellite dishes is not permitted except on written application and is subject to the written consent of the Committee. Consent will usually be given subject to an undertaking that the occupant and/or PCC formally accept the responsibility for any and all consequential costs arising from provision or removal.

The erection of a satellite dish may require the consent of the Local Authority, and the householder should make his or her own enquiries about this.

ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Property Portfolio Manager

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The Diocesan Surveyor

Clergy Housing Co-ordinator

Miss Lisa Whitley

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Mr Bevil Edwards

📧: bevil.edwards@yorkdiocese.org

Administrative Assistant

Ms Rebecca West

📧: rebecca.west@yorkdiocese.org

BOILER SERVICING

Robinsons Heating Limited The Courtyard, Oakwood Business Centre, Fountains Road, Bishop Thornton, Harrogate HG3 3BF

☎: 01423-226578 (office hours)

☎: 01423-593812 (after hours, callout/breakdowns) **please quote "DOY" when asked for a code**

EMERGENCY CALL OUT

Outside office hours and in the event of emergency you are authorised to engage local contractors to effect immediate repairs to make the property safe and secure. This repair may not necessarily be the final repair and may be a holding repair to enable the Diocesan Officers or others to come and advise on the final outcome of any particular event.

As a first port of call seek local advice on a suitable contractor or use the telephone directory.

All breaches of security **MUST** be reported to the police and a crime number obtained so that the Officers are able to make a claim on your behalf through the insurance policies. **All instances where Emergency Procedures have been followed should be communicated as soon as practical to the Clergy Housing Co-ordinator.**

APPENDIX 1: ASBESTOS

Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002

These regulations came into full effect in May 2004. The regulation requires that Asbestos Containing Materials (ACMs), which were used extensively in a wide range of construction materials throughout the last century, are managed and maintained.

Key points to note are that:

- The use of Asbestos in construction materials started in the 19th century and increased gradually until World War II. Large quantities were employed throughout the 1950s, 60s and early 1970s. Its use was subject to an informal ban from 1969 onwards with a total ban from 1999 onwards.
- Asbestos is only dangerous when the microscopic fibres are released. Therefore ACMs in good condition or encapsulated ACMs are not hazardous to health.
- Asbestos fibre inhalation is most likely to occur when the ACM is disturbed. Therefore monitoring and maintaining ACMs in-situ is often less hazardous than removing the materials.

Where is Asbestos in Buildings?

The short answer to this is nearly everywhere. Asbestos has good heat insulating properties, is fire resistant and its fibres are a good reinforcing agent in plastics. It is not found in naturally occurring building materials such as timber, stone or brick.

Typical applications are:

- Sprayed coatings to steel work for fire protection
- Laggings and packing for heat insulation of service pipes and tanks
- Asbestos Insulation Board (or AIB) used as a fire lining or often as ceiling tiles
- Rope and gaskets located round oven doors or electrical distribution box covers
- Mill boards and papers
- As a binding material in Asbestos cement
- Floor tiles, mastics and roofing felt
- Decorative paints and plasters including ARTEX.

The above list is by no means exhaustive but indicates the wide range of applications and by implication the locations of where ACMs are likely to be located.

Why is Asbestos a problem?

Although Asbestos has many good properties for use in construction (see above), the material is made up of tiny fibres, which when released can be inhaled and lead to various respiratory diseases such as lung cancer, Asbestosis and Mesothelioma. Exposure to the fibres, like lead poisoning, is cumulative,

as the body has no mechanism for getting rid of the fibres. **Remember though that undisturbed or encapsulated asbestos is entirely safe. Removal of the material is not necessarily the right solution to the situation.**

APPENDIX 2: CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

WHY ARE WE TELLING YOU THIS NOW?

We are in the process of installing better insulation in your home, reducing draughts and reducing heating bills. However, if air circulation is reduced the risk of Carbon Monoxide poisoning can be increased and we want to make you aware of preventative measures.

WHAT IS CARBON MONOXIDE- WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, poisonous gas produced by incomplete burning of carbon-based fuels, including gas, oil, wood and coal. It is quite different from, and much more dangerous than, carbon dioxide. Carbon-based fuels are essentially safe to use. It is only when the fuel does not burn properly that excess CO is produced, which is potentially lethal. When CO enters the body, it prevents the blood from bringing oxygen to cells, tissues, and organs.

You can't see it, taste it or smell it but CO can kill quickly without warning. According to the HSE statistics[1] around 20 people die from CO poisoning caused by solid fuel, gas fires and flues that have not been properly installed and maintained or that are poorly ventilated. Levels that do not kill can cause serious harm to health if breathed in over a long period. Many people associate CO poisoning with poorly maintained student bed-sit accommodation, but the risks are just as great in the private and rented housing sectors.

WHAT THE DIOCESE DOES TO MINIMISE RISK AND MEET ITS OBLIGATIONS.

The Diocese ensures that any work carried out in relation to gas appliances in our property is undertaken by a Gas Safe Registered engineer, competent in that area of work.

As your housing provider we have a legal duty to carry out an annual gas safety check and maintain gas appliances. We provide you with a copy of the completed gas safety check certificate. We also service oil fired appliances.

WHAT PREVENTATIVE MEASURES CAN YOU TAKE AGAINST CARBON MONOXIDE EXPOSURE?

Always make sure there is enough fresh air in the room containing your appliance (whether it is gas, oil, wood or coal fired). If you have a chimney or a flue, ensure it is not blocked up and also ensure that wall vents are not covered

If you plan to install a fire in a bedroom, do not use unflued appliances like paraffin heaters and cabinet heaters.

Get your chimney swept from top to bottom at least once a year by a qualified sweep

If you have appliances that use other fossil fuels (wood or coal fired), make sure they are serviced and maintained by a competent person. For information on competent persons' schemes, visit the Communities and Local Government websites

You must never allow an unqualified person to install or carry out work on an appliance

You must never block airbricks or other ventilation equipment – if draughts are a persistent problem in your home please ask the advice of the property team

DOES HSE RECOMMEND THE USE OF CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS?

HSE strongly recommends the use of audible carbon monoxide (CO) alarms as a useful back-up precaution but they must not be regarded as a substitute for proper installation and maintenance of gas appliances by a Gas Safe Registered engineer. Before purchasing a CO alarm, always ensure it complies with British Standard EN 50291 and carries a British or European approval mark, such as a Kitemark. CO alarms should be installed, checked and serviced in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

You can be particularly at risk from CO poisoning when you are asleep, because you may not be aware of early CO symptoms until it is too late. Having an audible CO alarm could wake you and save your life.

DOES THE DIOCESE SUPPLY CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS?

The diocese believes that it fulfils its obligations with regard to the safety of gas and oil fired appliances through its annual servicing agreements. However this relies on you maintaining the equipment as it was at the time of the servicing and not tampering with ventilation measures. If you still have concerns then the diocese will supply a battery powered CO alarm for each appliance.

With regard to wood and coal fired appliances (whether in a closed unit – such as a wood burning stove – or in an open hearth) the servicing and cleaning of the flue is your responsibility. Where open and active fires exist the diocese will supply, on request, a battery powered CO alarm for each appliance.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING?

Early symptoms of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning can mimic many common ailments and may easily be confused with food poisoning, viral infections, flu or simple tiredness. Symptoms to look out for include:

- headaches
- breathlessness
- nausea
- dizziness
- collapse
- loss of consciousness
- tiredness

- drowsiness
- vomiting
- pains in the chest
- stomach pains
- erratic behaviour
- visual problems

For more information visit the NHS[3] or telephone NHS Direct on 0845 4647. If you or your family experience any of the above symptoms and you believe CO may be involved, you must seek urgent medical advice from either your GP or an accident and emergency department. You should ask for a blood or a breath test to confirm the presence of CO. Be aware, CO quickly leaves the blood and tests may be inaccurate if taken more than four hours after exposure has ceased.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM AT RISK FROM CARBON MONOXIDE?

Although carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas, signs that indicate incomplete combustion is occurring, resulting in the production of CO, include:

- Yellow or orange rather than blue flames (apart from fuel effect fires or flueless appliances which display this colour flame)
- Soot or yellow/brown staining around or on appliances
- Pilot lights that frequently blow out
- Increased condensation inside windows
- What should I do if I think my appliance is spilling carbon monoxide?
- Switch off the appliance and do not reuse until remedial action has been taken
- Shut off the gas supply at the meter control valve (if you know where it is)
- Open all doors and windows to ventilate the room - do not sleep in it
- Visit your GP urgently and tell him/her that you believe your symptoms may be related to carbon monoxide poisoning and request either a blood and/or breath sample
- Contact Robinsons Mechanical and Electrical Engineers[4] to make repairs and inform the Property Team at the Diocesan Office

(Source: this document has been adapted from the Health and Safety Executive Website. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/co.htm>)

APPENDIX 3: INSTRUCTIONS TO CHURCHWARDENS DURING VACANCIES

During vacancies the foregoing guidelines will be of use to churchwardens, who as part of their duties take on responsibility for benefice property. In particular they are required to ensure the following guidance is adhered to:

- a. The Churchwardens should notify the water authority immediately the house becomes vacant. The Property Manager at the Diocesan Office should be notified that the house has become vacant so that adjustments can be made in Council Tax payments to the local authority.
- b. All houses are insured with the Ecclesiastical Insurance Group. A condition of the block policy is that, when a house is empty, a security check (including the efficacy of locks) should be carried out by the Churchwardens or a deputy twice weekly, both inside as well as outside the premises.
- c. The existing telephone number will only be preserved if the PCC maintains the telephone line as the subscriber. If the telephone is cut off a new number may be allocated when it is reconnected. Discretion is left to the PCC to decide if the telephone line should be retained, and if it is the PCC should pay the telephone bills during the vacancy.
- d. While the house is unoccupied, the water, gas and electricity should be turned off at the mains for reasons of insurance. The water should be drained by a plumber from cisterns, pipes, radiators, unless by prior agreement with the Diocesan Office. Burst pipes are not covered by insurance. Alternatively the central heating may be left commissioned so long as the frost thermostat is left at a minimum of 6°C. The cost of this should be borne locally but the house will appear more welcoming for prospective candidates if the interviews are taking place during winter months.

Parish equipment should be removed from the parsonage house unless the Archdeacon has consented to them remaining. It should not be assumed that a new successor in office would automatically consent to their return once the appointment has been made.

- e. Gutters and all pipes should be kept clear. It is important that the house is aired before the arrival of the new priest. It is the duty of the Churchwardens to also see that the house is cleaned before the arrival of the new incumbent and for the PCC to pay any money that may be needed for this purpose.
- f. Day to day running repairs are the responsibility of the PCC. Please contact the Diocesan Property Team prior to ordering a repair and if

you are in any doubt about the scope of work required. DO REMEMBER that the need for a minor – such as a slipped slate – may indicate larger imminent failures of which the Diocesan Property team may need to be aware. Major Repairs, of course, have to be considered by the Parsonages Committee. Unauthorised repair expenditure will not automatically be passed for payment, so it is always worthwhile contacting the office. In an emergency the Archdeacon should be contacted.

- g. Electricity / Gas and all service charges are the responsibility of the PCC during a vacancy. Where major works are undertaken to a property the DBF will make a contribution towards the costs over and above the standing charge. Meters must be read prior to commencement of the works so that a fair assessment can be made of the usage incurred..
- h. The Churchwardens must notify the Diocesan Surveyor immediately when anything occurs which might involve a claim under the Insurance Policy.
- i. The Parsonages Committee does not maintain any contents insurance. The Churchwardens should ensure that appropriate contents insurance remains in place for any items remaining in the property.
- j. The Churchwardens are responsible for the upkeep of the garden of the Parsonage House. The grass should be cut regularly, and before the new Incumbent arrives the garden should be tidied. This work should be paid for by the PCC. Trees should not be trimmed or felled without consent from the Parsonages Committee.
- k. When a new Incumbent or Priest in Charge comes to the Parish the removal expenses will be reimbursed in full by the Diocese if the removal is within the British Isles. A moving in grant will also be paid towards the alterations of curtains and carpets. The PCC should not purchase carpets or curtains from the outgoing Incumbent.