

- This Synod –
- notes that the Archbishops’ Council cites the establishment of the Independent Safeguarding Board in September 2021 as a ‘Key Management Action’ in response to the Principle Risk of “failure to deliver core safeguarding projects and to properly embed safeguarding policies and practice across the Church” (page 47 of the Archbishops’ Council Annual Report for 2022, GS 2308);
- further notes:
- as stated in paragraph 6(a) on page 4 of GS 2307, the Report and Recommendations from the National Church Governance Project Board, that the Governance Review Group had: “identified Safeguarding as a significant governance failure of the National Church, defining it as ‘the most tragic example of the human cost of governance failure that can be imagined’” [emphasis in the original] and that “the historic failure at a National Church level to have recognised and prioritised the significant risks posed in relation to safeguarding and to invest appropriately has damaged the Church reputationally but more importantly contributed to significant harm both to individuals and communities”;
- as reported in paragraph 3.5.5 of GS Misc 1340, the Annual Report of the Archbishops’ Council Audit Committee 2022/23, that the Archbishops’ Council did not agree to a request In Autumn 2022 from members of the Audit Committee for an internal audit review into the formation and governance of the Independent Safeguarding Board;
- as recorded in the Report of Proceedings for the February 2023 group of sessions of Synod, that in answer to a supplementary question by Professor Helen King related to Question 56, the Chair of the Audit Committee said that they “do not have the ability [to audit the Independent Safeguarding Board]. We are not the Audit Committee of the ISB. We are the Audit Committee of the Archbishops’ Council”; a statement that was later corrected by a letter to Professor King dated 1 March 2023 and noted in an Annex to Report of Proceedings, stating that “The Archbishops’ Council’s Audit Committee does have the ability to commission an internal audit of all or of aspects of the work of the ISB, but it has not done so...” and
- in answer to a question (Question 85) at the February group of sessions the Bishop of Rochester informed Synod that the unaudited expenditure of the ISB for 2022 was £472,000 and that the Archbishops’ Council 2023 approved budget for 2023 included £465,000 for the ISB;
- further notes that the creation of the Independent Safeguarding Board and details of its operation does not feature in any detail in the Annual Report of the Archbishops’ Council;
- therefore –
- is dismayed by the recent decision of the Archbishops’ Council to disband the Independent Safeguarding Board and terminate the contracts of its members;
- notes that a Serious Incident Report has been made to the Charity Commission in respect of this governance decision;
- recognises and laments that any working relationship between many survivors and victims with the Archbishops’ Council has been broken;
- in consequence, calls upon the Archbishops’ Council, working with its Audit Committee, to commission an independent inquiry led by a senior lawyer (judge or King’s Counsel) into the safeguarding bodies, functions, policies and practice in and of the Church of England, to report within a maximum period of 12 months, and
- requires that the report of that Inquiry be fully debated by the Synod to enable it to make decisions about future safeguarding in the Church of England.
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