



GUIDELINES FOR VACANCY SUPPORT FUND (SEQUESTRATION) - 2026

This Diocesan fund is designed to support parishes where there is a vacancy or extended absence of a stipendiary clergy person. It expanded the old Sequestration Fund and support to parishes to reflect the changes in legislation regarding fees and also the more complex nature of posts following the exercise on Deployment.

Please note that whilst a parish is in vacancy, the Common Fund request remains payable as the formula has built in a vacancy factor. If the vacancy exceeds 18 months, then the Parish Assessors will review the amount being requested.

APPLICATION FOR SUPPORT

Parishes may make an application for support from this fund if they satisfy any of the following criteria:

- Interregnum
- Vacancy of stipendiary clergy within the Team
- Stipendiary Clergy on extended Study Leave
- Stipendiary Clergy on extended Sick Leave
- Stipendiary Clergy on Maternity or Paternity Leave
- Stipendiary Clergy on any other agreed extended leave
- Where an Interim Minister is in place.

Application should be to the Finance Department at St Mary's House, for support from this fund.

HOW DOES THE FUND OPERATE?

Income

Since the changes in legislation concerning Ecclesiastical Fees, effective from 1 January 2013, fee income should no longer be retained by parishes in vacancy within the Sequestration Fund (see Annexe 1). Please do not include Occasional Services in claims for Vacancy Support. The PCC element of the fees for occasional services and monuments should continue to be retained by the PCC and recorded as fee income. The DBF element of the fees should be collected and remitted in full to the Diocese, with the following exceptions:

- House for Duty retain their full fee
- Retired Stipendiary Clergy should be paid 2/3rds of the DBF fee with the balance remitted to the Diocese through the normal Fees Return process.

Expenditure

Due to the changes in Accounting Rules and Regulations, it is no longer permissible to net or offset expenditure against income. Therefore, the creation of the Fund is to support parishes where additional costs are incurred due to the absence of Stipendiary Clergy, or where an Interim Minister has been deployed. In simple terms it supports relevant expenditure only.

PAYMENT FOR SERVICES

If the application to this Fund is successful, then the Diocese can provide an initial float of up to £500 on request to enable parishes cash flow to cover services and discharge their responsibilities.

(a) Retired Clergy

- (i) For ordinary services fees are payable as shown in the Table of Fees given at the end of these Notes.
- (ii) For other services, e.g. weddings, funerals, fees are payable in accordance with the current Diocesan Policy. With effect from 01 January 2023, retired stipendiary clergy retain 2/3rds of the DBF Fee; the remaining one third is due to the DBF and should therefore be remitted to the Diocese through the normal Fees Return process. In the case of a House for Duty Minister the full DBF fee is due to the Minister. Statutory fees are revised annually and advised by the Church Commissioners. The fees with effect from 1st January 2026 are enclosed.

(b) Lay Readers/OLM and NSM (SSM)

The PCC are responsible for the payment of the travel expenses at the recommended diocesan rate, of visiting lay readers, and are able to reclaim this amount from the Fund. No fee is payable. Please also see the Diocesan Ministerial Fees and Expenses: A Clergy Code of Practice on the Diocesan website

(c) Stipendiary Clergy in full-time or part-time Church or secular work

- (i) No fee is payable for ordinary services.
- (ii) For other services, e.g. weddings, funerals, the appropriate fee in accordance with the current scale should be remitted to the Diocese.

(d) All Categories

Travelling expenses are payable in all cases. For a private car the rate is as shown in the Table of Fees given at the end of these Notes.

Payment for services, etc., due to PCCs should be made in accordance with the current Scale of Fees and handed to the appropriate PCC official if the officer is

not available to collect them in person. These funds should be paid direct into the PCC account.

Please ensure all payments are made by cheque or bank transfer and a receipt issued. DO NOT make cash payments.

Expenditure chargeable to the fund only applies to areas of expenditure that have occurred due to the vacancy. Additional costs such as Organist fees or Vergers fees should not be included.

ACCOUNTING

(a) Initial Action

The PCC are responsible for maintaining a simple income and expenditure account in respect of Vacancy Support Funds, within the normal PCC books. This Fund should be shown in the annual accounts in full as income (DBF reimbursement only) and expenditure (costs claimed or due to be claimed from the Fund) with no offsetting.

(b) Subsequent Action

When applying to the Diocesan Office for further funds, an up-to-date statement of accounts should be forwarded. A final statement, together with any balance in the Fund should be forwarded when the vacancy is ended. Any outstanding claim should be made within three months of the Vacancy ending and likewise any funds due back to the DBF should be paid within the same time frame.

Table of Fees

Fee for regular services from 1st Jan 2026 payable to retired stipendiary clergy not in Church or Secular employment.	£66
Travelling allowance per mile until 5 April 2025 from 6 April 2026	45p 45p

Contact Details

The Diocesan Office
St. Mary's House
The Close
Lichfield
WS13 7LD

Tel: 01543 306030
Option 1

Finance Matters

Finance Department
01543 306030 – Option 1
finance@lichfield.anglican.org

Diocesan Website

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/finance>
<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/property>

Standard Expenses Claim form can be found on the website.

Property Matters**Urgent Issues**

Tel: 01543 306030 option 2
Simon Ray 07772 467478
finance@lichfield.anglican.org

These are some frequently asked questions, to try to help you determine where expenses should be paid from:

	Vacancy Fund	PCC	LDBF Property Department	LDBF Finance Department
Central heating will be drained down and assessed for potential conversion / upgrade ideally within the first six weeks, subject to funding.			X	
Grass cutting at vicarage and general tidying of gardens – please arrange via Property Department	X			
Large tree maintenance and fencing (check boundary responsibility on fencing first)			X	
Rental on telephone account to keep line open for next vicar		X		
Electricity and gas bills for vicarage during interregnum if the property is or to be vacant - upon vacancy meters read and gas/electric bills become responsibility of PCC.		X	Possible contribution of up to £25 per month	
If the vicarage is to be used by the Parish during the Interregnum for whatever reason – NB. Formal agreement required with Property Department.		X Agreement to be signed		
If the property is held as a strategic Curate property or designated DBF House (please check with the Diocesan office) then Electricity and Gas bills during the period of vacancy	X			
Council Tax and Water Rates during the vacancy on the property				X
Interior Decoration – the Diocese operates an IDS		X		X

	Vacancy Fund	PCC	LDBF Property Department	LDBF Finance Department
Exterior Decoration			X	
Exterior and interior repairs and maintenance – See Housing Guide - https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/documents/housing-guide5/				X – please contact the Diocesan office
Costs of clergy to cover services during interregnum	X			
Travelling expenses of visiting clergy	X			
Occasional service fees for clergy outside the Diocese or of other denominations				X – please contact the Diocesan office
Cost of advertising for new vicar (Church Times only)	X 50%	X 50%		
Costs of organists, vergers, etc. at services		X		
Costs of service booklets for new vicar				X – submit with the collection for the Bishops Ordination Fund
Alarm costs at vicarage		X		
Water Rates and Council Tax bills for vicar				X
Wine, candles and wafers for services		X		

ANNEX 1

DUTIES OF SEQUESTRATORS

The main duties of the Sequestrators are to act as the Bishop's Agents to ensure that:

- (a) The services and other ministrations of the Church are provided;
- (b) The parsonage house and any other property of the benefice are taken care of;
- (c) The appointed Diocesan Agents for glebe property (and the Secretary of the Diocesan Glebe Committee) are advised whenever any matter affecting Glebe property requires attention;
- (d) Fees due to the Board of Finance are collected and paid to the Board at regular intervals with Fees Returns – they should not be used as income to support the Vacancy Support Fund
- (e) Fees due to the PCC, in the absence of the appropriate PCC official, are collected

CARE OF PARSONAGE HOUSES

- (a) Immediate action

As soon as the property becomes unoccupied, Sequestrators must ensure that the water, gas, and electricity supplies are turned off at the mains, leaving the smoke and security alarm circuits **switched on**, as these units often require battery charging.

- (b) Heating installation

During winter months, and where location requires, heating installations will be drained down by the Property Department at St Mary's House. Central heating will then be assessed for potential conversion ideally within the first six weeks, subject to available funding.

- (c) Local Authority Relief

To ensure that Local Authority relief is claimed when houses are empty, Sequestrators should inform both the Diocesan office and the Local Authority as soon as the house becomes vacant and when it is re-occupied.

- (d) The garden

The parsonage garden should be maintained in a clean and tidy condition. If possible, voluntary labour should be used for this purpose. Otherwise, care should be taken to limit expenditure on this account as far as practicable. In case of doubt, the Archdeacon or Rural Dean should be consulted.

(e) House security, repair and maintenance

It is important that Sequestrators should visit the house frequently (daily if possible) and report to the Police and the Secretary of the Benefice Buildings Committee any signs of vandalism or break-in.

If repair and maintenance of vacant parsonage houses is required, reference should be made to the Property Department (Tel. 01543 306051). If the matter is urgent refer to the Housing Guide -

<https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/documents/housing-guide5/> and/or your Archdeacon.

(f) Letting

The Bishop may look to let out the parsonage house. Such a move might, for example, be considered desirable to ensure that the property was less open to vandalism and that some income could be generated. The Property Department will make these arrangements.

Housing matters

Most other information can be found in the comprehensive Housing Guide - <https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/documents/housing-guide5/> or by contacting:-

Mandy Hulse	01543 306051 Secretary to the Maintenance Surveyor and Head of Property Services General property queries, e.g. repair/security/letting issues
Emma Dyke	01543 306093 Planned Maintenance Co-ordinator Queries on planned work – ingoings and quinquennials