

## **General Synod Report – Ian Gooding**

### **Clergy Pension Scheme and Parochial Fees Order**

A debate on the proposed changes to the Clergy Pension Scheme occupied much of the Saturday afternoon session, which ran from 2.30pm to 6.15pm.

The three changes proposed were: to increase the number of pensionable years required for a full pension from 37 to 40; to limit pension increases for service after 31 December 2007 to a maximum of 3.5%; to break the link between stipend increases and pensions increases.

The changes proposed would, amongst other things, enable a Defined Benefits Pension Scheme to be retained and also mean no increase in the contributions from dioceses to the Pensions Board.

There was a full and frank debate (including an input from Derby) with many not wanting the retired to suffer any reduction in their benefits but the Clergy Pension Fund has a probable deficit of £150m and this has to be eliminated, probably over fifteen years. This alone accounts for 5% of the pension contribution. Clergy, like everyone else, are also living longer and pensions thus have to be paid for longer.

Eventually the changes were agreed and an amendment, passed overwhelmingly, was added to the original motion to the effect that should the pensions climate improve then the Archbishops' Council should consult with the Pensions Board and the Church Commissioners, with a view to restoring pension levels.

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There was an interesting debate on the Parochial Fees Order. One Julian Litton has for years asked for some element of the fees to be debated, usually burials or monuments. This year he succeeded in getting the fee for the burial of ashes increased from £91 to £110, which is half the fee for the burial of a body. It required a division of the whole Synod as the voting was so close; in the event 112 to 97. This so messed everything up that the Standing Orders Debate had to be postponed and we may not get any increases in fees on 1 January. Such is the power of the persistent.

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It was noted that because of reductions in income tax (22% - 20%) parishes will be 11% worse off for Gift Aid income. (loss of £8million for the whole church).

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*(From [www.derby.anglican.org](http://www.derby.anglican.org))*