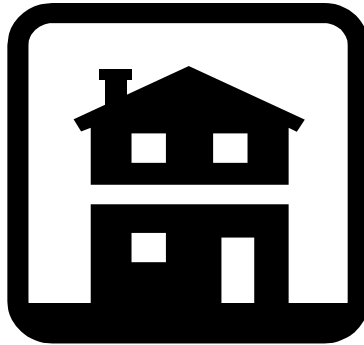


St Albans Diocese



Housing Handbook

Issued by the Property Committee
of the St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance

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INTRODUCTION



These guidance notes have been prepared to help all those occupying parsonage houses and team vicarages, particularly new arrivals to the Diocese, with the management of their homes. The Property Committee is continually reviewing policy and individual situations may sometimes require special consideration.

The Diocesan Parsonages Board is, by resolution of the Diocesan Synod, the Diocesan Board of Finance. This Board delegates the day-to-day responsibility to its Property Committee. The Diocesan Board of Finance is the designated housing provider under the Ecclesiastical Offices (terms of Service) Measure 2009. It is answerable to the Board of Finance. The Committee normally meets seven times a year and reports regularly to the Board. The committee's main purpose is to ensure that appropriate accommodation, in the right location, is provided for the clergy and their families to enable them to serve their parishes. To further this purpose the Committee ensures that the houses are economically repaired and improved to preserve the housing stock and to maintain clergy morale. PCCs have no direct responsibilities relating to parsonage houses. Nevertheless many are extremely generous and contribute financially to improvements, minor repairs and internal decorations and the Property Committee is most grateful for all this help.

The day to day management of houses is the responsibility of the Estates Department which works from the Diocesan Office. Any problems or queries relating to houses should be directed to this Department. It currently consists of the following:

Estates Secretary	-	Mrs Michèle Manders	01727 818129 mmanders@stalbans.anglican.org
Assistant	-	Mrs Janet Hurley	01727 818128 jhurley@stalbans.anglican.org
Assistant	-	Mr Nigel Bengel	01727 818127 nbengel@stalbans.anglican.org

These officers are always happy to give any help or advice that they can.

The Estates Department works very closely with the Diocesan Surveyor, Alastair Woodgate of Rumball Sedgwick and his team who are based at 58 St Peter's Street, St Albans, telephone number 01727 854516.

There is a clear division of responsibility between the Property Committee and house occupants which can be summarised as follows:

The Committee's responsibilities :

- (i) To keep in good repair the structure and exterior of the parsonage house.
- (ii) To keep in good repair all walls, fences, gates, drives, drains and gutters other than those for which a third party is responsible.
- (iii) To keep in repair and proper working order all fixtures and fittings in the parsonage house, including the installations for the supply of water, gas and electricity and for sanitation, space heating and heating water.
- (iv) To carry out a quinquennial inspection.
- (v) To insure the fabric of the parsonage house.
- (vi) To ensure that appropriate security is provided.
- (vii) To pay the council tax and water rates for those of incumbent status in parsonages and DBF properties and the council tax only for assistant curates (the PCCs to pay the water rates).

The Committee is under no obligation to carry out improvements but does so whenever appropriate and funds allow. (see section 7 below.)

The Occupant's responsibilities :

- (i) To keep the interior of the house clean and in good decorative condition.
- (ii) To keep all gutters clear of debris.
- (iii) To keep the garden tidy and trees and hedges in a safe and well managed condition.
- (iv) To inform the Diocesan Office of any problems in the house that might lead to structural damage or greater expense in the future if left unattended. It is important to inform the Diocesan Office as soon as possible if an insurance claim needs to be made.
- (v) To notify the Diocesan Office immediately when any local authority planning notice is received relating to development on a neighbouring property.
- (vi) To insure those contents of the parsonage house which do not belong to the benefice. (This becomes the PCC's responsibility through the churchwardens during a vacancy in the incumbency).
- (vii) Security: To ensure that doors and windows are secured and locked when the house is unoccupied.
- (viii) Not to make any repairs, alterations or additions to the property without the consent of the Estates Department.

Michèle Manders
Estates Secretary

1. Interim Repairs

A large sum is spent each year on interim repairs carried out between quinquennial inspections. These are the non-urgent day to day repairs which do not require immediate attention to avoid damage to the building and they should be dealt with only after liaison with the Estates Department. The Property Committee is grateful for any minor repairs which an occupant can carry out on a DIY basis and the cost of materials will be reimbursed if necessary. Alternatively, the Estates Department will arrange for the repair to be carried out or, on occasion, authorise an occupant to use a local contractor.

A "Contractor Code of Conduct" sheet is also sent to those tendering, setting out the conduct expected from all personnel undertaking repairs or other works at the houses. A copy is attached as Annexe A for information.

If a contractor arranges a time with an occupant to carry out a repair and the occupant fails to keep the appointment, any abortive charges a contractor might charge must be met by the occupant except in exceptional circumstances.

Unless these procedures are followed, the Property Committee cannot guarantee that the expenditure will be met by the Diocese.

2. Emergency work

Emergency works are those which must be carried out within 48 hours, i.e. gas leaks, reglazing and resealing property after break-ins, leaking pipes and water penetration and blocked drains. Where possible the Estates Department should be informed of the problem and its instructions and advice sought before work is carried out, and in any case as soon as the office has re-opened after a holiday or weekend. The Surveyor's office, Messrs Rumball Sedgwick, is sometimes open at times when the Diocesan Office is closed, e.g. between Christmas and the New Year.

3. Quinquennial Works

Every parsonage house is inspected at five yearly intervals. These inspections are carried out by the Diocesan Surveyor or his assistant. His report covers the condition of the external fabric of the house and the internal fittings. It also includes a comment on the state of internal decorations which are the occupant's responsibility. The Surveyor may mention possible desirable improvements but this does not mean that these will be undertaken (see section 7 below). The report is sent to the occupant for their comments and these and the report are considered by the Property Committee. If approved, the Diocesan Surveyor will draw up a specification for any necessary work and obtain competitive tenders. A "Contractor Code of Conduct" sheet is also to be sent to those tendering, setting out the conduct expected from all personnel undertaking repairs or other works at the houses. A copy is attached as

Annexe A for information.

The Estates Department is always interested to hear comments regarding contractors' work. Occupants may wish to recommend local contractors for inclusion on the tender list. The Diocesan Surveyor should be notified of any such preference at the time the survey is carried out. Any complaints about the standard of workmanship should be notified to the Diocesan Surveyor.

Any major structural problems should be notified to the Estates Department as soon as they occur as it may, in some circumstances, be advisable to bring forward a quinquennial inspection. Similarly, in certain situations, a quinquennial may be deferred, for example, if an appointment is pending or further investigation of structural problems is required.

External decorations are no longer carried out routinely every 5 years. If the surveyor thinks that no damage will occur they are on occasion deferred.

4. Internal decorations

In addition to the decorating grant which is available for new occupants, grants for materials only can be applied for every year by those already in post. Occupants are sent an e-mail each November asking them how much they anticipate spending on decorating materials the following year. Grants are agreed by the Property Committee and can be claimed at any point during the year by occupants sending in the relevant receipts. In this way, it is hoped that occupants will be encouraged to carry out a rolling programme of internal decorations.

5. Electrical installations, TV aerials and telephone systems

A full electrical survey is normally carried out every ten years, i.e. at every other quinquennial inspection. If occupants have any particular worries they should contact the Estates Department. Occupants are responsible for installing and maintaining their own T.V. aerials. It should be noted that although a telephone line is normally available, the occupier is responsible for the line rental and any other charges in connection with the telephone installation. The Property Committee does not provide additional lines, points or equipment.

6. Heating/Boiler Servicing

The Diocese takes responsibility for gas checks and the servicing of both gas and oil boilers in all parsonage houses and houses owned by the Diocesan Board of Finance occupied by sector clergy. These are carried out annually by authorised contractors appointed by the Diocese and occupants will be contacted direct by contractors in order that arrangements can be made for the work to be done.

As finance is limited, boilers are not automatically replaced when they reach a certain age. In line with the Committee's environmental strategy, condensing boilers will be installed whenever the old boiler has failed, is near the end of its life, is troublesome or as part of kitchen improvements carried out in a vacancy.

The Surveyor will assess the number of cases where boiler controls could be improved during the course of quinquennial inspections. Examples of improvements which could be made include installing thermostatic radiator valves, room thermostats, improved programmers and, possibly, zoning. Oil fired boilers are replaced by gas fired ones wherever a gas supply is readily available and affordable.

In winter, or unseasonable cold snaps, it is essential that houses are adequately heated and particularly when they are unoccupied. Water should be turned off at the mains during holiday periods at all times of the year. Any claims for water damage to house or contents may not be accepted by the insurance company if this procedure is not followed.

7. Improvement works

Financial pressures on Property Committee funds mean that improvements are carried out on a strict basis of priority from a waiting list. Normally, items are added to the waiting list as a result of the Surveyor's quinquennial inspection but requests for improvements from occupants are also considered for inclusion. The list is considered at a meeting held at the end of each year when decisions are taken on which items should be carried out in the following year. If an occupant feels that there are pastoral reasons for a particular improvement to be carried out they should contact their Archdeacon.

8. Security Policy

The Property Committee takes the security of occupants very seriously. It has a security policy which recognises that parsonage houses are often at greater risk than other properties and which aims to make occupants feel safe without turning their houses into fortresses.

Security measures are reviewed at each quinquennial inspection to ensure:-

- (i) All ground floor and vulnerable first floor windows have locks.
- (ii) Glazed porches and external doors have toughened glass.
- (iii) There is adequate security lighting.
- (iv) The front door has a chain and, where necessary, a spy hole.
- (v) Fences and gates are in good repair and prevent unauthorised access to back gardens.

The cost of all items is met by the Property Committee.
As funds for improvements are severely limited, the Property Committee

cannot meet the whole cost of the installation of intruder alarms except in exceptional circumstances. It is able, though, to contribute if a grant from Marshall's Charity can be secured and the PCC agrees to meet half the remaining cost. Once installed, the PCC becomes responsible for the annual maintenance charge, throughout successive incumbencies, and will also be responsible for the cost of removing the system should it cease to function properly.

9. Fire precautions

Occupants are responsible for providing a fire blanket in the kitchen near the cooker and for installing smoke detectors in their homes. (The exception is where they live in houses built after 1992 as these will have mains operated smoke alarms, as required by The Building Regulations 1991.) The advice from the fire services is as follows:-

1. The smoke alarms should comply with BS 5446 part one with a British Standard Kitemark or PCB "Horseshoe" mark. A hush button is useful so that the alarm can be silenced easily if it goes off accidentally. Smoke alarms with a vibrating pad or a flashing light are also available for the deaf or hard of hearing. The Royal National Institute for the deaf can provide detailed information.
2. If the house has only one storey the alarm should be fitted between the living room and the bedrooms. If there is more than one storey there should be one alarm at the bottom of the stairs and further alarms on each landing.
3. The alarms should be fixed to the ceiling at least 30cm (12") away from any wall or light fitting and should not be near the kitchen or the bathroom as smoke or steam can set them off accidentally.
4. They should be accessible so that they can be easily tested at least once a month if not every week. It is also advised that a duster or the nozzle of a vacuum cleaner is gently run over the smoke alarm once or twice a year to keep it free from dust and grime.
5. It is best to replace smoke alarms with completely new units every ten years.

The fire services in all areas of the diocese offer a free home fire safety check and will also provide free smoke alarms in certain circumstances. The contact details can be found on the following websites:-

The Barnet area
Bedfordshire
Hertfordshire

www.london-fire.gov.uk
www.bedsfire.com
www.hertsdirect.org/fire

10. Energy efficiency measures

The Property Committee has an environmental strategy the principles of which are as follows:-

- a) To reduce the negative impact of parsonages and corporate property on the environment;
- b) To be early adopters of proven good practice, as cost effectively as possible taking account of the balance between embodied energy costs and current usage;
- c) To develop a programme of reasonable measures to improve standards which would operate within the context of the existing programme of repairs, improvements and new building;
- d) To encourage occupiers to be more environmentally aware and act responsibly. In this respect, a paper with suggestions for saving money and cutting the occupier's carbon footprint, prepared by the Property Committee's Environmental Adviser, is included as Annexe B.

When implementing this strategy the Committee will always be mindful of the impact of any measures upon the occupiers of buildings and upon neighbours. Priority is given to the prevention of heat loss. In particular, where practicable:-

- i.) loft insulation will be increased to 270mm;
- ii.) weather stripping to windows will be carried out;
- iii.) double glazing will be installed when windows are replaced;
- iv.) energy efficient doors will be provided when replacement is needed;
- v.) condensing boilers will be installed when replacement is required and
- vi.) cavity wall insulation will be installed.

However, in line with the policy of adopting proven, cost-effective measures, the Property Committee will not normally expect to adopt the following measures at this stage:-

- vii.) Solar panels for central heating (though further research will be undertaken on solar panels for hot water heating).
- viii.) Wind turbines
- ix.) Rain water harvesting except in the case of new construction (Note: this is not the same as collecting rainwater in water butts, to which the Committee has no objection)
- x.) Grey water recycling
- xi.) Ground source heat pumps
- xii.) Photovoltaic panels

xiii.) Air source heat pumps

11. Carpet Fitting

The Property Committee is concerned that where fitted carpets are fitted to wood block floors or to floors with a vinyl tile covering, the floor surface should not be damaged by the method of fixing the gripper edging strip.

If it is intended to have wall to wall carpet fitted to such a floor where the edging strip is not already in place, it is necessary to ensure that the edging strip is fitted by drilling, rawlplugging the holes and screwing. In this way the floors will not be damaged if a future family wishes to revert to unfitted carpets with the borders exposed, since the screws can be easily removed and the small holes discreetly filled.

12. Trees and garden works

The Property Committee is not responsible for garden works and occupiers are expected to keep their gardens in good order. (Stipendiary clergy can claim a tax concession on gardening costs if they complete their annual return and send it to the Church Commissioners.)

Where trees threaten the structure of buildings or overhang public highways the Diocese may meet all or part of the cost of the necessary pruning works. Please contact the Estates Department for advice.

The Property Committee is not responsible for hedges, pruning of fruit trees or routine garden maintenance. The planting of trees is discouraged but if occupants wish to plant them they should be carefully sited and not in a position which is likely to threaten the structure of any building, wall or path. The local garden centre can probably recommend trees and shrubs which are appropriate for the size of garden. Vines and creepers should not be planted against buildings as they harm the fabric of the building and if left unchecked can interfere with gutters and roof tiles.

In some areas prior approval for works to trees from the local authority is required. If so, no work should be undertaken without this. Occupants are responsible for ensuring that all regulations are followed and are advised to consult the local arborist before undertaking any work to trees, particularly in Conservation Areas.

The Property Committee is also not responsible for the provision, maintenance or removal of garden sheds or greenhouses.

13. Insurance

All parsonage houses are insured for their replacement value under a block policy held with the Ecclesiastical. Occupants are responsible for their own contents insurance and for occupant's liability and are strongly advised to ensure their cover is adequate. Advice can be obtained from the Ecclesiastical which runs a special contents insurance scheme for the clergy. Please note that should additional security precautions be required because of the nature or value of the contents, the occupant will be expected to fund them.

All claims on the building insurance should be submitted through the Estates Department. It should be noted that:-

- < Ecclesiastical will expect two estimates for any repairs for which a claim is to be made, with the exception of urgent works which are required to make the property secure in the short term, i.e. overnight.
- < Only claims for the replacement of existing fittings are acceptable, for example damaged locks should be replaced as existing and any improvement clearly itemised on the invoice. The Ecclesiastical is not responsible for the payment of invoices relating to improved security.
- < Malicious damage and break-ins should be reported to the police and the Estates Department informed of the station notified, the time and date of the incident and its circumstances.

If the claim arises from neglect, misuse or accidental damage by the occupants, they will be expected to pay for the repair or the insurance policy excess (currently £250) whichever is the lower.

14. Vacation of Parsonage Houses

On leaving a property the occupant should ensure that the following procedures are followed:

- a. Gas and electricity meters readings are provided to the utility companies and final bills for supplies up until departure paid or forwarded. The telephone company should also be informed and arrangements made for the payment of outstanding charges. The telephone should be diverted where possible and NOT be disconnected and the number should be retained unchanged. Alternatively, an answering machine may be used. Gas, electricity and telephones should also be transferred to the name of a churchwarden or PCC treasurer and there are special arrangements for the payment of all these charges under the vacancy procedures.

- b. In respect of cover for the escape of water or oil and the freezing of water, the water supply must be turned off at the mains and the heating system drained down during the months of October to March unless there is an automatic central heating system in constant operation (including the water supply) which is set at a minimum temperature of 6 degrees centigrade. The loft hatch should also be left open to allow heat from the house to circulate. These measures should help ensure that no damage is caused should there be a sudden very cold spell. Draining down the system tends to make the house very unwelcoming and can lead to deterioration, especially where there are carpets.
- c. The Estates Department needs to know the date when the house is expected to become empty so that the relevant council tax authorities can be notified.
- d. The house should be left clean and empty of all rubbish and all personal possessions. It must not be assumed that the churchwardens will arrange for the clearance of unwanted items. If at the vacancy inspection carried out by the Archdeacon and the Estates Secretary it is discovered that the house has been left in an unacceptable condition and there are no overriding pastoral reasons for this, the Archdeacon may contact the outgoing occupant and request a financial contribution to meet the cost of any necessary remedial work.
- e. During a vacancy the churchwardens are responsible for security and general caretaking in the parsonage house. They should be handed a letter from the Bishop in advance of a vacancy, advising what their responsibilities are in this regard. Day to day household expenses - the cost of gas, electricity, telephone standing charges, chimney sweeping and garden upkeep - should be charged to the vacancy account.

15. Lettings

The Property Committee has a policy of trying to let empty houses on six month Assured Shorthold Tenancies, with the agreement of the churchwardens. As most vacancies are at least six months this does not delay a new appointment being made. Letting the house removes the burden of looking after it from the churchwardens. It also provides income, the first call on which is for work to the house concerned with any surplus being paid into the Diocesan Stipends Fund to help meet the cost of clergy stipends.

It is helpful if an early decision on letting can be taken so that the letting agent can, if convenient, visit whilst the house is still occupied and marketing can start in good time.

QUICK CHECK LIST FOR OCCUPANTS MOVING OUT :

Have you :

- # informed the Estates Department of the date of removal?
- # read the electricity and gas meters and informed the utility providers and telephone company of your removal date?
- # removed all your personal effects from the house (including the loft), garage and outbuildings and left the house clean?

FINALLY Please remember that we are here to assist you in your ministry - if you have any questions please feel free to contact us.

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Rumball Sedgwick working with the Diocese of St Albans CONTRACTOR CODE OF CONDUCT

The St Albans Diocesan Board of Finance, whether instructing contractors directly or through Rumball Sedgwick, require all personnel undertaking repairs or other works at their properties to:-

- Avoid calling at properties without prior appointment having been made with the occupants
- Carry means of identity and show it before entering the premises
- Take care of the premises and occupants' belongings, protecting them from damage, dust, paint, water, etc.
- Be polite and treat occupants with respect
- Keep the property secure at all times, ensuring that all windows and doors are locked, all gates are bolted and any ladders are left out of sight and padlocked at the end of each working day
- Make sure materials are stored only where agreed with the occupants
- Make sure materials and tools do not cause danger
- Tidy up at the end of each working day and arrange for all rubbish arising from the work to be cleared away from the property and garden promptly
- Repair any damage caused by their work
- Make sure gas, water and electricity are left connected and safe to use at the end of each day
- Warn occupants of any health/safety risks to them or their visitors arising from the work and take all necessary measures to minimise those risks
- Warn occupants and their neighbours of any likely noise or disturbance they will make, and keep it to a minimum
- Explain to occupants the nature and duration of the work and the programme to be followed, keeping them informed about progress
- Attend at the property only at times to be agreed in advance with the occupants
- Refrain from holding keys to the property overnight without the occupant's express permission
- Refrain from working in the property with children under 16 present without an adult member of the family or an adult friend also present, unless with the parent's express permission
- Refrain from smoking or playing radios in or around the property without the occupants' express permission

From the Property Committee's Environmental Adviser

50 Easy ways to save money and cut your carbon footprint

Heating

1. Turn down your heating thermostat by one number/ degree. Each degree reduction saves 10% on bills.
2. Set your immersion heater thermostat to 60 degrees maximum
3. Fit an insulating jacket to the hot water cylinder or add another if it is an old thin one.
4. Use the boiler controls, programmers and thermostatic radiator valves to optimise performance.

Power

5. Turn all appliances off and don't leave on standby. Some use up to 90% of power when on standby.
6. Turn off mobile phone, ipods and laptops when not in use.
7. Replace traditional light bulbs with low energy ones.
8. Turn off lights when leaving the room.
9. Use rechargeable batteries.
10. When buying new household goods – fridge, freezer, dish washer, washing machine, drier, kettle, TVs etc buy those rated A or A +.
11. Buy an electrisave/owl meter and monitor use of electrical appliances in the home.
12. Switch to paying for energy by Direct Debit. Contact your energy supplier for further details of how to switch to paying by direct debit. Some offer additional discounts for paperless on line billing.

Travel

13. Walk more, or cycle especially short journeys which are very inefficient by car.
14. Leave your car at home one workday a week and use public transport.
15. Drive your car in a more economical way.
16. Share a car/give a lift.

Kitchen

17. Wash Clothes at 30 degrees C instead of 40+ degrees.
18. Don't use washing machines and dishwashers on half loads.
19. Use economy programmes wherever possible on washing machines and dishwashers.
20. Don't leave fridge and freezer doors open for longer than necessary.
21. Do not locate fridges and freezers next to ovens, boilers or tumble driers.

22. Defrost fridges and freezers regularly.
23. Full freezers and fridges are more cost effective than half empty ones.
24. Use a time switch in order to do washing, dishwashing and drying at night when electricity is cheaper.
25. Buy only what you need and don't waste food.
26. Boil only the amount of water you actually need in the kettle.
27. Use the right size pan for the rings and keep lids on saucepans. This reduces the amount of heat required.
28. Use a steamer to use one ring for cooking all of your vegetables at the same time.
29. Pressure cookers, steamers and microwaves can all save energy.
30. Turn off the oven at 5 – 10 minutes before the meal is ready and allow the food to keep warm in the residual heat (but not if you are cooking a soufflé!).
31. Use the oven as sparingly as possible – if you do use it, try to cook the whole meal in it.
32. Part cook certain items in the microwave, then finish them off in the oven eg jacket potatoes.

Bathroom

33. Have a shower not a bath.
34. Fit low water showerhead (6/9 litre/min) to existing flexible pipe.
35. Fit a hippo or water reducing container in every toilet.
36. Rewasher leaking taps and overflows.
37. Reduce water consumption generally to minimise use of hot water.
38. In hard water areas descale shower heads and kettles at least twice a year.

Garden

39. Do not use a hosepipe. Use water butts to collect rainwater.
40. Use a watering can for the garden and bucket to wash the car.
41. Apply mulch around plants to retain moisture and deter weeds.
42. Make compost from left over food, grass and hedge cuttings and dead plants.
43. Use the compost to feed plants and improve the soil and do not buy peat based products.

General

44. Dry clothes outside wherever possible.
45. Don't dry clothes on radiators. Use a clothes horse or drying rack.
46. Close curtains at dusk.
47. Weather strip doors and windows. Fill in gaps around skirting boards, loft hatches, pipes and external openings.
48. Seal up open fireplaces that are not used.
49. Re-use and recycle as much as possible.

50. Re-use shopping bags and wrapping paper.