

GENERAL SYNOD 2010

BILL NO 1 – Seconded by Mr Geoffrey Perrin, Diocese of Dublin

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Your Grace, members of Synod,

The Archbishop, in proposing the Bill, has concentrated on the Funding Proposal to restore the solvency of the Pension Fund. As somebody who has spoken regularly on the subject at recent Synods may I wholeheartedly support this imaginative and realistic plan. Yes it calls on all contributing parties to make further increases but this is to ensure the ongoing viability of one of the prizes of the Church of Ireland, the defined benefit clergy pension scheme and something that is fundamental to our major purpose, the sustentation of the clergy.

In seconding the Bill, I want to concentrate more on the changes to Chapter 14, which have come from the working group reviewing the legal issues of the scheme. In doing this I am very conscious of the need not to over-complicate matters or to add further detail to what you already have. Your book of reports this year has just under 100 pages devoted to pensions, you normally have to get by with just 40 pages on pensions, and also this year your Bills and Explanatory Memoranda gives you another 30 pages, all of which I'm sure you have read closely!

The simple reason for most of this is to bring the oversight and running of the scheme in line with current legislation and best practice, an area which has seen significant change in recent years. You may recall some high profile business collapses with very significant pensions implications in recent years; Maxwell publishing in the UK, Enron in the US and last year Waterford Glass. Each of these underlined the need for greater regulation and control over pension funds to simply better protect the rights of employees and pensioners. What is being proposed through this bill is what has already been clearly set out at last years Synod- see pages 110 and 111 of the 2009 Book of Reports and summarised this year on pages 42-44 of the 2010 Book of Reports. There you will see that the proposed new special purpose trustee body will

be a limited company with the RCB as its only shareholder and its only function will be the trusteeship of the Clergy Pensions Fund. It will be controlled by the RCB and by General Synod in relation to any further changes in its constitution. All this is necessary to ensure that we are compliant with pensions law but in a way that continues to ensure the primacy of General Synod. So you can see that the proposed 5 Directors of the new corporate trustee (3 to be nominated by the Executive Committee and 2 by the Clergy Pensions Board) will each have to sign a declaration that they submit themselves to the powers of the General Synod and the laws of the Church of Ireland. The ESSENTIAL thing to remember is that nothing changes neither in the overall accountability and control nor indeed in the crucial day-to-day work carried out by the staff in Church House, the work of the Investment Committee and the CPB. Because the new corporate trustee is being set up in a way such that it can delegate many of its trustee duties to just these crucial people and committees who have done all this work in recent years.

So while all this has meant that this year you have had to be given a huge amount of very important supporting documentation, just reflect on the phenomenal amount of work done by the 2 working groups- one reviewing the legal issues and the other dealing with the solvency issues. Enormous thanks are due to them and in particular their chairpersons.

I have pleasure in seconding the bill.