



THE BISHOP OF ROCHESTER
The Right Revd Dr Jonathan Gibbs

1 March 2023

Dear Gilo,

Thank you for your email correspondence from the 26 January 2023. I apologise that it has taken me some time to reply.

I would like to begin by acknowledging how frustrating and difficult it has been to get to the bottom of the issues you have raised and to say that as a result I can fully understand why you might have reached the conclusions you have about the matters in question.

I can assure you that I have made every effort to obtain answers to your questions and that I believe those who have assisted me have done so in good faith. I recognise however that this is something that you may not be willing to accept, and as a result I will make a further proposal at the end of this letter about a possible way forward.

Since you wrote at the end of January, I have sought further answers about two specific issues in your correspondence, which I will try to address here.

You have requested that this matter be urgently brought to the attention of the Audit Committee. I am happy to copy our correspondence to the chair of the Archbishop's Council's Audit Committee, Maureen Cole. She will judge whether it needs to be brought to the attention of the Committee.

In relation to the meeting of the 9 August 2016 with Ecclesiastical Insurance Group (EIG), I apologise that the answer I provided was not sufficiently clear. We are aware that this meeting took place and that some members of Archbishops' Council staff were present at the meeting, including William Nye. What my answer was seeking to indicate was that I had been assured that reputation management was not a purpose of the meeting. I am sorry that this was not made clear.

From the records we have and from peoples' recollections, I have been informed that the meeting was convened to discuss the facts around the handling of your case, and to understand the sequence of events that led to the temporary removal of your pastoral care, and any lessons that could be learnt from this. At this time there had already been media attention in relation to your case and there were also questions about how the facts of your case were being presented in the media.

The notes of the meeting made by EIG do highlight that someone raised the fact your case represented a "reputational risk" to both the Church and EIG, which was a statement of fact. I understand that this would be a normal topic to be considered in a meeting between an insurer and their client. I have been advised that the minutes reflect there was an exchange of information in relation to a range of issues relating to your safeguarding case, but not that "reputation management" was a focus or purpose of the meeting.

I am sorry for any ambiguities in my reply of 26 January and hope that this provides clarity in relation to the meeting of 9 August 2016.

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Having said that, I would like to add that in my view the documents I have seen, including the notes of the 9th August meeting which you sent to me, do give the impression that your interests and well-being as a survivor were not as central a concern as they should have been. This may in part be to do with how the notes were written up, but as Lead Bishop I would like to apologise to you for that and to say that I believe this should be followed up in the programme I am suggesting below.

In terms of next steps, I will firstly copy this letter and your previous letter to Maureen Cole for consideration by the Audit Committee.

Beyond that, as I said above, I recognise that it is unlikely that the answers given here will satisfy you, not least because they have been provided by me as Lead Bishop, with the necessary assistance of members of the NST. In order to try to move things forward, I would like to suggest that in future Bishop Julie Conalty should be your point of contact, in her capacity as Deputy Lead Bishop with responsibility for work with survivors. This will also help ensure continuity when I step down as Lead Bishop at the end of March, and Bishop Julie will seek to work with you to resolve as fully as possible any outstanding issues.

I am sorry that I have not been able to conclude this matter to your satisfaction but hope that this may provide an acceptable way forward.

Best wishes,

