



 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

ARCHBISHOPS'
COUNCIL

Mr M Sewell
8 Appleshaw Close
Gravesend
Kent
DA11 7PB

Carl Hughes
*Chair, Finance Committee of
the Archbishops' Council*

6 February 2024

Dear Mr Sewell,

Your letter of 16 January addressed to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York has been passed to me to respond to as I have management responsibility for the Secretary General on behalf of the Archbishops' Council. I have therefore taken the lead in considering what your letter says concerning him.

Before turning to those specific matters, I wish to say on behalf of the members of the Archbishops' Council that we were deeply concerned to read in David Glasgow's report about the distress of the individuals who had been engaging with the Independent Safeguarding Board members. We deeply regret the impact that the disbanding of the ISB has had on the victims and survivors of abuse. We announced on 11 December that we had begun to discuss Sarah Wilkinson's report. We continue to do that with the affected victims and survivors of abuse at the forefront of our considerations.

We have said publicly that it is vital that we now learn lessons, and that we do not lose sight of those for whom the delivery of independent oversight is crucial – the survivors and victims of abuse – and, more widely, all those who come in contact with the Church. All of the material we have received will inform what we intend will be both a pastoral and a practical response. We will therefore be listening carefully to what victims and survivors tell us in discerning the way forward. We will listen too to what we hear in the General Synod when it considers the reports from Sarah Wilkinson and Alexis Jay at the group of sessions later this month. We do not claim to have all the answers and seek a collaborative way of considering and implementing reforms that avoid repetition of actions and ways of working which have distressed those about whom we care deeply – the victims and survivors of abuse.

I now turn to the specific matters raised in your letter relating to the Secretary General. In order to provide a secure basis for my response, I have obtained external legal advice from a specialist employment law solicitor at Farrer & Co who was provided with your letter, the accompanying report from David Glasgow and Sarah Wilkinson's report. The legal advice provided by Farrer & Co is that there are no grounds to suspend the Secretary

General nor to open a disciplinary investigation into his conduct.

In the light of that advice, which I have carefully considered and accept, I have concluded that there is no basis for me to institute a disciplinary investigation in relation to the Secretary General and, in particular, no basis on which I should ask the Archbishops to suspend him. Accordingly, I am treating this specific matter as having been concluded.

That does not, of course, mean that the work of the Archbishops' Council in terms of learning lessons from what has happened has concluded. We will commit considerable time and resource to enabling the Church to respond to the Wilkinson and Jay reports and look forward to engaging with all interested parties in this work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Hughes', written in a cursive style.

Carl Hughes