

Report of the Bishop's Council
Governance and Engagement Working Group

Introduction

This working group was formed at the request of the Bishop to consider the ways in which deaneries engage with diocesan strategy and with SDF Funded projects.

Extract from Bishop's Council minutes requesting this group to be formed:

2157 – RESOURCING GROWTH – GOVERNANCE AND ENGAGEMENT – PAPER E

Joanne Grenfell spoke to Paper E. Any kind of change will bring a degree of resistance, which needs to be heard and considered. However a degree of change is necessary, which includes new and creative responses to challenging areas of parish ministry. Governance is important but the money needs to be used wisely and people treated fairly and a need to set out challenges and underline what the governance role is.

Bob White noted the need for greater clarity about how deanery and diocesan governance work together, as raised in Paper E. JWG agreed with this request, noting that although deaneries still had input into the allocation of stipendiary clergy numbers, decisions about posts were often made in relation to diocesan strategic planning; it would be useful to set up structures which better reflected the changes that had taken place in funding, but which also allowed for deaneries to play a proper role in planning.

It was proposed that Bishop's Council create a small working party to look at this issue.

The Council agreed to this proposal.

The group has met six times (once at Peninsular House and the remainder online) and considered the following specific questions:

1. How do we ensure that deaneries are involved with and have some ownership of Resourcing Growth / SDF funded projects?
2. How can deanery and diocesan governance work effectively together?
3. How do we ensure that deaneries have a voice in diocesan strategy without delaying it unnecessarily?

We have considered these questions with the understanding that the Church of England is an episcopally led and synodically governed organisation. Decisions made regarding structures of mission and ministry rest with the Bishop and with the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee.

The benefits of working within a smaller diocese were recognised such as the family feel and the fact that relationships were easier to establish because of that but also that this can cause tensions in that we still have the same level of work and responsibilities as a larger diocese but with fewer people to carry the workload.

In all our meetings some key words became apparent and these were:

- Honesty
- Openness
- Trust
- Relationship
- Time
- Diocesan values: Courageous, Generous, Pioneering, Resourceful, Collaborative

Deaneries

1. Strong parishes are key to the mission of the church but increasingly work must be carried out across parish boundaries. This means that both to support and enable strong parishes and also to facilitate and indeed encourage cross boundary working the deaneries are key units of mission within the diocese. During the current Covid 19 crisis deaneries have been a source of support to many parish priests.
2. Much of the diocesan strategy has felt imposed and if we want people to buy into any changes and development plans then we need to work in a much more **collaborative** manner. This is a key feature of the proposals for action at the end of this report and any improvements to the process of change within the diocese hinge on this key point.
3. Experience of SDF funded projects in the diocese has been mixed. Where a deanery has bought into and engaged with a project it was due to the **openness** of the project team and the way they have engaged with the deanery. This had enabled a positive **relationship** to be established with the deanery, the key features of which were frequent information and updates done in a spirit of **openness**.
4. If as a diocese we are serious about collaboration, then **time** is needed to do this properly. To get to know and work with a parish or congregation in discerning the next steps for them. Area Deans and Archdeacons are key to this process.
5. There are occasions of course where **time** is limited and not on our side and then action must be taken. This might, for example, be use of the Viability Focus Process (VFP) as is currently happening with some parishes. Using interventions prior to this crisis point such as the Strategic Discipleship Process (SDP) might enable parishes to address issues before getting to the VFP. The current Covid 19 crisis may have an impact in this area and will need a wider diocesan approach.
6. The collaborative process properly requires **time** and represents an 'ideal' process. This may be challenging but is needed to ensure we are not always reacting but proactively moving forward as well. Having an ideal process in place should also ensure that when more immediate and drastic action is needed it was easier to accomplish.

7. If we want people to own the vision and strategy of the diocese then we needed to invest in the time to make this happen and this group ought not to make recommendations which are top down but rather offer a review process which
8. sought the involvement of those impacted by it. The recommendations later on reflect this approach.

Area Deans

1. Area Deans are a key part of diocesan leadership. They form a bridge between parishes and the Bishop's Staff Team and are leaders in mission in their deaneries.
2. Some key relationships were identified
 - Area Dean and Archdeacon – this is the primary way in which the Area Dean has input into the Bishop's staff team. Regular conversations need to happen in a spirit of honesty and openness in order that a relationship of trust can be established. There was a clear sense that these relationships had been created although it was noted that often the workload of Archdeacons made this a challenge to maintain over time. The regular meetings between archdeacons and area deans were seen as useful and should be maintained.
 - Area Dean and Parish Priests – This is another relationship of trust which must be established over time. It is a role involving both pastoral and practical support together with helping to tackle the missional challenge all churches face. This role can also help Parishes to remain aware of the bigger picture in the area of the deanery and surrounds.
 - Area Dean and Lay Chair – Many diocese have reviewed these roles (York, Sheffield and Norwich for example) and identified them as key leaders resulting in new ways of forming deanery leadership teams and increasing the role and responsibility of the Lay Chair in particular. This is particularly so in the Diocese of Manchester which is restructuring into seven 'super deaneries' with an Area Dean who will not have a parish responsibility. We feel there is a need to consider ways in which area deans and lay chairs can work closer together in leading the deanery.
 - Area Dean and Deanery Synod – the Area Dean and Lay Chair have particular leadership roles here where there is real potential for deanery synods and their sub-committees to become greater hubs of mission planning.
3. We considered the current model of five-year terms of office for area deans in relation to the time needed to establish relationships and develop them in order for exciting things to happen. We would suggest that a model of recruiting to the role of Area Dean is a better one thus removing the five-year time limit. We have produced a suggested role description for Area Deans at Appendix A.

Lay Chairs

1. Are these perceived as more functional roles rather than leadership ones? What might be done to address this?
2. What might be done to ensure these roles attract good quality volunteers and are not seen as administrative or burdensome but exciting and full of potential.
3. How might the area dean, lay chair and archdeacon work closer together to encourage and develop growth in depth, impact and number?
4. A suggested role description for Lay Chairs is given at Appendix B.

Communication

1. There was a recognition that communication around different projects and indeed the diocesan strategy had not always been as clear as it needed to be.
2. Any mass communications need to be more **open** about the real situation. One member felt that the recent letter regarding parish share during the crisis had been too opaque and that a better response might have been received with a greater degree of **openness** about the real situation.
3. This idea of **openness** and **relationship** was discussed and the need for it to work both ways from the parish up through Area Dean and Archdeacon and back the other way. This might be through the deanery plan, ideas from the parish or the Area Dean and Archdeacon asking some challenging questions of those parishes who are struggling.

Proposals for action.

We set out five proposals for action below but they are all about one thing, which is engendering a relationship of trust between the diocese, deaneries and parishes, so that problems are shared and, where possible, solutions are worked out together. That requires much more openness from the diocese about the nature of a problem and much greater generosity in the deaneries and parishes in understanding the difficulties and dilemmas the diocese is facing.

We are suggesting that the deaneries are treated as key mission units and this will necessitate development so that rather than having to persuade people to be involved at a deanery level there is real purpose and value in deanery synods and committees and people are keen to be involved. We recognise that historically people have perceived deaneries as a burden rather than a tool for mission but we believe that when given a dynamic and real purpose this would change. During the current Covid19 situation the Isle of Wight Deanery Council and Synod have been a key part of sharing information and seeking opinions and they have risen to the challenge well having been given a specific task. A suggestion relating to deanery synod committees is given at appendix D.

With this in mind our proposals are as follows:

1. The **deanery** should be developed by the diocese as the **key level of planning** and the intermediary with the parishes in questions of overall strategy, organisation and financial allocations.
2. **Deanery plans** should be the means by which the diocese and deanery agree the way forward in allocating resources and agreeing how to grow in depth, impact and numbers in each area. These plans must be dynamic, working documents which are under constant review and adaptable according to changing circumstances.

3. **Area deans** should be recruited to the role against a job description, rather than rotating every five years. The resources available to the dean and the time commitment should be agreed as part of the appointment. Appendix A
4. The **Lay Chair** of the deanery should be recognised as the key partner of the Area Dean in planning the future of the deanery and supporting the mission of the parishes. There should be a clear job description and recruitment process for the role and appropriate training. Appendix B
5. There should be an **agreed and public diocesan framework** (Appendix C) to guide future discussions between the diocese, deaneries and parishes about future plans for restructuring churches and parishes. This should be applied to the drawing up of deanery plans in normal times and be adaptable to any significant proposals for restructuring or reorganising churches and parishes, including SDF projects. It should include
 - a clear statement at the outset of the diocese's aims and objectives, the problem (with the financial background) to be solved and the kind of issues which need to be considered by parishes.
 - an agreed and public timescale for the deanery to produce a response, allowing enough time for discussion and consultation.
 - a period of consultation in the parishes, led by the deanery but with representatives of the diocese being willing to attend to answer questions and explain. If possible, a minimum of three months should be allowed for this.
 - a deanery plan setting out how it proposes to meet the challenges set by the diocese.
 - a final period of discussion between the deanery and diocese about the plan. The presumption should be that the plan will be accepted, but the diocese, through the Bishop and Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee retains the right of final decision. If the plan is not accepted, a further period of two months should be allowed for the deanery and parishes to consider and make final representations.

These proposals have been drawn up for the long term sustainable structure of the diocese and we suggest that they are implemented immediately so that they can be adapted to manage the more immediate short term financial challenges which the

diocese is facing as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. The group would be willing to stay in place until this is done.

The Venerable Peter Leonard (Chair)
Mrs Debbie Sutton
The Reverend Canon Bob White
Chamberlain

Sir David Normington
The Reverend Jane Ball
The Reverend Paul

Appendix A

Area Dean Role Description

The Purpose of the Role

- To share with the Bishop and Archdeacon in their ministry of oversight across the deanery
- To lead the deanery, working collaboratively with the Lay Chair and Deanery Standing Committee/Council.
- To fulfil the canonical expectations of being Area Dean

Primary Responsibilities

- Lead and co-ordinate the Deanery Standing Committee/Council, in conjunction with the Lay Chair.
- Ensure a Deanery Plan for Mission & Ministry is created and implemented, working closely with the Deanery Standing Committee/Council and Deanery Synod.
- Chair the Deanery Synod jointly with the Lay Chair
- Exercise the canonical responsibilities of an Area Dean (see C23 of the Canons) and those expected during Parish Vacancies
- Ensure that an appropriate structure for Clergy Chapter is established, and regular gatherings of all licensed and authorised ministers.

Key Tasks

Working collaboratively with the Lay Chair and the Deanery Standing Committee/Council, you will ensure:

- a) The Deanery Standing Committee/Council meets regularly and has a membership which is appropriate for the deanery

- b) A Deanery Plan for Mission & Ministry is created with the full involvement of the Deanery Synod and following consultation with PCC's.
- c) The Deanery Synod has an engaging agenda and develops a pattern of meetings which encourages involvement, creativity and meaningful outcomes; ordinarily sharing in the chairing of these meetings with the Lay Chair.
- d) The administrative needs of the Deanery Synod, Area Dean and Lay Chair are identified, and appropriate support is put in place

- e) Participation in the mission and life of the deanery is encouraged amongst the laity and the clergy, and that training is made available where appropriate

The following tasks are specific to the Area Dean, and may be shared with an Associate Area Dean :

- f) Be aware of the general well-being of the clergy; informing the Bishop of any particular causes for rejoicing or concern
- g) Inform the Bishop and Archdeacon of any legal or practical concerns arising from the parishes
- h) On occasions, to act as the 'local' representative for the Bishop and/or Archdeacon.
- i) Ensure that the Clergy Chapter, and/or any other Gatherings which involve the Clergy, is shaped and led in a manner which serves its membership and encourages an active participation
- j) Support parishes through times of vacancy which includes : the formal shared responsibility, with the Church Wardens , for the day to day oversight of the parish; attending the PCC's Pre-Vacancy meeting; advising on issues as they arise; handling applications for churchyard memorials and playing an active role on the interview day
- k) Oversee arrangements for Services of Licensing, Institution or Collation and acts as a focus for the deanery's initial support of new Incumbents and their families
- l) Support the Archdeacon in their Parish Visitations
- m) Be aware of the financial situation within the deanery and actively seek to encourage financial generosity and commitment
- n) Be the local link, where appropriate, with Civic, Ecumenical and Inter-

Faith partners

- o) Attend regular meetings with the Bishop and Archdeacon

Key Relationships

- The Bishop and Archdeacon
- The Lay Chair
- The Deanery Standing Committee/Council and Deanery Synod
- The Gatherings of Ministers, especially the Clergy
- Churchwardens, especially of parishes in vacancy

Commitment, Resourcing and Support

The role of Area Dean is stimulating and stretching; it develops clergy and gives them a wider perspective on ministry. It can also be very demanding, especially when a deanery has a number of vacancies or particular issues arise. It is recognised that resources are required and, whilst different contexts will be able to express this in different ways, the following need to be considered:

1. **Ministerial Support.** On the assumption that the Area Dean is an Incumbent, it is envisaged that if their benefice does not already have a team of Ministers (Lay and self-supporting or stipendiary Clergy) to share the demands of authorized and licensed ministry, then an attempt would be made to identify colleagues who could minister in the benefice.
2. **Administrative Support.** Being Area Dean brings extra administrative demands, though these are not regular or predictable in nature. Support may be provided by various means which will need to be investigated in each deanery.
3. **Expenses.** Clear guidelines for expenses will be provided, with an explicit encouragement for expenses to be claimed
4. **Training.** Training for Area Deans and Lay Chairs will be provided.
5. **Collegiality and Collaboration.** It is hoped that Area Deans will benefit from the shared ministry with the Lay Chair, the Deanery Standing Committee/Council, and through regular meetings with the Bishop and Archdeacon.

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Lay Chair Role Description

The Purpose of the Role

- To share in the leadership of the deanery, working collaboratively with the Area Dean and Deanery Standing Committee/Council.

Primary Responsibilities

- Share in the leadership of the Deanery and Deanery Standing Committee/Council, working collaboratively with the Area Dean.
- Ensure a Deanery Plan for Mission & Ministry is created and implemented, working closely with the Deanery Standing Committee/Council and Deanery Synod.
- Chair the Deanery Synod jointly with the Area Dean
- Take the lead jointly with the Area Dean in ensuring that the deanery synod is active in carrying out the functions set out the Synodical Government Measure 1969 section 5, and in carrying out functions and responsibilities assigned to the deanery synod by diocesan synod
- Convene and chair any meetings of the deanery House of Laity

Key Tasks

Working collaboratively with the Area Dean and Deanery Standing Committee/Council, you will ensure:

- a) The Deanery Standing Committee/Council meets regularly and has a membership which is appropriate for the deanery
- b) A Deanery Plan for Mission & Ministry is created with the full involvement of the Deanery Synod and following consultation with PCC's.
- c) The Deanery Synod has an engaging agenda and develops a pattern of meetings which encourages involvement, creativity and meaningful outcomes; sharing in the chairing of these meetings with the Area Dean.
- d) The administrative needs of the Deanery Synod, Area Dean and Lay Chair are identified and appropriate support is put in place
- e) Participation in the mission and life of the deanery is encouraged amongst the laity and the clergy, and that training is made available where appropriate

The following tasks are specific to the Lay Chair:

- f) Support parishes through times of vacancy, in particular by attending the PCC's Pre-Vacancy meeting, playing an active role on the interview days and representing the laity at Institutions and Licensings

- g) Inform the Bishop and Archdeacon of any legal or practical concerns arising from the parishes
- h) Respond to requests made by the Bishop or by other appointing bodies, for information and advice on deanery appointments, including a new Area Dean
- i) Be aware of the financial situation within the deanery and actively seek to encourage financial generosity and commitment
- j) Attend regular meetings with the Bishop and Archdeacon

- k) **Key Relationships**
 - The Bishop and Archdeacon
 - The Area Dean
 - The Deanery Standing Committee/Council and Deanery Synod
 - The Laity in the deanery
 - The Gatherings of Ministers
 - Churchwardens, especially of parishes in vacancy

Commitment, Resourcing and Support

The role of Lay Chair is a significant lay role in the life of the deanery and the wider diocese. The time commitment varies significantly from week to week and it must always be borne in mind that the role is being fulfilled voluntarily and that there may be occasions when circumstances restrict how much time and energy can be devoted to it.

1. **Expenses.** Clear guidelines for expenses will be provided, with an explicit encouragement for expenses to be claimed

2. **Training.** Training for Lay Chairs and Area Deans will be provided.

3. **Collegiality and Collaboration.** It is hoped that Lay Chairs will benefit from the shared ministry with the Area Dean, the Deanery Standing Committee/Council, and through regular meetings with the Bishop and Archdeacon.

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Portsmouth Diocese and its deaneries: working together

A framework for planning the future

Purpose

This framework is designed to help the Portsmouth diocese and its deaneries to work together to plan the future development of the church community in Portsmouth, south-east Hampshire and the Isle of Wight in responding to God's call to proclaim the good news of the kingdom. It is designed to be used both in "normal" times and as a process for tackling sudden changes in circumstances or resources either across the whole diocese or in particular places.

No planning framework can entirely remove or resolve all the anxieties and disagreements, which can arise when there is the prospect of change in long-standing structures and practice. But it is underpinned by a deep belief that the best way to further God's work in our parishes and diocese is by working together in a common Christian endeavour.

Our starting point

The starting point for any plan is the Portsmouth diocesan strategy: live- pray- serve. We want to grow God's church in south-east Hampshire and the Isle of Wight in depth, impact and numbers:

- **Depth:** so that everyone will be able to explore and grow in fellowship and discipleship;
- **Impact:** so that God's love may be evident in all that we do in loving our neighbours, so that in every place, parish and community we can care for those around us; and
- **Numbers:** so that all churches and styles of church are flourishing throughout the diocese with an increasing number of new disciples each year, and regular attendance in church rising.

We also ask everyone in the diocese to be mindful of our shared values: we are courageous, resourceful, generous, collaborative and pioneering. We want this planning framework to promote a new spirit of generosity across the diocese as we face together the challenges of growing God's church in a post Covid world. We hope it will foster trust, openness and partnership.

The role of the deanery

Strong parishes are key to the mission of the church in implementing the diocesan strategy. However, resources are limited and increasingly that mission requires collaboration and the sharing of expertise and resources across parish boundaries.

The role of each of the seven deaneries in the diocese is, therefore, to

- ensure there is a clear mission at parish level across the deanery
- support parishes in carrying forward that mission
- encourage and enable collaboration and partnership between parishes; and
- in partnership with the Bishop and Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, to develop plans for the deployment of resources in order to achieve church growth in depth, impact and numbers.

Deanery plans

Deanery plans should be living, flexible documents and be revised, if circumstances change and particularly where there are proposals for new churches or significant restructuring or reorganisation of churches or parishes. A deanery plan should set out the mission of the deanery and its parishes and how the resources of the diocese and deanery are to be deployed across its parishes in fulfilment of its mission. The deanery plan should be the main way in which the diocese, deanery and parishes discuss, agree and review the future mission of the church in the deanery.

The plans should in normal times be renewed at least every five years. The resource constraints following Covid 19 are likely to require all deanery plans to be substantially rewritten and revised.

Process for drawing up plans

Whether drawing up deanery plans in normal times or revising those plans to respond to major changes in circumstances or significant proposals for restructuring or reorganisation churches, the following process should be followed:

- There should be a clear statement at the outset from the diocese of its aims, objectives and expectations, the challenges to be tackled and any other issues, which need to be considered by parishes and deaneries. Some of these may be general to the whole diocese, some specific to a particular deanery or parish.

Where there are specific financial considerations or constraints, these should be fully explained at the outset, in a spirit of openness, to the deanery and parishes.

- The diocese and deanery should agree a timescale for the production and agreement of the plan. This may vary according to urgency but it is essential to allow enough time for discussion and consultation within parishes and between the diocese, deanery and parishes.
- It is for each deanery to agree, in consultation with the Archdeacon, the process for how its plan should be drawn up. The Area Dean and Lay Chair supported by the Archdeacon, will have a key leadership role in ensuring the process is collaborative and participative.
- Particular care must be taken to involve the parishes and their congregations in the process. Consultations should be led by the parish priest, supported by the Area Dean and, if appropriate, with the Archdeacon and representatives of the diocese being willing to attend to answer questions and explain. If possible, a minimum of three months should be allowed for this consultation.
- The proposed plan should both reflect discussions within parishes and respond to the expectations set by the diocese. It should set out the mission of the deanery and how the resources of deanery and diocese are to be allocated to further that mission.
- The drawing up of the plan will be an iterative process between the diocese, the deanery and the parishes, leading, where possible, to the plan being agreed by the deanery synod and the diocese.
- Where, despite extensive consultations, a plan cannot be agreed, a further period of at least two months should be allowed for reflection and further representations. The final decision rests at diocesan level with the Bishop and the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee. Where that is done without the agreement of the deanery, a full explanation of the reasons for disagreeing with the deanery or parishes should be provided.

Conclusion

This framework has been drawn to provide a long-term sustainable structure for planning the future of the diocese and its deaneries. It has, however, also been designed for tackling the immediate financial and other challenges which the diocese is facing as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.

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Deanery Synods within the Diocese of Portsmouth

The relevant extract for Deanery Synods within the Standing Orders of the Diocese of Portsmouth Diocesan Synod state:

STANDING COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP

11. There shall be a standing committee of the synod consisting of the joint chairmen, the secretary, the treasurer and not more than six other persons, the latter to be elected by the members of each house in equal numbers from among their membership. This committee shall have no power to co-opt additional members but may invite non-members to attend for advisory purposes.

ELECTED MEMBERS

12. Elections shall be triennial, at the first meeting of the synod in a new triennium. Voting shall be by houses and procedure otherwise the same, with essential modifications, as for elections at an annual parochial church meeting. The outgoing standing committee shall make no nominations.

FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

13. The functions of the standing committee shall be to initiate and advise on proposals; to ensure that synod members are adequately informed on questions raised and other matters of importance to the deanery; to prepare the agenda; to transact the business of the synod between meetings; and to make such appointments and do such other things as the synod may delegate to it.

OTHER COMMITTEES

14. The synod shall constitute a Finance Committee, a Pastoral Committee and other additional committees with such chairmen, membership, term of office, functions, mode of appointment, and other procedure as it thinks fit.

PROCEDURE OF COMMITTEES

15. Subject to these rules, and any resolution of the synod, the chairmanship and the procedure of a committee, including the standing committee, shall be determined by itself.

There is a great deal of flexibility allowed which can be a good thing in terms of application in context but does result in a lack of uniformity which can cause confusion.

We would like to suggest the following as models of good practice in each deanery depending on size and context:

1. A Deanery Standing and Pastoral Committee and a separate Deanery Finance Committee. Both would need to work together on the planning process.
2. A Deanery Council which acts as Standing, Pastoral and Finance Committees where the responsibility for the planning process would rest.

Close collaboration between Archdeacon, Area Dean and Lay Chair together with these committees should ensure that the planning process is owned at Deanery level whilst also reflecting the Diocesan needs and strategy.