

Consultation notes: Havant

The Archdeacon welcomed people to the meeting and introduced the diocesan team who were to give input during the evening. The Archdeacon explained the structure of the evening, its aim, and the process for consultation. Members of the diocesan team then each presented different parts of the evening, and responded to questions.

The aim of the evening was to consult about plans for pastoral reorganisation, i.e. about how we organize our parishes and ministry roles. The wider aim was to help churches plan and adapt for ministry which cares for our existing congregations, but which also help to reach new people and grow as a church.

In terms of process, this was the beginning of a six month process of consultation. There would be a number of opportunities for everyone to engage both formally and informally within this process. The process was being driven by a desire to increase impact within the affected areas and to reach more people with the love of God. It was not being driven by costs savings, closing churches or by choosing only to manage decline.

[There were a number of interruptions during this section and for the rest of the evening's consultation. The note taker for the evening recorded to the best of her ability the key points that were being made, but this was not always possible as people sometimes spoke over each other and interrupted the speakers. Not every interruption is recorded. Where the same point was made multiple times, it is recorded once. Many people did not speak at all. Some people spoke privately to members of the diocesan team during and after the presentation and their contributions are not recorded unless they gave permission for that to happen. Everyone was assured that they could telephone, email, or write to the diocesan office and that their views would be collected and taken seriously during the process of consultation.]

The presentation continued:

Why are we changing?

- We are exploring new patterns of ministry in churches across the diocese, not just in this deanery.
- There are some areas of the diocese where, despite the best efforts of clergy and congregations, relatively few people go to church.
- At this time we have the opportunity to apply for additional funds to support new growth projects. In order to be eligible for these funds we also need to release money from our existing budgets and invest in mission.

We have learned that:

- Working with more children and families leads to growth.
- When churches relate to local needs – e.g. debt, food poverty, housing, carers, loneliness – then they can also help people grow in faith.
- It is significantly more likely that we will attract those who have never gone to church before by also providing new, accessible, child-friendly worship services.
- Planting new churches with a fresh approach – e.g. Leesland Neighbourhood Church in Gosport and Harbour Church in Portsmouth city – can rapidly reach many people who wouldn't otherwise go to church.
- Any new initiative works best with a whole team approach, not just a lone individual.

- Any new resourcing initiative needs help and support from surrounding churches, deanery, diocese, and can give support and resources back to others in turn as it grows.

Why are we changing in these particular parishes?

- We want to create an environment here where:
 - all of the churches can flourish and grow;
 - we can be wise stewards of all of the resources that we have;
 - the church buildings can be better used by the local community;
 - the churches can have a bigger impact on some of the issues which are faced in this area;
 - churches here can be a resource and support to other churches in Havant deanery.

We want to free people from the burdens of finances, administration, and buildings so that rather than only maintaining the existing church they will also be able to support new projects, opportunities, and communities

What might we be changing?

- The estates of Leigh Park are currently separated into three parishes – Leigh Park, West Leigh, and Warren Park.
- There are currently two full time clergy who cover those parishes and a pioneer minister who works across all of the PO9 area.

We want to:

- Create one parish that covers all of the estates within Leigh Park;
- Increase the staffing levels from 3 to 5 across this parish, with a mixture of clergy, pioneering and operations staff;
- Invest in updating building resources to ensure the buildings can be better used by local communities.

Maps were shown, with affected areas in different colours

What might we do differently?

- Over the coming weeks we are going to be talking to local churches and community groups about what this investment could look like. We will want to hear your views.
- At the moment we don't know exactly what this will look like but possible ideas include:
 - a church plant focussed on younger people;
 - more children's and families ministry;
 - social outreach – foodbanks, debt support, carers?;

- operational support for buildings, finance, and administration.
- Including existing resources we aim to spend over £1.4 million over the next five years on ministry in the Leigh Park estates.
- This is approximately double what we currently spend.
- We want everyone to know the fullness of life that comes from faith in Jesus Christ.
- We want our churches to grow so that they are sustainable and can reach more people.
- We believe that by combining all three parishes together and having a coordinated plan for ministry, we could help these things to happen.

What are we consulting on?

- Although we are keen to hear your views on our proposals for new ministry in the Leigh Park Estates, what we need to consult you about – first informally and then formally, when more definite plans are in place – is basically this:

Should we unite benefices and so create one new parish which combines the existing parishes in Leigh Park, Warren Park and West Leigh?

Participants were provided with sticky notes to record their ideas, working in small groups

1. *What do you like about the plans that we have outlined so far?*
2. *What concerns you?*
3. *What have we not considered that we might need to look at further?*

[A small number of participants insisted that they did not want to write on sticky notes in small groups but wanted to carry on giving their views to the whole meeting. The diocesan team asked people to write on the sticky notes so that the voices of people who did not want to speak in the public meeting could also be heard. Many people did use the sticky notes, others chose not to, and instead engaged 1:1 with the diocesan team or talked to each other.]

There was a time of feedback and the following points were made/questions were asked during this time, or had been made during the presentation earlier and were then picked up in the feedback.

Questions were answered where possible (and recorded below) and points were taken and recorded.

- The Diocese not understanding Leigh Park estates.
- Why was the meeting not held at St Francis church?

Because it needed to be held on neutral ground within Havant deanery, not in any of the three potentially-affected churches, and because others from the deanery were also welcome to come.

- The churches are the heart of the community.
- We are concerned over the job roles of the two vicars.

As with many organisations when you make changes to its structure there are legal implications. For people who are employed by a company often they are notified that they are at risk of redundancy. Whilst clergy are not employees their roles they are still put at risk when you make changes to a parish structure, and as such we have as part of the process

informed those affected. We hope that many of those affected will choose to apply for roles in the new structure.

- How can these 2 people be supported – fb page with over 600 signatures.

The jobs would be advertised as any other post.

- The redundancies are a worry – is Diocese aware about welfare issues of clergy and their families? – they would be unemployed and homeless – Diocese would be responsible for their pastoral support and care and their state of mind. No care had been provided by the diocese – there had been no contact from the diocese and this was a disgrace (Beryl Jones)

Pastoral support was taken very seriously and had been offered and any support that is requested will be set up for clergy or their families.

- It was important to get people to church but community involvement equally important and Fr Jonathan was going to schools and into the community to bring people closer to God.
- Would the new people go into the community, as the community was not going to come to them?

These plans were intended to do exactly that.

- The Diocesan plans on the website said about the redeployment of people, finances and buildings – audacity to lump priests amongst finances and buildings.
- Diocese did not have the grace to call the priests.
- This was manipulation – not incorporating biblical truth.
- Everyone wants change but we don't want it – it is fine here.
- The plan talked about investment and offering practical help with admin. There was a blatantly obvious division showing those parishes up that didn't have enough people to carry out these roles. Why has this investment not been brought in in the past and why has the Diocese not offered support before?

The Diocese had provided admin support with the finances at St Francis and we were looking to provide exactly that kind of support in future.

- Keep the two vicars – they are the life of the church and run the churches.
- As a family member of St Francis for 50 years I have seen 6 ordained priests at one stage doing the same work as 1 priest does now.
- The 2 pioneers that were sent into St Francis and St Clare did not work as they weren't engaged with the community.
- People need to know that Leigh Park people are loyal and don't want new people who do new things.
- If the Diocese wants to make people's lives better, then invest in buildings and give the clergy the support they need.
- You are talking about church not about building – this is our community.
- You don't know or believe in our community.
- We don't need to be in church – good people are not necessarily Christians.
- Fr Jonathan oozes goodness.

We will be coming into the community, groups and schools as this consultation continues.

- We don't want no-one (sic) to lose their jobs.
- Church is buildings – these are our people.
- The Diocesan plans are ambitious and detailed and sadly about structures, numbers and money not people and their wishes. The studies didn't include talking to unchurched and those let down by the church.
- Many denominations are represented in Leigh Park and work together, eg the community nativity play.
- It is not about bums on seats.
- If you are the people of God, why have the two vicars not been consulted?

This is the beginning of the consultation – we informed the two affected vicars in advance of this public meeting and now there is an opportunity for everyone to hear about the consultation process together and to give their views.

- Fr Jonathan has developed a 5-year strategic plan, which was ignored and now they are offered redundancy plans.
- You should categorically state that the two clergy could take these new positions and help people in their community.
- Give these people a chance.
- The main focus has to be about God's plan. Who knows what God has in store for these clergy, would they not go at some stage anyway? If God wants them to stay he will make that happen and if he wants them to move on and do good somewhere else he also will do that.
- Not everyone goes to church – why not? Is this not an opportunity. Make it an opportunity.
- People say that “In God we trust.” That's not true here, in Leigh Park in Fr Jonathan we trust.
- Someone new would have to do an awful lot to learn and gain trust. Children love Fr Jonathan, he is child-friendly and we love his family.
- You throw him out like a bit of meat and this is unfair.
- Everything he has given to this community you dismiss and he gets a kicking.
- You ask him to apply for his own job. If he applies and doesn't get the job, he won't get the money.

That's not true. Redundancy is different for clergy. If they don't apply they are free to take the redundancy money offered. If they apply and do not get the job they still get the redundancy money.

- Will the pioneers come if I call them in the middle of the night, which our clergy have done?
- Why hasn't the archdeacon, or whoever is responsible for supporting the clergy and making sure that they are provided with enough admin support etc, given them more support? Fr Jonathan and his wife do the church notice sheets for themselves, and others should do things like that for them.
- We engage in schools through work with prayer spaces. Why don't you let the existing clergy run St Francis and St Alban and make St Clare's into another Harbour Church?

- If you are invited to apply that says that you are not required.
- It is personal even if you don't want to make it personal.
- You say it is about God. I didn't hear that this is about Christianity, humanity and compassion. It is not compassionate as you don't see that this family is laying their lives on the floor.
- Why can't you not say that the two clergy are the ideal candidates?
They are invited to apply and to work with the changes.
- We don't want change.

[The sticky notes were also collected so that their feedback could be recorded.]

The timetable for the consultation was outlined:

We are currently entering the *informal* consultation part of the process.

w/c **Monday 15th October**: Public Consultation Meetings

Friday 19th October: Informal letters sent to Legally Interested Parties plus anyone else who asks for them

Friday 30th November: closing date for written responses

Wednesday 5th December: statements of view and any scheme changes presented to the Bishop's Council

Following this we will have a *formal* consultation process lasting eight weeks [extended beyond the usual 4-6 weeks as it falls over the Christmas holidays]

Friday 7th December 2018: formal consultation letter and draft proposals sent to legally interested parties

Friday 1st February 2019: closing date for written responses

Monday 11th March 2019: statements of view and final draft proposals presented to the Bishop's Council

Friday 15th March 2019: Bishop Christopher to send draft scheme to Church Commissioners Pastoral Division

When the scheme has been received by the Church Commissioners Pastoral Division they will review and evaluate it. It will then be published. If there are representations the Church Commissioners will look at comments from this and other parts of the consultation process. They will make a decision in either May or July 2019.

The scheme could be made as early as 1 June 2019 and could come into effect on 1 December 2019.

Between these two dates we would look to recruit to new and vacant positions with the aim of people starting in new roles by 1 January 2020.

How we will communicate and how people can communicate with us?

We will continue to put information on the diocesan website and on our own social media. We will send emails to parish clergy and officers.

As well as the formal letters which are sent to interested parties, we are keen to hear from anyone who has a view.

You can email the deputy diocesan secretary: jenny.hollingsworth@portsmouth.anglican.org

You can write to us at The Diocese of Portsmouth, Peninsular House, Wharf Road, Portsmouth, PO2 8HB.

Two of the potentially affected clergy were given the opportunity to respond to what they had heard that evening. They made the following points:

- Touched and humbled by so much support from the community and their efforts and encouragement, love and support. We love you too. This proposal is doing away with something which is precious in our community. I am a champion and servant of Leigh Park. You are keen to skirt over some realities in this plan. On Tuesday we were presented with the plan and on Friday you called and gave notice of redundancies. If you had wanted to offer ministry in Leigh Park you would have done this differently and you could have consulted with us. You could have done this completely differently if you had wanted us to be involved. I am concerned that in order to do this in the time frame you had to do this hastily and this damages the reputation of the church and the diocese. Ten faithful clergy have to jump through hoops to get this money. It is not about personalities. Those people have proven track records showing that they can deliver but they are under-resourced. The consultation needs to be realistic and it needs to be not just hearing what people say but responding. I am very humbled and will continue and my allegiance is with the estate and the community here. We want to be included positively and constructively not in an abstract way. We want to see some action on what we heard this evening. (The Rev Jonathan Jeffery)
- Thank you for your support. Let's just sit quietly with God. (The Rev Karina Green)

The meeting closed with a prayer.