

Dioceses Commission

Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon and Leeds and Wakefield Reorganisation Scheme Evaluation



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The Commission gratefully acknowledges Professor Hilary Russell's work in compiling this Report on its behalf.

Hilary writes: "During the course of this study, more than 50 people took part in face-to-face or telephone interviews and others responded to me in writing after notices about the evaluation were posted on diocesan websites. I am grateful to them all for their very willing co-operation and to my colleagues on the Dioceses Commission for their guidance and support. However, I take full responsibility for any errors of fact, omission or interpretation."

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Foreword

The Dioceses Commission's recent West Yorkshire Scheme has broken new ground in lots of ways. No one had dissolved a diocese since Henry VIII in 1540 – and the last creation of a mainland diocese was in 1927. This was the first major review under the relatively new Dioceses, Mission and Pastoral Measure (2007): while the Measure provided a (statutory) basis for the Commission's work much of the detailed process had to be developed on the ground, often together with those being reviewed.

Given all of this, we were clear from the earliest days of the Review that it would be incumbent on us to enable an evaluation of *process* to take place. We have always recognised that there would be important lessons to be learned and so have repeated that commitment consistently. We are now delighted to make the Evaluation Report available. We hope it will be of particular interest to those caught up in future Reviews. Its value to the Commission in carrying out its future work I hope goes without saying.

Once the General Synod had approved the Scheme in July 2013 and we had all had a chance to draw breath, I invited one of the Commission's members, Professor Hilary Russell (Emeritus Professor of Urban Policy at Liverpool John Moores University) to undertake the evaluation. Hilary is a Social Scientist, widely respected for the evaluative work she has done. She has done a remarkable job over the last few months, both maintaining her objectivity and being open to contributions from a wide spectrum of those who had been involved in the review process itself.

As you read this document it is important to remember that Hilary's brief was to focus on the *process*, while memories were still relatively fresh. It is not an evaluation of the Review's substance or outcome. It would be far too early for that kind of exercise: full implementation of the Scheme will take years rather than months. In no sense, therefore, is this the last word on the subject.

We are grateful to those who have assisted the evaluation. I could not but recognise the same energy and enthusiasm which was the hallmark of so much of the Review itself. The willingness of so many people to 'go the extra mile' has been – and continues to be – remarkable. And so, in presenting this Report to the wider Church, we pay tribute to all those who have helped in shaping the idea and then the formation of the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales, so moving forward the Church's mission in this important part of England.

MICHAEL CLARKE
Chair, The Dioceses Commission
October 2014.

Part I: SETTING THE SCENE

Introduction

The Dioceses Commission always intended to try to learn from its first major scheme and, therefore, requested this evaluation exercise. The aim was to examine both the process leading up to the final scheme and the steps that followed between the General Synod decision and the Appointed Day and gain the perspectives of a range of stakeholders. The evaluation was *not* concerned with the content of the scheme or the arguments for and against it. Rather the purpose was to examine the procedures and practices around the development and early implementation of the scheme. It was always very clear that the smooth operation of the process depended upon very many interested parties far beyond the Dioceses Commission. Bearing in mind that this was a ‘first’ for everyone involved, the evaluation has sought to learn lessons not solely for the Commission, but for all concerned.

This report is in three parts. After this first part setting the scene, Part II recounts the story and reviews the process in West Yorkshire. The evaluation covered the period from the start of the Dioceses Commission focus on Yorkshire up to the early phase of the scheme’s implementation. It stopped at a point when there was still much to accomplish but the arrangements for going forward were firmly in place. No doubt, there would be merit in revisiting the scheme in a few years’ time to assess the later stages of implementation and the effectiveness of the new arrangements.

Essentially, there are three dimensions to this account:

- the approach and actions of the Dioceses Commission;
- other activity within the three dioceses prior to the decision being made about the scheme;
- the early steps taken after the decision was made at General Synod.

In practice, these can be difficult to disentangle but, in any case, Part II does not take the form of a straightforward narrative. Rather, it identifies different strands of the process and looks at these in turn.

Part III of the report identifies lessons and makes recommendations for any future reorganisation schemes based upon the West Yorkshire experience. Part II presents the findings upon which Part III is based, but the intention is that Part III can be read as a freestanding paper.

Background

The primary duty of the Dioceses Commission, which was set up in 2008, is to keep under review the provincial and diocesan structure of the Church of England. Under the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007, the Commission may make reorganisation schemes, either of its own volition in consequence of its review work or in response to proposals from diocesan bishops. As a result of writing to all diocesan bishops asking for suggestions about where it should start its work, the Commission focused upon Yorkshire.

It has been a long road from that initial decision in 2009 to look at the Yorkshire dioceses to the coming into being of the new diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales on Easter Sunday, 2014. It was not an easy process for many of those involved but, given that this was wholly uncharted territory, it is remarkable that so much has been achieved, thanks to the commitment, hard work and imagination of a great many people.

In addition to drawing on the relevant documentation, the evaluation has included interviews and discussions with:

- The Archbishop of York;
- The Mentor Bishop;
- Diocesan and Suffragan Bishops, Cathedral Deans, Archdeacons;
- Diocesan Secretaries and Communications Officers;
- Registrars;
- Diocesan Boards of Finance Chairs;
- Chairs of the Houses of Clergy and Laity;
- The Programme manager/Acting Diocesan Secretary;
- Staff in Church House Westminster;
- Past and present staff and members of the Dioceses Commission.

A few other people from West Yorkshire volunteered their views after it was announced that the evaluation was taking place.

An overview of the process

The Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007 laid down the four stages of the process for a reorganisation scheme:

1. Consultation with the interested parties.
2. Publication of a draft scheme with a report containing
 - o a statement of the effect of the proposals on the mission of the Church of England, and
 - o a detailed estimate of the financial effect of the proposals,followed by consultation with interested parties (3 – 6 months).
3. Publication of a final draft scheme and report as above, followed by consideration by the relevant diocesan synods.
4. Consideration by General Synod.

After looking across all the Yorkshire dioceses, the Commission focused on conducting a review of the Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon and Leeds, Sheffield and Wakefield and their boundaries with neighbouring dioceses. The review team met and took evidence from well over 200 people. The team met bishops and their senior staff, many rural deans and deanery lay chairs and significant numbers of parish clergy and lay representatives; council leaders and chief executives; leaders of other churches. The Commission also received a large amount of written evidence.

The report¹ published in December 2010 marked the start of stage 1: a consultation period which was originally due to end 9th May 2011, but was extended to 6th June 2011 to allow for corporate responses from diocesan bodies. This report proposed the dissolution of the existing dioceses of Bradford, Ripon and Leeds and Wakefield and the creation of a new diocese in their place. The vision was for a diocese better aligned with today's communities which would reconfigure episcopal ministry closer to the parishes and have more streamlined administration. This report provided the Commission's reasoning on how it narrowed its focus from the whole of Yorkshire to these three dioceses. *"Though there would undoubtedly be a sense of common Yorkshire identity, it is difficult to imagine that the scale*

¹ Appendix 1 shows the reports issued by the Commission during the course of the review from 2010 until the publication of the scheme.

of such a diocese would permit it to have a strong sense of what earlier reports have called 'diocesan consciousness' or 'a diocesan corporate life' ".² The fact that there are four Lords Lieutenant also suggested that there are discernible communities within it. Evidence from people in both areas showed that South Yorkshire is different from West Yorkshire and this was substantiated by the significance of the two city regions – Leeds and Sheffield – as reasonably self-contained areas in which people live, work and consume. The conclusion, therefore, was that South Yorkshire should continue to have its own diocese, whereas "West Yorkshire is a single entity, albeit a decentralized one, and . . .the Church needs to engage with it as such. Its division between three main dioceses militates against the Church's mission to West Yorkshire and indeed the Leeds City Region as a whole."³

At this stage, the Commission was seeking 'in principle' responses. The more than 140 written submissions received showed a general welcome for the main thrust of the proposals. The second major report in October 2011 (and the draft Scheme) largely reaffirmed its original thinking, whilst also making changes that reflected the feedback the Commission had received:

- The See of the new diocese was proposed to be Leeds (rather than Wakefield as first suggested), with the additional provision that it may be known as the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales – although this could not be its legal name for reasons explained in the Report⁴;
- The three cathedrals of Bradford, Ripon and Wakefield were to be retained with equal status;
- The option of Leeds Parish Church being accorded 'Pro-cathedral' status was kept open (it being up to a Bishop of Leeds whether or not to bring this provision into effect, should it be appropriate at some point in the future);
- A more limited number of parishes (about 20 or more than 50) were proposed for transfer to neighbouring dioceses to reduce disparities with civic boundaries..

There then followed the statutory six months consultation period up to the end of June 2012, which elicited over 100 representations. During this time, Commission members made further visits by invitation to speak, for example, as Synods.

In late 2011, a Preparation Group within the three dioceses was set up comprising representatives of their Bishop's Councils. The purpose was to anticipate steps that would need to be taken if the scheme was accepted. In June 2012, a Programme Manager was appointed to help co-ordinate the transition process.

The Dioceses Commission's third report was published on 29th October 2012 with a draft scheme that had changed very little from the previous one, though reflection on the views of individual parishes resulted in a smaller number being proposed for transfer. These documents were the ones that went to the diocesan synods (including those of the neighbouring dioceses of Blackburn and Sheffield that were affected by proposed parish transfers):

- the report and draft scheme,
- an explanatory memorandum,
- the statement about mission, and
- the financial estimate.

² Review Report No.2, p. 37

³ *Ibid.* p. 52

⁴ It required legislation by Measure. This process has now been started (see footnote 13) but the Dioceses Commission was clear it should not delay the scheme until the law was changed.

The diocesan synods voted on the scheme in March 2013. Bradford and Ripon and Leeds Diocesan Synods voted for the scheme; Wakefield voted against. Across the three dioceses, the votes in favour far exceeded those against. After due consideration, the Archbishop of York decided to forward the scheme for debate and decision at General Synod in July 2013. The vote in favour of the scheme was decisive, with only six opposed and the reorganisation was subsequently confirmed by the Privy Council on 9th October 2013.

Part II now elaborates on how various dimensions of the process were handled and how they were perceived.

PART II: LOOKING BACK

“The polity of the C of E militates against the needs of the management of change. The requirements of change should dictate behaviour.”⁵

“The Dioceses Commission has the ideas, tests them, refines them and then produces a scheme, but that is where its job stops. Then there is a very unsatisfactory void – no-one with the responsibility to take things forward.”

Introduction

This section looks at the process leading up to the reorganisation of the West Yorkshire dioceses under different headings:

- Timescale
- Consultation
- Communications
- Managing change
- Finances
- Boundary parishes

Before addressing these, however, it is worth giving an overview of what those interviewed in the evaluation thought went well and what went less well. Starting with the latter, there were some questions about the way the case for change was presented. Was it strong enough? Why was the *status quo* untenable? What was attractive about the future being proposed? There were criticisms that the Commission did not present a sufficiently clear ‘mission case’. (It is relevant to note here that there is an inherent tension between the demand for the Commission to present such a case and the principle of local determination of mission.) However, the most frequent criticism was about the failure to take into account the human implications of the scheme and the lack of care shown to affected individuals at different stages of the process. The report says more about this later. The determined opposition from one of the dioceses concerned was clearly problematic. Could this have been avoided or better handled? In addition, the issue of cathedrals, as well as being important in itself, became a focus of opposition to the scheme. Some aspects of the process leading to the reorganisation were outside the Dioceses Commission’s sphere of responsibility. But arguably the Commission should have been more perceptive in anticipating them – both in terms of identifying necessary interventions by others at different stages and foreseeing and being prepared for potential flashpoints.

A number of points were made in answer to the question ‘what went well?’. One was that the Commission “*felt like a learning group*”. Despite the danger of being seen as a sort of Church Ofsted coming in to ‘inspect’, there seemed to be widespread view that the staff and members of the Commission really wanted to listen and learn. This started at the point of the initial consultation, which most respondents felt was very thorough in the range of people seen and the time and trouble taken. It continued through to appreciation of Commission staff and members attending subsequent meetings when the dioceses concerned were considering the proposals. Other points made, not necessarily from people who supported the scheme, were that “*it forced us to think about mission*” and that there was enough goodwill for a viable process.

⁵ Unless otherwise stated, all the quotes in the report are taken from the interviews.

There was also praise for the contribution of particular people on the ground, including the Programme Manager. *“Despite the inevitable difficulties of being in the vanguard of such a reorganisation, I think we have got to this stage because of general goodwill (and even applied Christian faith!) and some remarkable leadership They have worked extremely hard at holding the confidence, even when the ultimate outcome could be detrimental personally. They have convinced many of the naysayers and hung on even when at times things were almost intolerable for them personally. I can’t imagine the same result being achieved in similar circumstances in secular business.”*

Timescale

Proceeding from the initial consideration of Yorkshire for reorganisation through to the Inauguration and Confirmation of Election of the new diocesan bishop was clearly a lengthy process. For local people, this was broken down into various phases: the preliminary consultation; the period between the first and second reports; the time from the scheme’s publication to the vote at diocesan synods; the wait thereafter first to see if the scheme would be referred to General Synod and then for the Synod vote to happen; the eight months leading up to the Appointed Day and then the seven weeks up to the Inauguration and Confirmation of the Election of the Diocesan Bishop.

There were major questions about the timescales especially the period up to the decision at General Synod and then between General Synod and the Appointed Day. On the first, opinions differed about whether the timescale was *too long* or *necessarily long* not only for thorough consultation but also for the detailed preparation required for constructing such a scheme. The Commission allowed the maximum time to avoid any suggestion of railroading the scheme through, but there were questions in particular about whether the subsequent changes justified the length of time between the first and second reports. The main problems associated with the timescale were that it induced planning blight, it became hard to sustain interest and momentum and it meant prolonged uncertainty for individuals concerned about their future. It was also pointed out that it extended the time for campaigning against change.

The converse question arose about the post-decision timescale. Was it too short or just manageable? As General Synod took place in July, it was followed almost inevitably by a fallow holiday period. Delay over clarifying the Programme Manager’s new contract, which was not signed until December 2013, was demotivating. In the event, the major challenge of setting up a new Diocesan Board of Finance with charitable and company status – a process led by the Diocesan Secretary of Wakefield - and other essential tasks were achieved but not without difficulty and stress. There were no precedents for dismantling dioceses or for creating a new one so that it is important to underline the immense amount of work required to make it happen, some of which will be indicated later in this report. The need to break new ground has continued long after the Appointed Day. The process at this stage was not helped by the earlier embargo on any planning that might have been construed as pre-empting the decision.

Consultation

Preliminary consultation

The first step taken by the Dioceses Commission towards determining where it should focus first was to compare the boundaries of the English dioceses with those of the secular communities that they served. The resulting paper, “Discrepancies between Diocesan and Local Authority Boundaries: A Preliminary Survey” was sent to all diocesan bishops with an

invitation to comment on it and on the question of which region should be the priority for the Commission's initial work. This consultation had the benefit of demonstrating that the Commission was not just plucking its starting point out of thin air. It resulted in the decision to start a review of the boundaries of the five Yorkshire dioceses (Bradford, Ripon and Leeds, Sheffield, Wakefield and York) in the autumn of 2009 with the following aim: "*to establish whether the shape and boundaries of the existing dioceses tend to facilitate the Church's mission to the people and communities of Yorkshire or whether different boundaries would enable the Church to relate to them more effectively*"⁶. It was made clear at the time that the Commission's agenda was to ensure the best fit between dioceses and the communities they serve. There were no preconceived ideas about either reducing or increasing the number of dioceses.

The well attended fringe meeting held at General Synod July 2009 Group of Sessions was another useful exercise. It was effective in communicating the Commission's role and illustrating something of the complexity of its task. A subsequent presentation to the Church Commissioners served a similar purpose.

Local consultation by the review team

"The opportunity people had to express themselves . . . perhaps contributed to the way they became more positive once the decision was made."

Following the preparatory work, the review of the Yorkshire dioceses began in January 2010. The local consultation was undertaken by a review team comprising Dr Chadwick, Professor Clarke⁷ and the Secretary. The team made five visits to Yorkshire over a total of 15 days between January and June. In all, 80 meetings were held and oral evidence was taken from over 200 individuals, including senior diocesan staff, rural deans and lay chairs, parish clergy and lay representatives, ecumenical partners, Lords Lieutenant, and members and officers of local authorities. The full Commission received detailed reports of the review team's meetings as well as copies of all written submissions. After some of the early meetings, it was decided to focus on the three dioceses of Bradford, Ripon and Leeds and Wakefield and on the western boundary of the Diocese of York.

The evaluation has shown that local participants were most appreciative of the time and effort put in by the Review Team, especially as it was recognised that some of the visits coincided with very inclement weather and entailed difficult travelling conditions. In general, it was thought that a very good range of consultees was covered although, not surprisingly, views differed about the precise make-up of the list. At one extreme, it was felt that insufficient time was given to local mayors and other civic leaders; at the other, the view was expressed they should have been excluded altogether because this was purely a 'Church' matter.

One suggestion was that it would have been useful for the Review Group to have met with all the staff as a group in each diocesan office. Another was that more consultation could have been conducted *via* the diocesan websites.

Other issues emerged though not extensively and they were often more nebulous and to some extent, were concerns that tended to be felt by people who had reservations about the scheme. Was there equity in the way the Commission consulted across the three dioceses concerned? Was the scope of the consultation transparent enough? Was the Commission really interested in the responses or was this a token exercise? Overwhelmingly, however,

⁶ Review Report No 2, November 2010, p.4

⁷ At this stage Dr Chadwick was Chair of the Commission; and Professor Clarke was Vice-Chair.

even those opposed to the scheme were content with the consultation process. Often respondents of varying shades of opinion pointed out the significance of local dynamics and cultures, different theologies and the effects of the stances of key players. Consequently, it would be impossible to please everyone, but it was also important to consider such factors.

Consultation and discussion within the dioceses after the publication of the proposals

After the early work, a review report was published in November 2010. Over 140 responses were received. After considering all the evidence it received, the Commission amended its recommendations. The draft scheme was then put out for formal consultation on 1 November 2011. This consultation period lasted until June 2012.

One of the main messages emerging from the evaluation is the importance of leadership and organisation in setting the ‘tone’ of local debate. Approaches differed across the three dioceses; there was said to be a “structure of negativity” in one. A question that arises is how far the strongly expressed views of bishops – whether positive or negative – influence or inhibit the way that clergy and lay people think and speak.

A key issue is whether there was any way in which the Dioceses Commission could have acted that would have reduced the level of outright opposition. There was some criticism of the tone of 2010 Review Report in reference to Wakefield Diocese, which illustrates the sensitivity of the Commission’s task. It was felt that the report conveyed the impression that the Commission was coming in to inspect and judge and that this could have affected later reactions for the proposed change. Another view was that if individual feedback had been given to those making submissions it would have helped to demonstrate that the Commission was taking account of what was being said. (This wish for an even more iterative process is relevant to the question of the secretarial time available to service the Commission, which will be touched on later in the report.) Suggestions were made, such as focusing on encouraging more ‘blue sky’ thinking or consulting on a range of scenarios. However, there remained the feeling that, although there might be merit in these ideas, either approach would have extended the process and would still have elicited very different reactions and failed to produce a consensus. There would still have been opposition.

When requested, members of the Dioceses Commission attended local discussions, such as those in deaneries, Bishop’s Council and Diocesan Synods. Again, this was appreciated. It was helpful for the Commission to have a human face locally and the manner of participation underlined that the Commission’s members and Secretary were seeking to clarify, listen and learn, not to persuade or impose.

Consultation over the Appointed Day and scheme implementation

The evaluation found there was some concern about the lack of consultation over the date of the Appointed Day. Although Easter Day – celebrating resurrection – was clearly an attractive juncture in the Church year, administratively it presented considerable difficulties because it was not the end of the financial year or even a month end and because it coincided with a holiday period. As is noted later in the report, there was also some frustration caused over the lack of transparency over the appointment of the Acting Diocesan Secretary.

Communications

This part of the evaluation report covers the Commission documents but also looks at other dimensions of the communication task associated with a scheme of this sort.

Dioceses Commission reports

Appendix I gives the full list of reports published by the Dioceses Commission. It was the Review Report of November 2010 that explained why the focus had narrowed from the whole of Yorkshire to the three West Yorkshire dioceses. In October 2011 and October 2012 came the first and second draft schemes and their associated documents. In both cases, there were explanatory memoranda and financial estimates. In 2011, an accompanying report, "A New Diocese for West Yorkshire and the Dales" contained a statement of the effect of the proposals, if implemented, on the mission of the Church of England. In 2012, as well as the explanatory report, "Moving towards a New Diocese for West Yorkshire and the Dales", there was a separate paper specifically looking at "The New Diocese and the Mission of the Church".

The 'scheme'⁸ is a legal and, therefore a technical, document itemising provisions concerning the dissolution of the dioceses and the creation and composition of the new diocese and all the connected arrangements. It was the accompanying reports that contained the Commission's thinking and reasons for proposing the change. Presenting a detailed and thorough case inevitably meant lengthy and dense documents and, to some extent, the full story only unfolded over a series of reports. (Although a single sheet executive summary issued in October 2011 set out the main elements of the scheme and referred to other documents, it did not give any rationale for the proposals. A 'Frequently Asked Questions' sheet did, however, seek to explain key elements of the proposals.) Various interviewees recognised that it was unlikely that many people would read such long reports and that they may, therefore, rely on other people's – not necessarily accurate – interpretation of what was being proposed. In the absence of a more accessible presentation, it meant that people attending discussions at deanery or diocesan synods came with differing levels of prior information and that those who did not attend could feel it was all very far removed from them at parish level.

There were some criticisms of the presentation of the proposals for change. Most fundamentally, the case for change needed to be strengthened.

"It seemed that some hard facts were not properly confronted – ageing congregations, fewer clergy, dilapidated buildings – problems shared by other dioceses but worse in West Yorkshire than elsewhere. In other words, the Dioceses Commission could have been more forceful. There is a need for honest speaking, plain facts and people to feel the Dioceses Commission is being honest with them."

In particular, it was felt that the 'mission case' was too embedded within the reports, especially the one published in 2011. The criteria were insufficiently spelt out. The October 2012 paper on mission signalled that the Commission had already registered this criticism. But there were two linked issues. First, it was also felt by some that there was too much emphasis on being "mission-led, not finance-driven"⁹ and that more should have been said about both financial implications and opportunities. The Commission was perhaps too cautious about acknowledging the upfront costs of transition, whereas a case could have been made for 'spending to save' - about the need to invest in change. Second, for some people, the distinction between the Commission's role in proposing structural change and the local task of determining the vision for the new diocese whilst fine on paper seemed more questionable in practice.

⁸ "The Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon and Leeds and Wakefield Reorganisation Scheme"

⁹ Review Report No 2, November 2010, p.6

Communication with key players and the pastoral needs of affected individuals

The evaluation exercise has underlined the central importance of good communications but it has also shown that the communication task extended far beyond the Commission reports and involved far more players than the Commission itself. This perhaps encapsulates the main perceived overall failing in relation to the reorganisation scheme: that it was treated primarily as a legal/structural set of changes without full appreciating or anticipating the wider implications for affected individuals. The reports were said to spend too much time on the intellectual case for change, not enough on the implications. Not all of these would be negative, but there was a failure to recognise potential hurt involved for individuals or to have pastoral support in place for those whose jobs were under threat or going. Although addressing management and pastoral needs in this situation was not within its remit, the Dioceses Commission should have been more perceptive about these needs and ensured that the appropriate people were alerted.

This was an issue at different stages of the process and in relation to different groups of people. First - and this was the role of the Commission itself – there should have been more notice given to certain individuals prior to the publication of the scheme; for example, giving the bishops at least a week's notice. Instead, there was a feeling that the press were earlier and better informed. *“Communications were pretty poor when the proposals went out in December 2010 - there seemed to be greater concern about publicity than about pastoral considerations. [There was a] need for someone to have an eye to the pastoral aspects.”* It was admitted that communication of the first report was mishandled, partly because there was reliance on the Post Office to deliver a letter on a certain day and people being at home to receive it. But no warning was given that it was coming and in any case, there should have been a personal visit rather than a letter. This had been thought about, but in the end decided against. *“With hindsight it should have happened.”* All of this was initially damaging to trust.

Second, insufficient consideration was given to the uncomfortable position of diocesan secretaries. Their own jobs were apparently in jeopardy and they led staffs whose futures were equally uncertain. Yet, a considerable onus of ‘fronting’ the scheme locally fell on them. They were receiving a range of ‘what if?’ questions that they were not in a position to answer and on one occasion when seeking answers from the central Church, it was suggested that they were merely trying to protect their own interests. *“Given all the issues of job security, TUPE, etc., the importance of the leadership of diocesan staff through a period of transition was not sufficiently recognised.”* The protracted timescale, even if unavoidable, made their task more difficult and the dynamics of working towards closer collaboration, although in some instances rewarding, nevertheless had its challenges.

“Is it fully appreciated what a devastating psychological effect of ongoing uncertainty can have? It can be more debilitating and distressing than bad news. Many have been left in state of unknowing for a long time yet at the same time having to work even harder than normal to bring about the transition. For some it must feel like potentially digging their own grave.”

“Working with opposite numbers in other dioceses and trying to bring together different policies and models, different status of roles, different personalities, with some anxiety of losing one’s job to a colleague is a cocktail that could provoke profound difficulties for some.”

After the scheme was agreed, when it was announced in August 2013 that the Programme Manager was to become Acting Diocesan Secretary, it was felt in some quarters that this was mishandled. *“There had not even been the courtesy of a discussion. Elsewhere this would have been a constructive dismissal matter. It gave a very damaging impression to*

other staff – ‘if they treat you like that, how will they treat us?’”. Bradford and Wakefield Diocesan Secretaries¹⁰, worked with the Programme Manager/Acting Diocesan Secretary to develop the infrastructure for the new diocese whilst they also had to sustain normal business.

A third illustration of failure in communications involved the Diocesan Chancellors and Registrars. The Chancellors, although they knew they were being displaced, were not told formally until after an Acting Chancellor had been named for the new diocese. This was also when the bishops found out about the appointment. The Registrars had the impression that they came at the bottom of the list for being told about what was happening and that, to some extent, this betrayed a lack of understanding both of their position and of the range of work they undertake. On the one hand, although they are paid for their work for dioceses, they also contribute a lot of unremunerated time and activity. The firms concerned varied in the extent to which they were reliant on the work for the Church, but little consideration appeared to be given to the need to safeguard their commercial interests. For example, they felt that the Ecclesiastical Law Association or the Ecclesiastical Judges Association should have been involved in drawing up the compensation arrangements. On the other hand, many of the changes needed to move from three dioceses to one required legal expertise and the Registrars continued to be active despite feeling side-lined and disillusioned by the lack of transparency. For example, questions – such as how they might work together, who could apply for the new post, how they would put systems in place – received no answers, probably because the answers were not known at the time. But nor did anyone say ‘we don’t know’ and then go on to address the issues. The existing registrars were not given the opportunity to pitch for the work associated with setting up the new Diocesan Board of Finance.

Others whose needs were neglected at key stages in the process were the diocesan bishops. Each of them was in a different position and had different concerns but they all tended to fall through the cracks between the Provincial Office and Human Resources in Church House, Westminster and, in one case, the Archbishops’ Secretary for Appointments.

Further people who could have a sense of loss as a result of change were those lay volunteers who had served their dioceses on synods and boards who were being displaced. It was important to keep them informed as well as convey appreciation of their past service.

A further issue relating to communications concerned the wait for certain decisions, which gave time for anxiety to mount or negativity to grow. For instance, it was unhelpful that the Church Commissioners prevaricated at first about assuring financial support for the three separate cathedrals. Earlier signals could have been given. The wait of three weeks between the diocesan synod votes and the Archbishop of York’s announcement that the scheme would be forwarded to General Synod was also a source of frustration. The Archbishop was in a no-win situation. For those people who were inclined to think that this was ‘his’ scheme all along, his decision confirmed their suspicions. Had he decided not to send the scheme forward, he would have been flying in the face of the clear majority in favour across the three dioceses.

The need to keep people informed during the implementation phase

The tremendous amount of work that had to be accomplished in a very short space of time by the Acting Diocesan Secretary and others on the design group brought the danger of failing to keep a wider circle of people informed who needed to know about progress. Some,

¹⁰ The Diocesan Secretary of Ripon and Leeds left in September 2013. From November 2013, the Diocesan Surveyor became Acting Diocesan Secretary.

such as archdeacons, had to field questions during visitations; others, such as ecumenical partners, may have been waiting to make joint appointments.

Managing change

What change was being sought?

A major challenge in relation to the reorganisation scheme was moving from the scheme on paper, the legislative changes it brought, to the scope that these changes opened up for wider transformation. *“Restructuring’ could just mean business as usual with different geographic boundaries.”* But the opportunity being offered was for *“a new organisation with the prospect of being able to redesign itself within the core purpose of the Church”*. It is uncertain whether, on this first occasion, the opportunity presented by such an open invitation to think new thoughts was fully recognised.

Initial steps prior to the scheme being agreed

The three Bishop’s Councils of the dioceses set up a Preparation Group in the autumn of 2011 to start to anticipate the actions required if the scheme was accepted. Various sub-groups were formed focusing on specific areas of work, such as education and ministry. Establishing trust was critical to all of these. The Preparation Group itself was severely hampered because only two of the three diocesan bishops were members, both supportive of the scheme and it was very difficult for representatives from the third diocese, where the diocesan bishop was opposed, to speak with authority about the diocesan position.

The sub-groups varied in their effectiveness. In some, it was evident that participants got on well and made progress in addressing a shared agenda. Where they did not work well, *“it was because people pushed a particular agenda – ‘it will be done like this’ –and especially with raised voices”*. There was mutual suspicion, but in particular a feeling that one diocese saw itself as leading the process and representing best practice and that the aim was to get the others to fall into line. *“The groups stopped but by then unnecessary angst had already been caused – it needed an outside view.”*

Thus, it quickly became apparent that the reorganisation scheme not only required change management expertise, but also the introduction of someone who was independent of the dioceses concerned and could bring a detached perspective. The Church Commissioners agreed to provide 75% of the costs of a Programme Manager, with the dioceses making up the shortfall, and an appointment was made. The need for such an appointment was universally agreed amongst interviewees and the evaluation showed that there was widespread respect for Programme Manager: *“Tenacity a sight to behold.” “Anyone without his resilience and sense of humour would have run for the hills.” “Could have been even more effective if he had been allowed.”* However, there were also ways in which his task could have been clarified and made easier for him.

It would have been desirable for the appointment to have been made earlier to avoid what in retrospect can be seen as the false start made by the Preparation Group. It was also important to make clear the purpose of the role in the job title and job description. To describe him as a Programme Manager during the period prior to the decision being made gave the wrong impression. It suggested (especially to those already suspicious about the scheme) that the outcome was being taken for granted. At this stage, the need was for someone in a facilitative/supportive role rather than a programme manager. The dioceses were at a cross roads: his role was to indicate potential options whichever way the decision went: what should happen if it went through or if it did not. This was a novel experience for someone accustomed to managing change in organisations where the strategic decision has already been taken and the task is one of implementation. (His lack of familiarity of the

Church and its governance was also a handicap at this stage and subsequently, though it would have been very difficult to find someone who combined such a high level of change management expertise in similarly large organisations with a more intimate knowledge of the Church.) Setting up the role with the Programme Manager title meant that his task of gaining trust was harder than it might have been. Another pitfall to be skirted was appearing to act as advocate for the scheme. It was essential to maintain his neutrality, but being so often in the position of having to describe and explain the proposal meant it was tricky to avoid being seen as a spokesman for it.

During this phase prior to the decision, a brake was put on any discussion that might be seen to pre-empt the votes, first in diocesan synods and then in General Synod. This even extended to precluding the sharing of information such as baseline data. *“This meant there was no forward planning, which was difficult then and has been a killer since.”*

Leadership and accountability

“Are there some powers the Dioceses Commission can take to provide episcopal oversight? We need to be smarter over leadership and management to enable the practicalities to be sorted out and to deal with the human side. How do we as a Church cope with these in a period of uncertainty?”

Although it seems to cover implementation, in practice – inevitably – the scheme itself is confined to church law. The demands of change management are entirely outside its scope and therefore a range of questions remained unanswered. For example, where did leadership lie between the General Synod vote and the Appointed Day? Who should oversee the transition process and provide continuity of management? And who would have what role between the Appointed Day and the new bishop taking up his position? The Programme Manager was in a prominent position but, again, at this stage his job was to drive not lead the process. This was another significant challenge in the absence of anyone else to lead or co-ordinate. There were *“too many times and situations when it has not been clear who has the power to do what”*.

All this relates to another area in which the Programme Manager could have been better supported: greater clarity about his line management. His accountability at times could be unclear – to him and to others – and it changed during the course of events. When first appointed, he was based at Bishopthorpe, that is, in Yorkshire but independent of the existing dioceses. However there could have been a perception of a conflict of interest in this arrangement because the Archbishop had statutory functions that he was required to exercise independently of the Commission or the dioceses. The Programme Manager reported to the Secretary of the Church Commissioners partly because of the major contribution they were making to his post and partly because he was also independent of the dioceses. But the Church Commissioners were an interested party and, in any case, were not responsible for managing the process¹¹. He necessarily had a lot of contact with the Chair and Secretary of the Dioceses Commission. In other words, his reporting arrangements were rather far removed from events on the ground and there were others nearer at hand who would want a say in his activities. *“. . . he probably found himself leaderless at times, whereas everyone needs ‘clients’ for instructions. Three bishops and three diocesan secretaries, but no-one in charge and like herding cats.”*

After the General Synod vote when implementation needed to start in earnest, the Programme Manager’s accountability formally switched to the Archbishop of York and he started to report to the Archbishop of York’s Chief of Staff. However, there was no-one

¹¹ There was a further potential conflict of interest in one of the Cathedral Deans being a Church Commissioner.

locally to give him meaningful support and the idea of a mentor bishop emerged which led to the appointment of Bishop Tom Butler. This largely worked well although the Archbishop also made the Mentor Bishop Chair of the transitional Diocesan Board of Finance which involved him in several planning groups as well. It would have been preferable to keep the episcopal mentoring role uncomplicated by an executive one.

The task after the scheme was agreed

It was only some time after the implementation phase began that the Programme Manager secured any secretarial help though essentially he needed administrative support from taking up his appointment. At this point he had become Acting Diocesan Secretary and one issue was to work out a workable *modus operandi* with the existing Diocesan Secretaries¹². The model developed was in effect, the Acting Diocesan Secretary as Programme Manager and Chief Executive Officer, with the others as operational managers. The design group set up at this time also comprised the two suffragan bishops and an archdeacon.

There was still a brake put on some elements of forward planning, partly awaiting confirmation of the Scheme by Her Majesty in Council after General Synod had taken place and partly because of the fear of pre-empting the yet-to-be-appointed bishop's decisions. Arguably, this was taken too far and any advantage of this cautious approach was outweighed by further planning blight, loss of momentum and a sapping of enthusiasm amongst people who were now raring to go.

A distinction can be drawn between two agendas – episcopal and management – “*they are almost totally unaware of and divorced from each other*”. One observation was that “*There have been lots of views, consultation and facilitation but nowhere when push comes to shove – no-one with the role to take the initiative. Change of this type is a management job and therefore bishops need to give permission for it to be managed.*”

The goal was to be ‘legal, viable and operational’ by the Appointed Day. This was where effort was concentrated. Consequently, there was less space to think about wider aspects of transformation. Tasks included:

- Setting up the new Diocesan Board of Finance and transitional bodies.
- Dealing with appointments/staffing issues.
- Identifying areas where clear and consistent policies were essential, such as safeguarding, and areas where it was possible to live with differences for the time being, such as property management.

Various lessons emerged. First, innumerable gaps appeared as a result of this being a wholly novel situation. All the interested parties worked independently – the Archbishop of York's Office, Church Commissioners, Archbishops' Council, Archbishops' Appointments Office, Dioceses Commission. There was no consistency or co-ordination. No-one was in active overall charge. No-one except the Archbishop of York had the authority to pull it together, but the tensions between different aspects of his role inhibited this. There was no single definitive document setting out what should be done. There was confusion about what was in whose remit, including some of the communications tasks mentioned earlier. Second, there was scope for much more support from the national Church and guidance on structural arrangements and HR practice. The Secretary General of the Archbishops' Council set up an *ad hoc* National Church Institutions' staff group, but it appears that this scarcely met after the General Synod decision and that, in any case, its membership did not extend to all the

¹² The Diocesan Secretary for Ripon and Leeds had left and the Diocesan Surveyor appointed as Acting Diocesan Secretary.

departmental staff that were involved and who might need to be able to respond. Third, a lot of time had to be given to issues around Church schools and the interface between ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical elements, partly because not enough attention had been paid to it earlier. A number of interviewees felt that the National Society should have been involved as early as the creation of the scheme. Fourth, there were unanticipated difficulties around closing down bishops' offices in relation to issues such as staff, buildings, transfer of files and closing down/transferring discretionary funds. Finally, the range of tasks to be completed required a similarly wide ranging expertise as well as a depth of knowledge of the Church of England. The Acting Diocesan Secretary sought out the guidance needed but ideally there could have been better arrangements in place for it to be more accessible.

Legislative framework

Experience in West Yorkshire has shown the challenge of introducing radical change in the context of existing church legislation. Several factors added to the complexity of the process:

- *The name of the diocese:* there was widespread opinion that the new diocese should be known as the Diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales rather than being named after a town or city in the customary way. Many in the three dioceses could identify more easily with this geographic area than with any one of the towns or cities within it. At the time, this option was not open to the Commission because the diocese automatically took the name of the see.¹³ If it had been possible, however, it would have eased the dilemma of choosing between Wakefield and Leeds as the name of the new diocese. The former had the advantage of being the smallest area and therefore potentially the easiest to combine with being diocesan bishop, but the latter is the more obvious 'capital' of the West Yorkshire region.
- *Appointment of new diocesan bishop:* the appointment was accelerated as far as possible by reserving the first Crown Nominations Committee meeting after General Synod for considering it and by modifying the scale of consultation to enable a speedier process. Nevertheless, the usual procedures of the Church for appointing a bishop did not best serve the needs of the new diocese because of the inevitable delay incurred between the decision to form the new diocese and his appointment and even between the Appointed Day and his Inauguration.
- *Representation on the Crown Nominations Committee* from the diocese was a source of some unease. There had been an assumption that the three former dioceses would have equal representation but this was not the case. Representatives had to be elected from the whole group and the result – four from one former diocese and one each from the other two – then served to feed mistrust and even conspiracy theories.
- *Change of title of suffragan bishops:* the Bishops of Knaresborough and Pontefract are continuing in post and will become the Bishops of Ripon and Wakefield respectively. However, the switch of title has to be taken through the diocesan synod and General Synod and go to the Privy Council, a process that could take up to twelve months.

One perceived difficulty was that, once published, there was no power to amend it even in a very minor way after it was submitted to General Synod. If amendment was deemed to be

¹³ A see and a diocese are different. 'See' refers to the place where the bishop has his seat. A diocese is the geographical area over which the bishop of a particular see has spiritual jurisdiction. General Synod in November 2013 agreed a motion requesting the Archbishops' Council to introduce legislation to enable dioceses of the Church of England to be named by reference either to a city or substantial town or to a geographical area.

necessary, it would have to be withdrawn and the process begun again. This was not a problem with the Scheme, but rather with the legislation under which it was made.

It is mandatory under the Dioceses Pastoral and Mission Measure for a reorganisation scheme to contain provisions for the transitional period. Some proved problematic. The role of the Dioceses Commission during this period was not to approve arrangements but to designate transitional bodies. Putting together the three Bishop's Councils was especially unwieldy because it consisted of 60-70 people. No provision was made about Chairs of the Houses of Clergy and Laity. Further, the stipulation about what has to be considered at the first meeting of diocesan synod meant it must be delayed because of the danger of making premature decisions.

Finance

“Such schemes need a commercial case as well as a spiritual one”

It has already been noted that several respondents – particularly those with responsibilities for finance in the dioceses – felt that more attention should have been given to the financial pluses and minuses of the scheme. It may have been that the Dioceses Commission was so concerned to demonstrate that the proposed changes were not motivated by an attempt to cut costs that it relied too much on suggesting that there could be long term savings as well as more effective mission and underplayed the case for the upfront investment that was needed for the change process.

As it was, the financial statement was largely an amalgam of the finances of the three dioceses. Producing it meant a significant learning curve for National Church Institutions' Head of Financial Policy and Planning and his task was more complex because of the variation in the way the dioceses presented their accounts. The statement began to identify and flesh out some of the implementation challenges and the three Diocesan Boards of Finance agreed that, as far as it went, it gave a reasonable picture. However, the bar on pre-planning and producing data about likely costs and benefits made the exercise less robust than it might have been. When considering the scheme, local players would have liked more information not only on the projected transformation costs, but also on how the transition would be supported by Church Commissioners. The scheme would entail costs and savings to the Church Commissioners as well as the new diocese, but apparently these remained to be calculated. Even after the Appointed Day, there were still some unknowns and no definitive answers from Church Commissioners.

Costs have already been incurred in drawing up the Memorandum and Articles for the new Diocesan Board of Finance. It seems surprising that there was no off-the-shelf template that could have lessened the need for legal advice and the associated charges. The coat of arms for the new diocese was another expense. A greater challenge and expense will be replacing three IT accounting systems with a single one, which will require more than merely consolidating existing functionality. For it to be fit for purpose, it will need to be built on an understanding of how technology might be used to mitigate issues of travel, communication and information dissemination taking account of the new geography and the new organisational structure. In addition, decisions have to be made about how to develop uniform policies across a range of areas, including stipends, pensions, employment, properties, diocesan offices, parish share and faculty fees.

Compensation

One facet of the Dioceses Commission's duty was to draw up rules regarding the principles to be applied in determining rights to compensation where a reorganisation scheme

abolished an office in a diocese or cathedral, or reduced its status and the office holder suffered loss (unless the office holder is also an employee in relation to the same function). Once drawn up, these rules had to be laid before General Synod for approval. The Commission made the rules¹⁴ in April 2011 and they were approved in July 2011. The existing statutory provision contained in Schedule 4 of the Pastoral Measure 1983 was the basic model for the compensation of archdeacons and parochial clergy whose offices were abolished by pastoral schemes, but the Compensation Rules had to provide for the wider range of offices potentially abolished in a reorganisation scheme, including chancellors and diocesan registrars. (The Dean of Arches expressed concern about the rules going to General Synod before they had been referred to Ecclesiastical Judges Association or Ecclesiastical Law Association and this concern was reiterated by registrars during the evaluation.)

After the reorganisation scheme was approved by General Synod, a sub-group of the Dioceses Commission worked with individuals eligible for compensation to consider their claims.

Boundary parishes

Proposals for transferring parishes

The Dioceses Commission looked at the external boundaries of Bradford, Ripon and Leeds and Wakefield dioceses to determine whether any adjustments were required in relation to the bordering dioceses of Blackburn, Carlisle, Durham, Sheffield and York. One aspect of the preliminary consultation, therefore, was to meet with local parish representatives in areas where there seemed to be potential anomalies. In its investigation, the Commission was in part trying to gain a picture of “the realities of local life”: the identity of local communities, which major towns or cities they might identify with, which way they ‘faced’ for shopping or leisure activities. However, other criteria clearly cut across these factors, such as traditional county loyalties or perceptions of dioceses and their churchmanship. This meant that it was more difficult to assess the views being expressed and to decide how much weight to give them as against wider strategic objectives.

This focus, in any case, brought a number of criticisms. There was an objection in principle that parishes might have more power to decide their ‘fate’ than dioceses. A more widespread concern, however, was about the opportunity costs represented by the time the Commission spent on these peripheral parishes. It was thought that, given its limited resources, the Commission’s time could have been better spent especially as consultation at this level risked distraction from more strategic issues. If there had been more clearly expressed criteria for deciding who was in and who was out, any idea of self-determination would not have applied.

In Review Report No. 2, 2010 that went out for consultation, the Commission:

- Invited 12 parishes in the Diocese of Bradford to consider whether their mission and that of the Church in Lancashire would be strengthened by transfer to the Diocese of Blackburn.
- Recommended the transfer of 5 parishes in Cumbria to the Diocese of Carlisle.
- Recommended the transfer of 5 parishes to the Diocese of Durham.
- Invited 7 parishes to consider transferring to the Diocese of York;

¹⁴ See The Reorganisation Schemes (Compensation) Rules 2011 and GS1839X Explanatory Memorandum

- Recommended the transfer of 3 parishes from the Diocese of York to the new diocese.
- Suggested others to consider whether they more appropriately belonged in the Diocese of York or the new one.
- Recommended the transfer of 9 parishes to the Diocese of York and 1 to the Diocese of Lincoln.
- Recommended the transfer of the 20 parishes in the Barnsley Deanery of Wakefield diocese to the Diocese of Sheffield.

At this stage, 'in principle' responses were sought from the incumbent or priest in charge and the Parochial Church Council of each parish.

By the time the scheme was published in October 2012, the transfer of some parishes in and around Sedbergh to the Carlisle Diocese had already been put into effect under the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011 and the Commission had decided to exclude others from the scheme. In the draft scheme 2011, twenty parishes were included; in the 2012 scheme, there were eight. By this time, the Commission had concluded that its machinery was needless in many cases; the Mission and Pastoral Measure could be used instead. Interviewees in the evaluation questioned the consistency and/or fairness in the decisions though they could recognise that realpolitik can sometimes override other considerations. This was perhaps most clearly exemplified in relation to Barnsley.

Neighbouring dioceses

As the eventual scheme entailed transfers to Blackburn and Sheffield Dioceses, their diocesan synods also had to vote on it. This was not wholly satisfactory partly because, for many synod members, their involvement seemed too peripheral for them legitimately or sensibly to have a vote. But also, many of the questions that they might have asked, particularly about the financial implications of the transfers, could still not be answered at that stage and some challenges were yet to be resolved.

Other lessons have come out of the process relating to the transfer of parishes. First, a great deal of liaison between the archdeacons of the dioceses concerned was required both whilst parishes were considering transfer and subsequently. There was considerable reluctance in some of the parishes transferring to Blackburn Diocese, largely it seemed because it was perceived to have a more catholic ethos than Bradford Diocese. A lot of care was taken in Blackburn Diocese, first to indicate that, although transferees would be very welcome, the diocese was in no sense pressurising them to join; secondly once the decision was made, strenuous efforts were made to ensure that this welcome was translated into practice and to correct any misconceptions.

The transfer of parishes entails sorting out a variety of issues, such as transfer of glebe; property and whether dilapidations are to be included; stipend fund capital; church schools. One surprising discovery was that there was no off-the-shelf checklist of what needs to be done and by whom.¹⁵

Part II of the evaluation report has described something of the journey from the outset of the Dioceses Commission's deliberations through to the early days of the new diocese of West Yorkshire and the Dales and it has reported the main findings of the evaluation exercise. All the points made – complimentary or critical – have to be seen in the context of new ground being broken at every stage of the process and by all the parties involved. Part III will identify

¹⁵ Blackburn Diocese was able to make use of such a checklist previously developed by Carlisle Diocese.

the lessons that emerge and make recommendations that could help smooth the path of any future such scheme.

Part III. LOOKING FORWARD

Introduction

“The C of E is more an organism than an organisation – a family of charitable bodies, relations between which are to some extent determined by law, but with tremendous difficulties of leadership and co-ordination”

This section of the report aims to derive lessons from the experience in relation to the West Yorkshire reorganisation scheme that would help to inform the process of carrying out any comparable scheme in future. As was indicated earlier in the report, the Dioceses Commission instigated this evaluation because it was keen to learn from its first experience of a major scheme. However, the messages that emerge are not solely for the Commission but also for a much wider range of interested parties, nationally and locally.

The overriding theme is the importance of anticipating both all that is entailed in reorganisation on this scale and all that can flow from it. Creating the scheme is only the beginning of the story. Such schemes go beyond legal or structural changes. They can have a profound impact on individuals, who may lose their office, employment or role. They require the widespread involvement of many from the national as well as the local Church. They inevitably involve coordinating or revising an immense range of diocesan policies and practice, but they can also open up tremendous opportunities for reimagining local mission and ministry.

The point was made early in this report that “given that this was wholly uncharted territory, it is remarkable that so much has been achieved, thanks to the commitment, hard work and imagination of a great many people”. This cannot be stressed strongly enough. Not only was the Scheme breaking new ground, but it was also *“the largest, most complex and most wide-ranging sort of reorganisation scheme that it is possible to envisage being made under the Dioceses Pastoral and Mission Measure. That being so, that it was achieved at all is quite something.”*

General messages

- ***The context of the Dioceses Commission’s considerations***

Questions variously arose in the evaluation about the criteria the Commission used in the formulation of its proposals for change and whether it was working in something of a vacuum. Could or should there be more debate in the national Church – in General Synod and/or the House of Bishops – for example, about how diocesan structures and arrangements can serve mission, about the ‘vital signs’ a healthy dioceses and about the role of Cathedrals?

- ***Legislation fitted for radical change***

The evaluation illustrated that existing legislation can impede the rapid introduction of radical change. Some difficulties are being overcome. The renaming and creation of suffragan sees has been dealt with through the Miscellaneous Provisions Measure. The names of dioceses will be dealt with by the Naming of Dioceses Measure. Others remain to be resolved, such as enabling diocesan leadership to be in place at an earlier stage, the election of diocesan members to the Crown Nominations Commission and the need for greater clarity over transitional arrangements. There is a need to give consideration to how these may be resolved.

- **Responsibilities beyond the Commission**

One dimension of the complexity entailed is that much of the necessary action relating to a reorganisation scheme is outside the remit of the Commission. One of the Commission's tasks must be to identify the implications for all interested parties at every stage of the process but it must also have the authority to ensure that these diverse responsibilities are carried out. This means collaboration with the Church Commissioners and the Archbishops' Council in particular. Although the Secretary General of the Archbishops' Council established an *ad hoc* staff group in relation to the West Yorkshire scheme (which included the Secretary to the Dioceses Commission) to keep a watching brief on what was required, the group did not meet sufficiently often, especially in the later stages and it needed a wider membership and more executive role. It seemed that even in early 2014, there were staff in some relevant departments in Church House who were unaware of what was happening and therefore unable to respond adequately to questions being posed by diocesan officers.

- **External, non-aligned support for dioceses going through a process of potential reorganisation**

It can be difficult for local people to navigate their way through the inevitably long reports associated with proposals for change and through the range of reactions being voiced. Support needs to be in place *"to help with understanding of reports and ensure that people do not get distracted by trivia. It is also important to challenge dogmatic responses – either positive or negative – especially from people in leadership positions because it can then be difficult to discern how widely these views are shared and it can inhibit others from voicing questions or contrary opinions. In other words, loyalty can be distracting."* This also suggests that, whilst they have to state their views, diocesan bishops should not see themselves as chief protagonists either for or against the proposed scheme. Rather a key role for them is to create spaces for open consideration and uninhibited debate.

- **A leadership void**

At each stage of the process – from the first publication of proposals for change through to implementation – there is a need for some person or body with the authority to lead and to co-ordinate dispersed authority. The Programme Manager cannot act on his or her own initiative but needs to be clear about to whom s/he is accountable. This leadership role includes identifying what is required at each stage and where responsibility lies and ensuring the necessary degree of joined-up working – at local level, at national level and between the central and local Church.

- **Role conflicts**

There are actual or potential role conflicts for a number of people, which need to be disentangled. Most notably, apart from the difficulty of him giving enough time alongside all his other duties, the Archbishop has to combine statutory and pastoral responsibilities and in the process of a diocesan reorganisation scheme, the former may at times inhibit or delay the exercise of the latter. But there were other examples. The Church Commissioners can be said to have an interest particularly in the financial implications of a reorganisation scheme but they are also in a powerful position in relation to investing in its development and later implementation. Another example is where an individual is a Church Commissioner as well as a local interested party.

- **Professional and pastoral support for affected individuals**

Reorganisation (and the prospect of it) is very stressful for the people most affected by it, whether because it threatens their current position or activity or because it entails

additional work or because it presents new challenges. This was very evident amongst the bishops and clergy, whose positions were apparently to be abolished, and amongst diocesan staff, who at best might have to compete for their jobs. Diocesan Secretaries were in the position of having to reassure and manage their staffs whilst coping with uncertainty about their own futures and having to combine 'business as usual' with preparing for change. The particular points of need varied between different groups and individuals, depending upon their particular circumstances, but provision was generally inadequate. In West Yorkshire, this situation occurred because it was a novel situation and requirements were not anticipated. In future, appropriate support arrangements need to be put in place.

- ***Planning and managing change***

The importance of arrangements for planning and implementation is a clear lesson from experience in West Yorkshire and the Dales. The necessary support before and after the decision is made on a scheme needs to be agreed from the outset as an essential cost.

Getting the job title and job description right for the person responsible for the planning and implementation is also significant. The requirements shift during the course of the process. In the case of West Yorkshire and the Dales, the Programme Manager was appointed later than was desirable (and when some largely abortive efforts had been made locally to anticipate implementation requirements) and his job title was inappropriate for the role prior to the scheme being agreed. For those opposed to the scheme, to call him a Programme Manager and to talk about his role being one of change management fed suspicions that the outcome was a foregone conclusion. At that stage, his role was primarily as a facilitator. He had to avoid being seen as an advocate of the scheme. The existing dioceses were at a cross roads. His function was to help the process of thinking through the issues to be faced whichever future direction was eventually taken.

Arrangements for the line management and accountability of the Programme Manager /Acting Diocesan Secretary were less than ideal at every stage. Once into the implementation phase, the appointment of a mentor bishop prior to the new diocesan bishop being in place was helpful. Bearing in mind that there is a distinction between episcopal and management agendas, it might usefully have been supplemented by having a mentor diocesan secretary. In the implementation phase, the complexity of the task became more apparent and the need for a wide range of knowledge and expertise.

In the face of these various challenges, it would be helpful to have a programme board comprising representatives of the various parties involved to oversee the transformation and manage the budget allocated to resource it. The Programme Manager would be accountable to the board, which would carry the requisite authority for planning change, and it could give him/her access to the necessary expertise.

- ***A gap between dioceses and Church House, Westminster***

It was evident at various stages of the process of carrying forward the reorganisation scheme, before and after the decision had been made, that staff in Church House, Westminster, are not necessarily familiar with how dioceses operate. Producing the financial estimate for the scheme involved a steep learning curve for the National Church Institutions' Head of Financial Policy and Planning. Later, it seemed surprising that there was not more central guidance on topics such as creating a new Diocesan Board of Finance or the transfer of parishes from one diocese to another. Alternatively, it would have been helpful for the staff in Church House to have facilitated links with staff in other dioceses that would have been able to give practical tips based on relevant experience of changing their Diocesan Board of Finance, for example, or moving parishes.

- ***Preparation and planning***

Planning blight was one of the chief drawbacks after the Dioceses Commission first mooted the possibility of reorganisation in West Yorkshire. There were fears that planning for change would be seen to pre-empt the decision on the scheme. In hindsight, it seems that it would be possible to define the parameters of preparation so that some momentum could have been sustained working in ways that would be useful irrespective of the outcome: developing relationships across the existing dioceses; sharing data; scenario planning.

Similar concerns surfaced again once the decision was made but before the appointment of the diocesan bishop. Again, it was unfortunate that brakes were applied just as local officers were raring to go and again, based upon the West Yorkshire experience it would be possible to differentiate between areas in which progress could be made and ones that should await later policy decisions.

- ***A focus on transformation***

Once agreed and the process of change is progressing, there remains the challenge of looking beyond all the practical steps that have to be taken to establish the new diocese to focus on its future vision and strategic direction. In other words, it is important not to let structural and bureaucratic changes become ends in themselves or constrain opportunities for new thinking about the Church's mission and ministry. On the one hand, it is necessary to distinguish between the managerial and episcopal agendas and, on the other, to recognise the interconnections between the two. In West Yorkshire and the Dales, the length of appointment of the Acting Diocesan Secretary (moving on from being Programme Manager) acknowledges that implementation will take some time and needs to go hand in hand with wider thinking about how the new diocese will function. In this case, various practical issues, such as the installation of a new IT system, need to be resolved creatively in ways that will best serve its needs; for example, its geography and the relationship between the episcopal areas and the whole diocese.

Lessons for the Dioceses Commission

The experience of the West Yorkshire reorganisation scheme brought a range of major and minor lessons for the Commission.

- ***A massive task***

First, it underlined the scale and complexity of bringing such a scheme to fruition, given that the Commission had other business on its agenda, its members are all volunteers, most with full-time occupations, and that it is served by only two part-time staff¹⁶. It also entailed considerable involvement from the Deputy Legal Advisor to General Synod and the National Church Institutions' Head of Financial Policy and Planning in tasks that were outside their usual areas of activity. The evaluation demonstrated that it would also be helpful for the Commission to have access to support on communications and human resources.

¹⁶ 75% of the Secretary's time is devoted to the Commission; 40% of the Assistant Secretary's time.

- ***The case for investment in change***

Perhaps because it was anxious to avoid any impression that making savings was not the motivation for proposing change, the Commission paid less attention than it might have done to quantifying the likely upfront costs. However, it was evident in the evaluation that people wanted as much information as possible about the financial implications of reorganisation. Although it can be hard to forecast the medium to long term financial effects, some immediate costs could have been specified and, some interviewees felt that the Commission need not feel apologetic about presenting the case for investing in change. Linked with this is the need to identify who – between the Church Commissioners and the diocese – would bear the costs and make the savings. Some potential savings are clearly contingent upon the decisions made in the new diocese but, in particular, local players would have liked more information from the Church Commissioners about housing costs and savings.

- ***Strategic focus***

Inevitably, the proposed reorganisation of the three West Yorkshire dioceses also revealed anomalies in relation to the parishes on their external boundaries. The Commission – and particularly the sub-group carrying out the preliminary consultation – spent considerable time investigating whether or not these should be recommended for transfer to neighbouring dioceses. In its 2010 report, the Commission identified over fifty parishes as potential transferees. The draft scheme in 2011 included twenty parishes. The number had gone down to eight in the 2012 scheme, by which time some transfers had been effected through the Mission and Pastoral Measure and it was evident that this made unnecessary the more cumbersome machinery of the Commission. Responses in the evaluation also suggested that the consultation with parishes represented opportunity costs for the Commission. At this level, the debate tended to revolve around issues that were outside the strategic remit of the enquiry.

- ***Timescale***

The Dioceses Commission began its work in Yorkshire in 2009. The reorganisation scheme was agreed by General Synod in July 2013 and the Appointed Day for the new diocese coming into being was Easter Day 2014. On the one hand, this may not be considered to be an unduly long preparatory period for such radical change. On the other, it constituted prolonged uncertainty and inhibited activity that might have proceeded in the absence of the scheme. A number of factors dictate that it must be a fairly lengthy process: the limited time and staff resources available to the Commission and the need to allow sufficient time for consultation and feedback. However, it may be worth re-examining the timescales that are stipulated and, in particular whether the time between the end of the statutory six months consultation period after the publication of the first draft scheme and the publication of the next draft could be shortened in circumstances where very little is changed between the two drafts.

- ***A listening and informing role***

The appreciation expressed by interviewees in the evaluation about the part that Commission members and staff played in the consultation and later in local meetings highlighted the importance of being seen to be concerned to serve the process: to listen, to be informative and to be collaborative and not to appear either as salespersons or people from outside ‘descending’ with the answers.

- ***Consistent local processes***

One of the process questions during the period when dioceses are deliberating over proposals for change is who has ownership: who leads and co-ordinates? This is one

aspect of the leadership issue raised earlier. One lesson from the very varied provision for, and tone of, local debate was the desirability of collective thinking across the dioceses concerned about how to conduct this phase in as consistent – though not necessarily uniform – and open and inclusive a manner as possible. If a scheme is subsequently accepted, the more people have had an opportunity to contribute at the formative stage, the greater is likely to be their later ownership of it. Similarly the voting methods adopted at diocesan synods differed in a way that undermined confidence.

- **A range of communication tasks**

Communication featured as a central issue.

- The evaluation showed that care needs to be taken in relation to the tone and style of reports to avoid any suggestion of the Commission making negative judgements or seeming to reach a ‘verdict’, that would be prejudicial to people coming to the proposals with an open mind.
- It would be valuable to try to anticipate not only issues likely to get publicity inside and outside the Church but also themes that might excite and enthuse people, such as mission opportunities and (in this case) the area model.
- Given the inevitable length and density of reports, it is important to consider alternative means of communication to enable a wider cross-section of people to gain an accurate picture of what is being proposed.
- It would be helpful to have more media management and collaboration with diocesan communications people.
- There is a need to notify key people pre-publication and consider their need for Human Resource support.

- **Emphasising the centrality of mission**

In its statement about mission in October 2012, the Commission stated that it was presenting “*the opportunity to re-imagine and re-envision the mission of the Church of England in a changed and changing context to enable it to speak with a single voice to and for the area*”.¹⁷ It also gave the key criteria on which the mission case for a diocese across the whole of West Yorkshire and the Dales is based¹⁸. However, it made clear that it was not the role of the Commission to impose a vision; formulating one was the job of the new diocese. It was evident from the evaluation that some people feel that this is a ‘chicken and egg’ situation. Arguably ‘form should follow function’ but at least the thinking about structure and geography should go hand in hand with thinking about mission. The challenge for the Commission, therefore, is to underline from the outset that the main objective of any reorganisation must be more effective mission. In preparation for the new diocese, the suffragan bishops made Lent visits to deaneries inviting clergy and laity to share what they value and what they need from the diocese in terms of resourcing and support. It is precisely this sort of exercise that could be worthwhile earlier to encourage a local and widely rooted process of envisioning what is required to be conducted in parallel with the Commission’s considerations.

¹⁷ YDCR6 The New Diocese and the Mission of the Church, October 2012 p.3

¹⁸ *Ibid* p.2

Recommendations

Dioceses Commission

- Produce a brochure giving general information about what the Dioceses Commission can and cannot do.
- Encourage discussion in deaneries in parallel with the Dioceses Commission's consultation.
- Park most if not all of the issues of boundary parishes, but point out anomalies that could be rectified *via* the Mission and Pastoral Measure.
- Articulate the rationale for change: the need to substantiate the case for why the *status quo* is unsatisfactory and the need to give more attention to the financial effects and provide a sound argument for the need to invest in transformation.
- Provide a schedule at the outset of proposals including a timeline of the consultation and decision-making process and a potential CNC in advance to which everyone can work.
- Consult/listen to groups of diocesan staffs.
- Use web-based means of communication.
- Acknowledge and provide feedback to people making submissions.
- Produce a short, more accessible leaflet giving a basic proposals and rationale of a scheme for individuals and for use in groups such as diocesan and deanery synods.
- Provide guidance on the approach to consultation and consideration of schemes within dioceses.
- When drawing up schemes, allow for the possibility of amendments being made after publication.
- Produce newsletter(s) between the decision and the Appointed Day to inform people of progress.
- Develop a single definitive document for reference in future schemes indicating the pastoral, administrative, and legal requirements where the responsibility lies for these tasks at different stages of the process.
- Maintain close liaison with Human Resource staff and the Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments.

Dioceses Commission/Archbishops' Council/Church Commissioners

- Make human resource and communications/marketing expertise available to the Commission.
- Appoint an adequately resourced facilitator with sufficient administrative support early enough to enable the process of local consultation, consideration and future planning whatever the eventual decision.

- After a positive decision, set up a programme management office with access to range of expertise required (legal, financial, educational, administrative, etc.).
- Keep the change management role separate from that of Diocesan Secretary prior to making the decision being made.
- Appoint a programme management board with representatives from the relevant Archbishop's Office, the dioceses, the Church Commissioners and the Archbishops' Council to which the programme manager can be accountable.
- Appoint a mentor diocesan secretary as well as mentor bishop, but with neither having any executive role
- Ensure transparency about appointments.
- Clarify the eligibility (or not) of incumbent bishops to be appointed to the new diocese.
- Make more financial information available about the costs and benefits of reorganisation to the local and national Church.

Archbishops' Council

- Set up an executive/delivery group representing the relevant departments in Church House, Westminster to work with the Commission and the dioceses.
- Introduce a programme of secondments of Church House staff to diocesan offices to develop mutual learning.
- Develop more central templates – e.g. re Diocesan Boards of Finance; transfer of parishes – in consultation with other dioceses.
- Grasp the opportunity offered by new Charities' Statement of Recommended Practice to promote greater consistency in the presentation of diocesan accounts.

Provincial Office/Bishops

- Ensure clarity about who has pastoral responsibility for diocesan staffs at every stage making certain that their ministry and service is recognised and affirmed.
- Convene regular meetings of interested or affected parties from an early stage and ensure consultation with them prior to communication.
- Early involvement/notification of Chancellors and Registrars.
- Express appreciation and thanks to serving members of synods and boards.

Archbishops

- Clarify where leadership lies at different stages of a reorganisation scheme.
- Consider the extent to which additional provision be made at provincial level to ensure that resources are in place to provide pastoral support to diocesan bishops at a time when the Archbishop is exercising metropolitan responsibilities in respect of the

reference of a Commission scheme concerning those bishops' dioceses to General Synod.

Local bishops/diocesan secretaries

- Liaise across dioceses on the approach to consultation and consideration of schemes and create opportunities for informed and open discussion.
- Ensure up-to-date information on the ground during implementation.
- Keep ecumenical partners and secular organisations informed on how changes will affect them and create opportunities for better engagement.
- Consider staff retention measures during the period of uncertainty.

Legislative change

- Give the Dioceses Commission the power to determine the appropriate length of the consultation period for a reorganisation scheme, taking into account the scale of change being proposed, rather than prescribing periods in the legislation.
- Remove the requirement for the diocesan synods of adjoining dioceses to give their formal consent to schemes where they have only a very peripheral interest.

Appendix 1: Dioceses Commission Reports relating to West Yorkshire

The Dioceses Commission issued the following reports:

- Progress Report March 2010
- Review Report No 2 Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon & Leeds, Sheffield and Wakefield, November 2010
- Review Report No.2: A Guide to the Report, November 2010
- Interim Progress Report, July 2011
- YDCR1 A New Diocese for West Yorkshire and the Dales: the draft Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon and Leeds and Wakefield Reorganisation Scheme, October 2011.
- YDCR2 Executive Summary of YDCR1, October 2011
- YDCR: Draft Scheme prepared by the Dioceses Commission under section 6 of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007, October 2011
- YDCR3 Draft Scheme Explanatory Memorandum, October 2011
- YDCR 4 An estimate of the financial effect of the proposals, October 2011
- YDCR5 Moving towards a New Diocese for West Yorkshire and the Dales, October 2012
- YDCR6 The New Diocese and the Mission of the Church, October 2012
- YDCR7 Draft Scheme
- YDCR8 Explanatory Memorandum
- YDCR9 An estimate of the financial effect of the proposals, October 2012