

SUMMARY OF THE RIPON & LEEDS DIOCESAN SYNOD DEBATE OF 02 MARCH

BACKGROUND

Synod members attending the debate included:

- 2 members of the House of Bishops
- 50 elected members from the House of Clergy
- 38 elected members from the House of Laity

Voting was by secret ballot and resulted in 70 voting for the scheme, 18 against with 2 abstentions

PROCESS

Formal presentations were given by:

- Professor Hilary Russell of the Dioceses Commission who outlined the role of the Commission and the considerations taken into account when proposing the scheme. She clarified that the scheme provides a framework for a new diocese but detailed decisions would follow at a local level.
- The Bishop of Knaresborough who highlighted that despite many good things about the Diocese as it is, sustainability is a key concern and the number of vulnerabilities arising from the 'smallness' of current dioceses.

THEMES EMERGING DURING THE DEBATE

During the subsequent debate, the following themes and issues emerged.

Mission

- There was strong support for the Scheme and the case it makes for Mission.
- A key feature is the opportunities it provides for re-imagining the Mission of the Church in a new context of five areas within a single Diocese. The chance to do something new and innovative was one that people felt should be grasped and welcomed.
- Many perceived significant benefits arising from the Scheme in the areas of:
 - o Clergy deployment and employment
 - o Attracting clergy to the diocese
 - o Education
- The impact a new Diocesan Bishop could have in attracting resources and focusing attention on the north and its challenges, was seen as considerable

Developing the future:

- Many speakers highlighted that the Scheme only provides a framework, not a complete solution. The opportunities this provides for people locally to develop the future and how it works, was seen as a real incentive and was very welcome.

Geographical and the Area Model:

- Members recognised that the current Diocese boundaries are historically based and no longer reflect today's partners, or the secular world and its structures. This makes the work of Mission in communities more complicated than it needs to be. This applies especially in the city of Leeds where currently four dioceses cover the geographical area of the city.
- There was recognition that the Area Model proposed has many opportunities within it to focus work at a local level with local needs and local solutions. Equally, there was a recognition that the detail of what is carried out in Areas, and what is done on a Diocese-wide basis, will need to be carefully worked through.
- **Northern Archdeaconry:** Some concerns were raised that the northern archdeaconry of Richmond, covering a large geographic area of the Dales, would be too large to be run or supported as a single area. A key aspect was the potential distances, travel and costs involved, all of which could impact on commitment and involvement of people. Contrary views were expressed that whilst the area is large geographically, innovative ways of working and imaginative use of technology could both assist and enable a more effective delivery of Mission across the whole Area.
- **Area of Leeds:** The benefits for the city of Leeds as being one of UK's largest and fastest growing cities, being a single area with its own Bishop were seen as being considerable

Management of the change

- Many members commented on the need for strong Project/Programme Management to ensure that any transformation is well planned, minimises risk and delivers the benefits and outcomes to time and on budget.
- Many also commented that risks and some disruption are inevitable on a change of this scale. Most speakers were of the view that these should be welcomed and managed, not taken as a reason for not moving forward. Some felt the risks were too large.
- The change the Scheme proposes builds on extensive joint working and partnerships that already exist across the three dioceses, and this in itself will reduce the risks and make the overall challenge easier to address.

Financial aspects

- There was a general recognition that current financial pressures within the Dioceses are extensive, would continue and action is needed to mitigate them.
- The Scheme could offer a degree of financial stability and security. Savings were seen as possible but firm financial management and control would be needed to achieve these and reduce the risks.

- Some felt that the financial risks involved in moving to a new diocese were simply too great and were hesitant about the more optimistic assessment of the Dioceses Commission.
- Others were of the view there were no financial reasons for rejecting the scheme and significant advantages and benefits that could accrue from accepting it, provided a strong financial framework is developed.
- However Parish support will be essential to ensure share collection and mission are not jeopardised.

Diocesan Staff

- The protection that TUPE will provide for Diocesan Office staff during any transformation was recognised and welcomed.
- It was felt to be important to reduce uncertainty over senior management roles that are abolished by the Scheme, as early as possible.