

The Bishop of Portsmouth
The Rt Revd Christopher Foster

Mr Rex Andrew
Pastoral Division
Church House
Great Smith Street
London
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17 December 2018

Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011

Benefices of Brighstone and Brooke with Mottistone; Shorwell with Kingston; Calbourne with Newtown; Shalfleet; Thorley; Freshwater; Yarmouth; and Christ Church Totland Bay
Proposed Pastoral Scheme

Dear Rex,

Thank you very much for your letter and for the copies of the representations you have received about this proposed scheme. While I appreciate and understand the sentiments of those who have made these representations, I do nevertheless wish the Scheme to proceed.

In order to help the Pastoral Committee to consider this proposal I offer below my responses to the points raised in your letter dated 18 October 2018.

1. What were the main reasons for proposing to unite the eight benefices and establish a team ministry for its area and how this would further the Mission of the Church in this area?

The Isle of Wight Deanery Plan (see Annex A) was codified at the inaugural Isle of Wight Deanery Synod on 21 January 2016. It stated that 'working together is an essential feature of the Isle of Wight Deanery Plan and this will be achieved through developing the six Island clusters, which are not mini-deaneries, but mission areas in which Christians work together'.

As part of the out-working of the deanery plan, a lengthy informal consultation was undertaken by the then Archdeacon of the Isle of Wight, the Ven Peter Sutton, and since January 2017, with the assistance of the Area Dean, the Revd Allie Kerr, to explore what cluster working would look like in West Wight. This was assisted greatly through learning from the strategy of the Diocese of Exeter and its work on 'mission communities' in rural areas where it is recognised that while not every parish can offer every aspect of the Church's life and ministry, if parishes join in partnership to form a mission community, they can work more effectively together.

The learning and information gathered and views given (see Annexes B, C, D, E, F) have formed the proposals of having 2.5 to 3 full-time equivalent ordained stipendiary ministers, a team rector, team vicar and a house for duty post (0.5FTE) or title curate (1FTE), with a full-time administrator.

It is believed that the benefits for mission in West Wight from these proposed changes will include releasing clergy to minister rather than administrate; giving a single point of contact for the parish and its community for access to clergy for pastoral care, occasional offices and for church and hall use and will give the legal framework for the continued close working of the parishes.

2. How would the proposed new benefice fit with diocesan criteria regarding sizes of benefices in terms of population and electoral roll figures and staffing levels, compared with similar areas in the diocese? Is it intended that members of the team will have particular responsibility for the areas comprising the current benefices?

Currently, there are no specific diocesan criteria for population figures, average weekly attendance or electoral roll for automatic allocation of a stipendiary post or part thereof. However, the above factors are considered through the discernment process for allocation of stipendiary ministers and also informed by the missional need. It does also have to take into account the parishes' ability to be self-sustaining or the ability of parishes of the wider diocese to subsidise such appointments.

The data contained in Annex G demonstrates that the total population figure for the 'towns' is 8,707 and for the 'downs' is 4,751 and the total geographic distance is roughly 12 miles long by 7 miles wide. So whereas the total population figures and geographic area are both relatively small, cognisance is taken of the individual identity of rural parish churches and their local communities as well as the lack of public transport routes with regular availability and the complex rural road system and so these proposals are erring on the conservative by seeking to retain 2.5 posts plus a full-time administrator.

3. Is the 0.5 post referred to by some representors still to be made available? I noted that it is not specifically referred to in the footnotes to the draft Scheme, but a footnote does say that you intend to license the Reverend Linda Bushell and the Reverend James Cook to serve in the new benefice. Is it intended that they would provide the assistance envisaged for this post?

Part of the overall deployment scheme for diocesan funded offices in West Wight includes either a house for duty post (0.5FTE) or a title curate (1FTE).

At the time of drafting the proposals the Revd James Cook was serving in a house for duty post. He has now retired and it is yet to be determined whether a further house for duty post will be advertised or whether the benefice would be an appropriate opportunity for a title curate at this time.

The Revd Linda Bushell is currently serving in exchange for a house for duty, and it is intended that she will be licenced to the new benefice if the Scheme were to be made.

It is intended that a further self-supporting minister shall also be licenced as associate vicars.

4. Were any alternative suggestions for reorganisation considered and, if so, why were they rejected?

The informal consultation process to create proposals for pastoral reorganisation in the western area of the Isle of Wight began in the final quarter of 2015. The first rough draft of the proposals can be seen at Annex B.

During the course of 2016, these proposals went through a number of iterations (see Annex C, D, E, F, G) with amendments as a result of a series of meetings with PCCs and PCC representatives and the then Archdeacon of the Isle of Wight, the Ven Peter Sutton. These various alternative suggestions were ultimately rejected by the PCCs themselves and not the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee.

The draft proposals currently before this Committee are based on over two years of consultation with the legally interested parties, the Isle of Wight Deanery Council, which is also the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee, and the Isle of Wight Deanery Synod.

5. Please set out the consultation process leading to the proposed draft Scheme, indicating any meetings held with the interested parties. In particular please confirm that the statutory consultations under s.6 of the Measure with all the PCCs affected were carried out before the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee made its recommendation to you. Please confirm the level of support, or otherwise, for what was being proposed during the local consultation process and how any concerns raised during that stage were addressed. Was there any consultation beyond that with the statutory parties?

The initial proposals were roughly drafted by Ven Peter Sutton in December 2015 (Annex B) and were brought to the Isle of Wight (IOW) Deanery Council on 3 February 2016 (see minutes at Annex H).

With the resignation of the vicar of Brighstone, Brook with Mottistone and Shorwell with Kingston, the IOW Deanery Council, which is also the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee, looked at the possible configurations of deployment that would also enable the area to have a designated administrator (see minutes at Annex I).

The IOW Deanery Synod of 11 May 2016 was updated on vacancies across the Island and proposed future ministry deployment (Annex J).

At the IOW Deanery Council meeting of 7 June 2016, the importance of clusters working well was discussed as well as the proposals for West Wight (see minutes at Annex K).

During this period, the minutes of the Deanery Council meeting of 1 September 2016 (see Annex L) note that while discussions continued about the future framework, all parishes were rethinking what would be sustainable and reasonable in the interim with regard to service provision and it was noted that population size has a direct relationship with resource. It is also noted that there was a West Wight Cluster Development meeting on 4 October (see Annexes M & N).

Subsequently an advertisement for a post in West Wight was published but there were no applications received. This is noted in the minutes of the Deanery Council of 31 October 2016 (see Annex O). The following meeting of the Deanery Council on 10 January 2017 (see Annex P), notes that there is an interview set for the West Wight

post on 20/21 February 2017 with one applicant but again this individual was not appointed.

The IOW Deanery Synod on 16 May 2017 discussed the vacancies in West Wight and acknowledged that the proposed West Wight configuration would need to be re-considered.

The following month the Rector of Freshwater and Yarmouth announced his retirement which enabled a wider view to be taken of future ministry deployment in the area.

A period of informal consultation was then undertaken by the Ven Peter Sutton and the Area Dean, Revd Allie Kerr with three public consultation meetings on 18 June 2017 in Calbourne, 24 June 2017 in Freshwater and 25 June in Brighstone with approximately 60 people attending (see Annexes D, E, F, G).

In September 2017, five posts on the Isle of Wight were put in one advertisement (see Annex Q) including the vacancies at all of the affected parishes as designate positions of team rector and team vicar should this Scheme be successful in being made. Interviews were held in November 2017 and the Revd Clive Todd and the Revd Leisa Potter (née McGovern) were successful in appointment to these priest-in-charge posts.

The July 2016 meeting of the Bishop's Council (which is the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee), upon the request of the Ven Peter Sutton, had recommended that a formal consultation be undertaken with the interested parties regarding the proposals of uniting the benefices of Brighstone, Brook with Mottistone, Shorwell with Kingston, Calbourne, Newtown, Shalfleet, Thorley, Freshwater, Yarmouth and Totland Bay. However, despite initial views that an informal consultation would not be required, this decision was postponed in order to enable the full informal consultation outlined above at both the parish and deanery levels (see Annex R).

The formal s.6 consultation letters were sent to the legally interested parties on 18 April 2018 with a closing date for responses six weeks later on 4 June 2018. There were only two responses to the consultation which were both in favour of proceeding with the draft proposals with one mentioning the desire for their parish continuing distinct as per the proposals and seeking clarification regarding its patronage (see Annex S).

6. Do you think that undertaking further local consultation might allay the concerns expressed by the representors and produce a consensus in favour of the proposals? If so, would you wish consideration of the representations by the Commissioners to be deferred while this is done?

The informal consultation process was undertaken over a two year period with a broad range of people and PCCs participating in that and the views taken in that time have informed the draft Scheme as it currently stands.

As you will see from the answers to questions 7 and 8 below; it is anticipated that the Revd Clive Todd and the Revd Leisa Potter (née McGovern) will continue to work with all of the affected PCCs to help develop the mission community. They will be assisted in this by the Ven Penny Driver, former Archdeacon of Exeter, who has been providing consultancy support for some time

There has been vocal frustration on the Isle of Wight that the proposed administrator for West Wight has not yet been appointed whereas the team rector designate and team vicar designate have. Should the Scheme not be made, there would not be the funds available for the administrator, whereas there would be for the newly appointed stipendiary ministers.

- 7. Has there been any consultation with the PCCs about the membership and procedure of a team council and the matters which must or may be delegated to it under a Bishop's Instrument? What is your response to the suggestions that this should be done before the draft Scheme is considered, that there should be no team council initially or that any provision for one should be reviewed after a year or eighteen months?**

The discussions with all of the affected parishes indicated that the best way forward would be for the team rector designate and the team vicar designate to work with the parishes to agree the terms and parameters of the team council, should the Scheme be made, based on a pro forma team council document received from the diocesan registrar.

- 8. What matters do you envisage would be delegated to the team council? Would you expect the PCCs to retain responsibilities for financial matters and the maintenance of their churches?**

The intention of the ministry team is for the shared mission of the cluster/new benefice to be delegated to the team council and for finance and fabric maintenance to be retained by the PCCs.

- 9. Do you expect that the parsonage houses of Freshwater, Totland Bay and Shalfleet will be retained for the purposes indicated in the footnotes to the draft Scheme for the foreseeable future? Would you be prepared to give an undertaking to consult the team council or particular PCCs before any proposed disposal of any of these houses?**

The parsonage house of the benefice of Christ Church, Totland Bay is not currently occupied as the Revd James Cook has retired.

The parsonage house of the benefice of Calbourne; Newtown; Shalfleet; Thorley continues to be the residence of the Area Dean of the Isle of Wight.

There is no intention, at this time, for either property to be sold. Both are purpose-built rectories and as such are ideal for housing clergy. There is the possibility that in the future, if this draft Scheme is made, that there may be another house for duty post and a title curate appointed. Therefore, both properties would be required even if both were to fall vacant in the short-term.

- 10. What impact would you expect the proposals have on the current service patterns at the affected 12 churches? To what extent would this be decided by the team council? How will the parishes' needs and traditions be respected? Will BCP 1662 services continue at Thorley?**

There has been a shared rota across the 12 parishes for over two years so there should be no effect on what is currently ongoing.

11. Would you expect the proposals to have any significant effect on the parishes' finances? Would their parish share be affected?

The intention is that the parishes shall continue distinct. So there is no expectation that there will be any significant effect on any parish's' finances as a result of the proposals.

It is, however, possible that if the draft Scheme is approved and a subsequent appointment is made for a full-time administrator that there will be an increase in occasional offices across the parishes as it will be easier for parishioners, the wider community, funeral directors etc. to make arrangements. This could result in a modest increase in income across the parishes.

The parish share allocation for each parish would continue to be calculated in the same way and so any change will be dependent on any change in a parish's average weekly attendance (AWA) figures and the overall numbers across the diocese. (If a parish's AWA remains the same but the overall numbers for the diocese decrease, there will be an increase in the parish share calculation for that parish). The social economic score for each parish is from Experian data and will not be updated for the coming year.

12. Would you expect proposals to close St James, Yarmouth or any of the other churches in the proposed new benefice for regular public worship to be brought forward in the foreseeable future?

There have been no requests from any of the affected parishes to seek closure of any of the churches for regular public worship and there is no intention from the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee to seek to have such schemes made in the foreseeable future.

13. Are there any other factors which the Commissioners should be aware of in their consideration of these representations?

There is a strong sense of identity, if you ask people where they live they'll often say West Wight.

There is also strong history of the parishes working together. When the West Wight cluster first started, and until the Revd Helen O'Sullivan and Revd David Bevington left, there was a weekly cluster evening prayer which all members of the ministry team were invited to. This was followed once a month by a cluster ministry team meeting where they discussed pastoral concerns, shared mission opportunities, administration and rota issues. There was a practice of covering pastoral offices across the cluster and ministers would lead and preach across the whole cluster.

There is a strong team of lay worship leaders who lead services and preach across the west Wight rather than just in their home patch.

Should this Scheme be made it will be codifying the practice in West Wight that has been ongoing before even the first rough proposals were crafted in 2015.

With good wishes.
Yours sincerely,

Chimboras Portsmouth: