

**Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests
(Resolution of Disputes Procedure) Regulations 2014**

**Report of the Independent Reviewer for 2018 to
the Archbishops of Canterbury and York**

1. This is the fourth annual report required by Regulation 30 of the Bishops and Priests (Resolution of Disputes Procedure) Regulations 2014 and the first that I have produced since succeeding Sir Philip Mawer in February 2018.
2. His final year in the role was dominated by the major piece of work that you had commissioned as a result of the concerns surrounding the nomination of a bishop to the See of Sheffield in January 2017. His report, published that September, made recommendations which the House of Bishops accepted in February 2018 and which led to the creation of an Implementation and Dialogue Group chaired by the Bishop of Rochester. Happily my first year has proved far less onerous than my predecessor's final year. As a result, this report can be relatively short.

Initial briefings

3. On arrival I wrote to a number of organisations and individuals to say that I would find it very helpful to have an initial, private, conversation with each of them to hear their perception of how the 2014 settlement had been working out in practice. I am grateful to all those who made themselves available for these informal briefing sessions. It was invaluable to be able to hear a range of perspectives and reflections on how matters have developed since 2014. Having an understanding of the current context proved very useful when, later in the year, the first cases arose.

Grievances and Concerns Received under the Regulations

4. On 1 November I received notice of a grievance brought by the PCC of St George's Headstone in the Diocese of London. The PCC invited me to carry out a review of the decision of the Bishop of London to invite the Bishop of Fulham or, in the alternative, the Bishop of Maidstone, to exercise episcopal ministry in the parish following its passing of a resolution under the House of Bishops' Declaration. The Regulations require the Independent Reviewer to seek to conclude consideration of grievances within two months and I duly published my report on 13 December.
5. This is not the place for rehearsing the analysis in the report. It is worth noting, however, that the case was significant in two respects:
 - It is the first, and so far only, grievance brought by a PCC since the 2014 Regulations came into force. All of the cases considered by my predecessor were the result of concerns raised under Regulation 27.

- It provided an opportunity to consider the meaning of paragraphs 22 and 26 of the House of Bishops' Declaration and in particular whether they were sufficiently broad to include a theological conviction (a) concerning the marital status of a bishop rather than a conviction in relation to gender and ordained ministry and (b) that the man who had consecrated the male bishop invited to minister to the parish should not previously have consecrated a woman as bishop. I concluded that they were not and that the Bishop of London had not therefore acted contrary to the Declaration in inviting the Bishops of Fulham or Maidstone to provide ministry to the parish,
6. In December I received an expression of concern in relation to one of our cathedrals and decided that, although the issue was a relatively narrow one, it had potentially wider relevance in view of the importance of cathedral ministry and should, therefore, be inquired into. I hope to be able to conclude my report on this case in March.

Other correspondence received

7. I received two letters seeking guidance on matters where Bishops were anxious to ensure some consistency of approach across the Church of England. In both cases I had to explain that my remit is confined to what is set out in the Regulations made by the House of Bishops and that I cannot provide private advice given that the issue in question could in due course become the subject of a grievance or a concern that I then had to deal with formally and even-handedly with interested parties.
8. Another letter was received from a member of a parish which had a resolution in place under the House of Bishops' Declaration following a tied PCC vote and the use of a casting vote by the Chair in favour of the resolution. The question raised was whether a resolution could be carried by the casting vote of the Chair. Since the matter may be of wider interest it may be helpful to record the response sent.
9. Paragraph 19 of the House of Bishops' Declaration says that the relevant resolution must be passed by way of a motion passed "*either (a) by a majority of those present at a meeting at which at least two-thirds of the members of the PCC who are entitled to attend are present or (b) by the majority of all the members of the PCC.*". Such votes need to be calculated in accordance with the normal rules that apply to decision-making by PCCs: rule (8)3, and paragraph 11 of Annex II, of the Church Representation Rules make provision for the Chair to have a second, or casting, vote in the event of there being an equality of votes. A majority can therefore be achieved by way of a Chair's casting vote.