

REVIEW OF THE SEES OF BEVERLEY, EBBSFLEET, MAIDSTONE & RICHBOROUGH

Background

1. In the context of the Church of England's legislation to admit women bishops in 2014, the House of Bishops set out arrangements for those parishes which, on grounds of theological conviction, were unable to receive the priestly or episcopal ministry of women. PCCs could request their diocesan bishop to make appropriate arrangements. The provision of a bishop to undertake ministry in respect of such a resolution relied on the continued existence of the Sees of Beverley, Ebbsfleet and Richborough; and the subsequent appointment of the Bishop of Maidstone.¹
2. The status of these Sees was set out by the Independent Reviewer in his note of 25 August 2015, namely that...

"The sees of Beverley, Ebbsfleet and Richborough, like that of Maidstone, exist by virtue of the Suffragan Bishops Act 1888. The legal mechanism by which these sees were brought into being was under that Act rather than the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993 or the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993. It follows that the sees continue in existence in spite of the repeal of the Measure and the rescinding of the Act of Synod.

Decisions about appointments to these sees are made by the relevant archbishop since they are suffragan sees within the diocese of Canterbury or, in the case of Beverley, York. The responsibility for drawing up the role description rests with the archbishop of the province and the Dioceses Commission now has the same role in scrutinising any proposal for filling a vacant see as it has for all other suffragan sees."
3. These four Sees are distinctive as the bishops work across a number of dioceses, and the holders' ministry will reflect that. Following consultation with the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Dioceses Commission decided to undertake an objective assessment of the practical arrangements relating to all these Sees, in the context of the current role descriptions and the House of Bishops' 2014 Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests. The focus was on episcopal workloads and issues arising from them, and was therefore intended to be limited in its scope: the Dioceses Commission noted that the House of Bishops in 2014 viewed these Sees and their occupants as '...an integral part of the new dispensation.'²

¹ See *The House of Bishops' Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests*, June 2014 [GS Misc 1076]

² GS 1932, para 23

How the review was conducted

- Members of the Commission accompanied by the Secretary held meetings individually with all post holders between 24 September and 10 October. Members of the House of Bishops were also invited to comment if they wished (see list of those who did so as ANNEX A). The Secretary also met with Nicola Elliott of the Church Commissioners' Bishops and Cathedrals Department to discuss the current resourcing arrangements for the holders of these Sees. The findings were subsequently considered by the Commission at its meeting on 5 December 2018 (and then shared with the Archbishops of Canterbury and York).

Workload

- Whenever the Commission considers submissions to fill any suffragan see, one of the key questions is that of workload. While statistics can never tell the whole story, they do provide a guide, and enable some kind of some objective assessment to be made. In the case of the holders of these Sees, the following table sets out the number of parishes which have passed Resolutions for which they provide extended episcopal ministry and, significantly, the number of dioceses in which they work, according to data collected by the Research & Statistics Unit - as at 1 January 2018³.

	No of Resolution parishes in their care	No of dioceses in which they minister
Beverley	104	9
Ebbsfleet	95	12
Maidstone	58 (126 ⁴)	15 (31)
Richborough	95	14

The bishops themselves in some cases gave us slightly more up to date figures⁵ but for the purposes of this Report it seemed more useful to use data at the same base line which was already in the public domain. The main difference is that the nature of the ministry conducted by the Bishop of Maidstone (who has only been functioning in

³ The total number of Resolution parishes of course varies depending on decisions made from time to time by the relevant PCCs.

⁴ In documentation supplied to the Commission in September 2018, the Bishop of Maidstone gave details of a further category of parish – over 60 – where he is 'invited to be involved as issues arise' as opposed to the former category where he is formally invited to provide episcopal ministry. The latter category includes a number of parishes in the 14 dioceses where the Bishop of Maidstone is an Honorary Assistant Bishop. In a written submission he comments that '...it seems sensible to judge the size of my role in relation to all the [131] evangelical churches which have passed resolutions rather than the [58] where the relationship has been more formalized.'

⁵ In a further submission dated 18 February 2019, the Bishop of Maidstone's office gave updated statistics: 74 parishes where the Bishop had been officially asked to provide extended episcopal ministry, and a further 65 Resolution Parishes where he also is 'invited to be involved as issues arise' (ie a total of 137).

this capacity since 2015, unlike the PEVs Sees which date from 1994) means that he is also ministering in a further 68 parishes but alongside other bishops, and in a less formalised way. He is the only bishop ministering to conservative evangelical parishes holding theological convictions in respect of headship, whereas the other bishops are by and large ministering to traditional catholic congregations.

6. All bishops spoke of the pressure which they were under and gave the impression of working at the absolute limit of their capabilities. They sought to provide pastoral care to a range of geographically dispersed congregations. All the bishops concerned – including Maidstone – exercise a significant confirmation ministry: in 2016 the Bishops of Beverley, Ebbsfleet and Richborough confirmed 536 candidates; between September 2016 and August 2017 the Bishop of Maidstone confirmed 238 candidates⁶.
7. In many cases the congregations to which the bishops minister felt somewhat isolated within their dioceses and looked to their bishop to provide support, particularly when clergy vacancies occurred. The bishop would usually play a key role at such times, helping with parish profiles, attending key local meetings, and advising on the appointment. Because the parishes were often holding a minority position within their dioceses the parish representatives could seek a significant episcopal input in this process (more so than might be the case in a typical non-Resolution parish), with the bishops often needing to negotiate with the diocesan authorities to help ensure that suitable appointments were made. In addition, the practical need to relate to senior staffs in up to 15 dioceses could be extremely demanding in terms of the number of different people to whom the bishop had to relate (quite apart from practical considerations of travelling long distances). The bishops spoke candidly of the time that they needed to invest in these relationships.
8. In his representation concerning the Sees of Beverley, Ebbsfleet and Richborough, Dr Colin Podmore makes the point that their parishes are disproportionately populous and deprived. According to data collected by Forward in Faith, 83% of these bishops' parishes are among the 50% more deprived parishes nationally. The Bishop of Maidstone has made a rather different point. The average electoral roll size of the parishes to which he ministers is 202 (compared to the national average of 95, or median of 60⁷). Both these factors – ministry in disproportionately deprived traditional catholic parishes, and larger than average congregations in respect of conservative evangelical parishes – inevitably impact on episcopal workload.
9. Because the parishes to which these bishops minister are not geographically contiguous and are spread over so many dioceses, the exercise of episcopal ministry to them involves much more travel that would typically be the case for a suffragan

⁶ In 2017 15,300 candidates were confirmed in the Church of England. The diocesan breakdown is not available but the average *per diocese* was 364. (The approximate average per serving bishop would be c.140).

⁷ National data supplied by the NCIs Research and Statistics Unit

bishop within a diocese. The Bishop of Richborough, resident in St Albans, spoke with feeling about driving back from North Lincolnshire late at night. Likewise, the Bishop of Beverley regularly finds himself travelling back to York from parishes in Manchester after evening engagements. The travel dimension is all part of the mix in terms of the ministry of these bishops.

10. The supply of bishops who are in a position to minister to Resolution parishes is a further issue. Within the traditional catholic spectrum, the Bishop of Chichester is able to minister to 17 such parishes in his diocese; the Bishop of Fulham ministers to 54– 46 in London, and 8 in Southwark; the Bishop of Wakefield ministers to 29 in Leeds; and the Bishop of Burnley to 21 in Blackburn⁸. There are no other serving headship evangelical bishops. If any of these current arrangements were to cease, it could have a dramatic impact on the workload of the Sees under review. One recent example concerns the ripple effect of not replacing the former Bishop of Edmonton – the Rt Revd Peter Wheatley – with another catholic traditionalist. This meant that the Bishop of Fulham took on a significant number of Edmonton parishes at the expense of those he had been ministering to in the Diocese of Rochester. The Bishop of Richborough then found himself ministering to a further 12 parishes in Rochester (and visiting any of these by car necessitating time-consuming trips via the Dartford Crossing). If, for sake of argument, the 29 Leeds parishes currently ministered to by the Bishop of Wakefield were to fall to a provincial bishop, this would make the workload of the Bishop of Beverley unsustainable and might require the creation of another suffragan see.

Resourcing

11. When the suffragan sees of Beverley, Ebbsfleet and Richborough were created in 1994, it was on the basis that the Church Commissioners would finance them on the same basis as other suffragan sees. This basic model has evolved in the era of episcopal block grants and the Commissioners Bishopsrics and Cathedrals Department currently provides a basic block grant roughly as follows:

Stipend and Pension contribution	£50k
Staffing	£30k
Other costs (inc travel)	£30k
Total	£110k

12. There are some variations to the above figures (for instance if there was an unspent balance from a previous year), but arrangements are negotiated on this basis. All the bishops spoke positively about the practical support that they had been given by the Commissioners, whose staff had clearly tried to meet their needs within the parameters that had been set.

⁸ Data as at 1.1.18 supplied to the Research & Statistics Unit for the annual Ministry Statistics

13. The amount that could be spent on a PA averages out at 0.75 of a full-time post. The same overall pot of money pays for a driver as required, so if a bishop employs a full-time PA he consequently has very little to meet any chauffeuring costs. None find this an easy circle to square – with one post holder (Beverley) clearly having to negotiate additional driving support from his Archbishop.

14. A further consideration relates to the specific demands of this itinerant and specialist network episcopacy. All the bishops find themselves drawn into necessarily complex and time-consuming work on clergy appointments in the parishes to which they minister with little apparent access to the normal support services of a diocese, often in effect also acting in an archidiaconal capacity. Dr Podmore in his submission suggests the additional provision of ‘a senior ‘vicar-general’-type support’ to make this form of episcopal ministry more sustainable. The Bishop of Maidstone had indeed already arranged for the Revd David Banting to assist him one day a week in the York Province. For a 9-month period the Bishop of Beverley had the temporary services of a chaplain (as someone unexpectedly became available between posts). This evidently made a huge difference, and significantly meant that he had another priest with whom he could pray on a regular basis, and who could assist with parish visits (and driving).

15. The holders of these Sees are housed on a similar basis to suffragan bishops (whose housing is a diocesan responsibility). Although the housing specification is no different, the housing is rented by the Church Commissioners (in one case owned by them). The Commissioners as the housing provider pay council tax and water rates and meet the cost of repairs and decorations. 50% of the cost is then apportioned by a formula between relevant dioceses⁹. Although post holders did raise some issues about the *location* of their housing (which had been amicably resolved), none raised concerns in relation to the actual specification.

Role Descriptions

16. All the post holder operate as suffragans of archiepiscopal sees in line with Role Descriptions that are given to them (see sample as ANNEX B). One largely absent aspect of episcopal ministry in these Sees is any significant external dimension: it is very church-focused. This may be an inevitable consequence of their particular role, and is certainly consistent with their Role Descriptions. They are linked into the wider Church through their attendance at meetings of both the College of Bishops and the House (in which they have ex-officio attendance rights), as well as regional bishops’ groups and those diocesan senior staff meetings to which they are invited (and that they can realistically attend). The Bishop of Ebbsfleet, uniquely among holders of

⁹ 50% of the housing cost is recharged to dioceses as follows:

Beverley – shared between the dioceses of the York Province;

Richborough and Ebbsfleet – shared between the dioceses of the Canterbury Province;

Maidstone – shared between all dioceses.

these Sees, holds a national ecumenical brief for relations with the Orthodox Church. He confessed to finding this very energising, even though it takes up c.20% of his time. In his submission the Bishop of Norwich expresses his concern that "...they have little opportunity for wider community ministry which is such a significant part of being a bishop for the rest of us.." and suggests that thought be given to them being invited to take on roles in such areas as public affairs or social responsibility where they would be "...bishops of the Church rather than chaplains to a constituency."

17. While probably falling outside their formal role description from the Archbishops, one theme that has recurred is the lack of definition that there can be from a diocesan bishop in relation to the bishop's role within the diocese. In many cases – but not all – the holders of these Sees have been appointed Honorary Assistant Bishops within the diocese: a development which is clearly welcome to the post holders and provides some ecclesiological undergirding of their ministry. Some nevertheless commented with a degree of frustration on how much time could be spent negotiating their role with individual diocesan bishops. This is particularly acute for the Bishop of Maidstone, whose ministry is still developing (whereas it is probably true to say that arrangements are more settled in relation to the other Sees). Were other diocesans to follow the practice of the London Plan¹⁰, those relationships would be more defined and more transparent to all concerned.

Conclusions

18. The Commission's conclusions are as follows:

- That, based on the current workload, the Commission would in principle support a submission to fill any one of these Sees should one become vacant;
- That, if there were to be any diminution in the supply of traditional catholic bishops, or a further significant expansion in the numbers of headship evangelical parishes passing Resolutions, the Commission might together with the relevant Archbishop need to consider creating or reviving further suffragan sees;
- That the post holders should seek assistance from the administration of the relevant diocese (where possible), particularly if they held assistant bishop status in that diocese;
- That the Church Commissioners should give urgent consideration to increasing their support for these Sees to allow each post holder to employ a senior chaplain who could in share the administrative load, particularly in relation to parish visits and clergy appointments;
- That the Church Commissioners' support should explicitly allow for reasonable assistance with driving;

¹⁰ See: <https://www.london.anglican.org/about/the-london-plan/>

- That the Archbishops should review the Role Descriptions at the next vacancy to consider the scope for broadening the roles as may be appropriate or feasible (given the workload pressures).
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(signed)

THE REVD PAUL BENFIELD

THE RIGHT REVD CHRISTOPHER FOSTER

CANON MALCOLM HALLIDAY

THE REVD CANON GEOFFREY HARBORD

RUTH MARTIN

THE RIGHT REVD AND RT HON DAME SARAH MULLALLY,

THE REVD DR ROBERT MUNRO

The Dioceses Commission

25 February 2019

Those who have taken part in the Review

Meetings

The Rt Revd Norman Banks, Bishop of Richborough

Nicola Elliott, Church Commissioners' Bishops and Cathedrals Department

The Rt Revd Jonathan Goodall, Bishop of Ebbsfleet

The Rt Revd Rod Thomas, Bishop of Maidstone (accompanied by his PA, Rachel Lickess)

The Rt Revd Glyn Webster, Bishop of Beverley

Correspondence

The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds

The Rt Revd Graham James, Bishop of Norwich

Dr Colin Podmore, Director of Forward in Faith

The Rt Revd Tony Robinson, Bishop of Wakefield

The Rt Revd Rod Thomas, Bishop of Maidstone (in addition to the meeting)

The Rt Revd David Walker, Bishop of Manchester

The Rt Revd Dr Martin Warner, Bishop of Chichester

The Rt Revd Andrew Watson, Bishop of Guildford

The Rt Revd Pete Wilcox, Bishop of Sheffield

ROLE SPECIFICATION**Role** **BISHOP OF EBBSFLEET****NOTES**

This role description has been prepared on the basis of the requirements for the Suffragan Bishop of Ebbsfleet identified by the Archbishop of Canterbury. As with any role description it will need to be kept under review particularly in the light of any changes to the Act of Synod. If there are any particular concerns after six months the Bishop may wish to raise these with the Archbishop. The Bishop will also wish to ensure that at their first Ministerial Development Review with the Archbishop this document is discussed and amended as appropriate.

This document should not be considered in isolation but in the context of the vows and duties undertaken at the ordination and consecration as a bishop, the Canons of the Church of England and the Act of Synod.

The Bishop will also have received various briefing documents to support his nomination and appointment.

The initial point of contact on Terms of Service is the Archbishops' Secretary for Appointments

Purpose of the Role

To provide extended episcopal care, as a suffragan bishop to the See of Ebbsfleet, to those who cannot, on theological grounds accept the priestly or episcopal ministry of women and to act as Provincial Episcopal Visitors for the purposes of the current Act of Synod.

Challenges of the Role

- To enhance the level of communion and understanding between those who cannot, on theological grounds, accept the priestly or episcopal ministry of women and those who do accept these ministries within the Church of England; to encourage celebration of the breadth of the Church
- To release the imagination, energies and prayers of petitioning parishes to make their distinctive contribution in local mission within the wider fellowship of the Church of England

- To build up the confidence of clergy and lay people who cannot, on theological grounds, accept the priestly or episcopal ministry of women within the Church of England and to provide inspiration and encouragement. To ensure appropriate extended pastoral care and support for them.
- To encourage churches in fruitful mission and confident sharing of the gospel, to lead them in growth to evangelise and to draw out vocations to Christian ministry.
- As a non-voting participant of the House of Bishops to take part in the collegial leadership of the Church of England. The House has a particular responsibility to lead the church in mission, to maintain and promote the unity of the Church, in guardianship of Church of England doctrine and liturgy, for issues regarding the nature of Ministry within the Church, and for ensuring that the Church is equipped to undertake the mission and ministry to which it is called

Main Responsibilities of the role

These are set out mindful of the themes of the current quinquennium as identified by the House of Bishops, namely i) to contribute to the common good ii) to facilitate the growth of the church and iii) to re-imagine ministry; as well as the Five Marks of Mission, namely i) to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom ii) to teach, baptise and nurture new believers iii) to respond to human need by loving service iv) to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation and v) to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

The Bishop is commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury

- To carry out, or cause to be carried out, episcopal duties for any parish in the Province of Canterbury the diocesan bishop concerned may request;
- To work with the diocesan bishop concerned in enabling extended pastoral care and sacramental ministry to be provided within these parishes;
- To act as spokesman and adviser for those who cannot, on theological grounds, accept the priestly or episcopal ministry of women ;
- To assist the Archbishop of Canterbury in monitoring the operation of the Act of Synod
- To engage constructively with Diocesan Bishops, Suffragans, Archdeacons and Rural Deans, building collegial relationships, to be proactive about attending staff meetings and to share in the wider episcopal ministry in each diocese as appropriate

Person Specification

<p>Spiritual Life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly identified with an orthodox Christian position and committed to a traditional interpretation of faith and order • Committed to the breadth of traditions within the Church of England • Nourished by both catholic and evangelical worship • Has a depth of spirituality which will sustain a ministry that is peripatetic and high profile • Displays a confidence in their faith and ministry • Authenticity in their ministry in terms of doctrinal understanding • Unable, on theological grounds, to accept the priestly or episcopal ministry of women
<p>Vision for mission and delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energised to evangelise and share the gospel and able to encourage churches in their mission and an outward facing ministry • A communicator of the faith and a proclaimer of the gospel • Recognised as a leader in mission
<p>Formation of others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastorally sensitive and skillful. A pastor of pastors • Capacity to engage and stimulate others through effective teaching and preaching • An encourager of vocations to the ministry
<p>Engagement in community life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of the potential contribution of church in and for the community it serves; an incarnational understanding of ministry
<p>Leadership and oversight of others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to command the respect and confidence across the breadth of the Church with particular reference to Conservative Evangelicals and Traditional Catholics • Able to bring vision to and to contribute to the strategic leadership of the wider College of Bishops • Identifies with and understands the particular needs of those to whom he will minister • A track record in pastoral ministry
<p>Working with others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willing to work to hold the breadth of tradition within the Church of England together • Able to work in partnership with Diocesan Bishops • Able to work collaboratively with the Bishops

	<p>of Beverley and Richborough and with those appointed to provide extended pastoral care and sacramental ministry under diocesan or regional arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed to building constructive relationships within the Church of England at local, diocesan, provincial and national level. • Committed to the ecumenical journey and able to contribute to ongoing ecumenical debate • Willing to encourage clergy and parishes to play as full a part in the Church of England as possible • Willing to undertake wider episcopal duties within dioceses • In common with other bishops of the Church of England, to recognise and respect the integrity of different theological positions on the ordination of women to the priesthood and to the episcopate
<p>Management of Resources and Structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the structures and legal frameworks of the Church of England • Ability and willingness to understand the day to day pastoral operation of the Church of England
<p>Personal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to travel around a large area and to travel to parishes which may be off public transport routes • Has the physical resilience for this ministry

24 April 2013