

Annex H

A copy of the letter referring the representations
to the Bishop of Portsmouth,
together with a copy of his reply





THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

CHURCH
COMMISSIONERS

The Rt Revd the Bishop of Portsmouth
Bishopsgrove
26 Osborn Road
Fareham
PO16 7DQ

Rex Andrew
Pastoral

Our ref: NB29/37

6 June 2019

Dear Bishop

Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011
Benefices of St John, Forton; Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport
Proposed Pastoral Scheme

Following the publication of the draft Pastoral Scheme providing for:

- (i) terminating the plurality established for the benefices of Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport;
- (ii) uniting the benefices and parishes of St John, Forton; Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport and establishing a team ministry for the area of the new benefice of Forton, Gosport Christ Church and Gosport Holy Trinity;
- (iii) the cure of souls in the new benefice to be shared by a team rector and one team vicar; their housing arrangements and the patronage arrangements for the new benefice; and
- (iv) for the parish churches of Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport to be parish churches of the new parish, and for the parish church of St John, Forton to cease to be a parish church.

we received 11 representations about the draft Scheme, of which one against was out of time.

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The draft Scheme carried the following as the diocesan rationale for your proposals:

The proposed union of benefices and parishes is necessary to free up people and finances, as well as decrease the burden of administration and buildings, from maintaining a declining/static church and to support cohesive working across the whole area of the affected parishes of St John, Forton; Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport.

It also carried a footnote saying that separate consultations were in hand about a proposal to take St John's church, Forton out of the parish system and establish it as a mission hub for a Bishop's Mission Order covering the deanery of Gosport.

A further footnote stated that all the current office holders would be dispossessed from their current offices and become entitled to compensation for loss of office but would also be welcome to apply for offices in the new benefice.

The six representations against the draft Scheme came from:-

- (1) Holy Trinity, Gosport PCC
- (2) Mr Robin Clark, PCC member at Christ Church, Gosport
- (3) Ms Lilian Fitchett, on the electoral roll at Holy Trinity, Gosport
- (4) Alderman Geoffrey O'Neill, worshipper and treasurer at Holy Trinity, Gosport
- (5) Ms Maureen Peacock, parishioner at Holy Trinity, Gosport
- (6) Mrs Lesley Tinman, member of Christ Church, Gosport

The out of time representation against the draft Scheme was from

- (1) Mr Geoffrey Holroyde, organist at Holy Trinity, Gosport since 2005

Some of these are against particular aspects of the draft Scheme although saying they support it in principle.

The four representations in favour came from:-

- (1) The Reverend Carrie Thompson, incumbent of St John, Forton (since 2008)
- (2) Mrs Ann Wood, Christ Church, Gosport, and its deanery and diocesan rep

- (3) The Ven Gavin Collins, Archdeacon of the Meon (since 2011)
- (4) Mrs Anne Stunt, Secretary to the Portsmouth Diocesan Board of Patronage

I enclose copies of all the correspondence.

Summary of the representations against

The representors against the draft Scheme are mainly concerned about the consultation process leading up to it and that it would dispossess the Reverend Andy Davis from his current office as incumbent of the benefices of Holy Trinity, Gosport; and Christ Church, Gosport without designating him to hold an office in the proposed new benefice.

Dispossession of the Reverend Andy Davis

All the representors against the draft Scheme speak highly of Mr Davis and his current ministry and say that he should be named as the first team rector of the proposed new team ministry benefice, instead of being dispossessed. They variously say that he is probably the most loved, respected and admired incumbent in Gosport; that he is a talented man whose strong Christian faith shines through and for who the cure of souls is a fundamental part of his mission; that he has gained the respect of large numbers of people, irrespective of age, in Gosport, whether or not they are sympathetic to Christianity; that he has built up a wide range of contacts, including to the scouts and other groups, which would take a new incumbent a considerable time to establish and that Holy Trinity and Christ Church have shown increasing attendance and strong support under him. One points out that he presides over eight services a week assisted only by a part-time non-stipendiary minister whereas another incumbent in the deanery presides over only five although assisted by six ordained ministers.

Mr Clark says that he and his wife found it distressing and totally unwarranted to see both Mr Davis and his wife, who is disabled, in tears following the first meeting when these proposals were presented. He says that they and others feel ashamed to be members of the Church of England as Mr Davis had previously told the Sunday congregation that in an interview with you, he had said he wished to work to his retirement with the Christ Church parish, and then found out that he was to be made redundant, and would have to apply for his job, possibly along with other applicants. They say that if he is not appointed, they would cease to attend Anglican worship in the Diocese and to contribute financially.

Ms Fitchett says that to ask a priest of Mr Davis's calibre to apply for a position which he already fulfils is both insulting and humiliating.

Mrs Tinman says that the proposal to dispossess/sack Mr Davis is so shocking and unwarranted as to amount to misfeasance.

Ms Mayhead says that the benefits of the draft Scheme should not be at the expense of Mr Davis's exclusion from being a crucial part of it and Ms Peacock that she, and others are distressed at Mr Davis not being named at the first team rector, unlike his colleagues in St Mary's, Alverstoke and St Faith's, Lee-on-Solent whose posts are unchanged, and fears that it will be a great loss to Gosport and the Diocese if he applies for posts elsewhere.

Holy Trinity Gosport PCC believes a better person could not be appointed to the team rector's office.

Consultation process

Holy Trinity Gosport PCC feels that it was misled during the consultation process by being told that it was not possible to make such an appointment without first advertising the post nationally, for which Mr Davis was welcome to apply. It says that it has since found out from material published by the Commissioners that it was perfectly possible to have named Mr Davis as the first team rector.

Others have more general concerns about the consultation process. Alderman O'Neill says that the Diocese has missed a wonderful opportunity by not involving the clergy, PCCs and the local community in the initial consideration of these proposals. He says that the range of information disseminated at the various consultation meetings and the failure to satisfactorily answer questions, particularly about the future of Mr Davis, means that many among the Holy Trinity and Christ Church congregations now find it very difficult to trust the Diocese for the rest of the process.

Mr Clark says that the parishes have not been asked about the how the Church Commissioners' funding allocated to this area could best be used. In his view in the initial proposals put forward, bar a few amendments, were set in stone and presented to the deanery. He feels that they are a fait accompli, and that the so-called consultations have been non-existent and carried out in more of a 'business' way than a 'Church' one. He thinks that the parishes of St Faith's Lee-on-Solent and St Mary's Alverstoke should have been included in all the discussions, as they are not as flourishing as is believed, compared to Holy Trinity and Christ Church.

Rationale for the proposals

Alderman O'Neill questions the stated rationale for the proposals. Like Mr Clark he says that the congregation of Holy Trinity, Gosport is not static or declining and gives details of work carried out on the church in recent years. He says the parish's main difficulty is meeting the 66% increase in its parish share over five years.

Ms Fitchett says that the parishes of Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport already work well together, thanks to the leadership of Mr Davis, and therefore to make them one parish seems pointless

Unsuitability of St John's Forton as a Mission Hub

Alderman O'Neill questions the proposal to turn St John's church, Forton into a Mission Hub in due course, given its size, state of repair and its position on a busy road with very little parking. He feels that the acquisition of a replacement building in a more suitable location, and with a partnership scheme with one of the local colleges, would be a far better option. He expresses concern that no professional advice seems to have been sought regarding the suitability of converting St John's church into a Mission Hub, especially as this appears to be the cornerstone of your proposals.

Ms Peacock also questions the choice of St John's, Forton as a Mission Hub. She believes that 'Mission' should permeate all that we do as Christians and not necessarily be focussed on one 'hub'.

Name of proposed new benefice and parish

Alderman O'Neill also disagrees with the proposed name of the new benefice and parish, as he thinks including Forton and including Gosport twice will be confusing. He asks for confirmation that this could be changed if the new PCC so wished. *(I have explained when acknowledging his representation that this could be done by a Bishop's Pastoral Order, were you so minded.)*

Patronage provision

The Holy Trinity PCC comments that the patronage provisions for the team ministry gives rise to a "chicken and egg" situation if neither office holder is named in the draft Scheme as the team rector and team vicar would each be involved in the appointment of the other. The PCC points out that naming Mr Davis as the first team rector would enable him to be involved in the selection of the first team vicar, as that appointment would be made by the Bishop and team rector jointly.

Summary of the representations in favour

Ms Thompson, the incumbent of St John, Forton since 2008, says that her support for the dissolution of the parish and her own dispossession is not a position that she has come to lightly, and it is not without personal pain and regret. Nevertheless, she is convinced that the ministry will be best facilitated and supported if Forton church is freed from some of the obligations and restrictions imposed on it by being a parish church.

She says that her parish has tried its best to carry out good parochial ministry over the last decade, and has a very good and warm relationship with the wider community, including for occasional offices, but that this had not translated into the regular numbers or income needed to sustain Forton as a parish and concludes that traditional ministry is no longer the right approach for this area and this church community.

She says that many of the future plans contained in the 'diocesan rationale' came from the congregation at Forton, showing that its people are not resistant to change, mired in the past or lacking vision for the future. They wish to be set free and supported to do the ministry that they believe God is calling them to do.

Mrs Ann Wood, the Christ Church, Gosport deanery and diocesan synod representative, says that, having initially felt that reorganisation should apply to the whole deanery, she now supports the proposals which target areas of need for new and revitalised community outreach and mission.

She is pleased with the decision to develop Forton as a mission hub, in an area that would benefit greatly from investment of skills, finance and leadership.

She thinks that the recent congregational increases at both Christ Church and Holy Trinity does not represent growth but is largely as a result of members of other congregations in the deanery being attracted to them because they have been uncomfortable with new arrangements in their own parishes, sometimes instituted without much sensitivity.

She says that her parish was appraised at an early consultation meeting of the Bishop Council's decision that all new positions should be advertised in order to promote a fair and equal process. She says Mr Davis supported this, especially as he thought that the team rector role might pose problems for him. She is therefore surprised and disappointed that the churchwardens at Holy Trinity, Gosport have asked for Mr Davis to be named as the first team rector in the proposed Scheme. She is concerned that his appointment may lead to a "same old, same old" approach by familiar parishioners, especially those who have moved from other parishes, and make it difficult for him to implement fresh ideas and approaches for outreach and mission. She says that only a full, open and transparent interview process will enable the candidates and those selecting them to address the parish profile and roles that are necessary and appropriate here for their future as servants of God.

She is also concerned that Holy Trinity and Christ Church have become detached from deanery activities and that the Deanery itself has a low level of support for diocesan initiatives and training and says there is a need for intervention and invigorating support.

The Archdeacon of the Meon strongly supports the Scheme which he considers would give the local Church and its communities potential for mission and growth in the years ahead. He says that there has been extensive consultation, both formal and informal, in the areas affected, and the wider deanery as a whole, and the original proposal has been re-shaped in response.

He is particularly excited by the potential for St John the Evangelist, Forton as a "mission hub" to enable the church's outreach to and engagement with currently unreached sections of the community in fresh and creative ways, whilst the two parish churches provide 'more traditional' ministry.

Mrs Stunt says that the Portsmouth Diocesan Board of Patronage has been fully involved in the proposed Scheme and strongly supports it.

Out-of-time representation

Mr Holroyde's main point is that Mr Davis is an excellent parish priest and it would be wasteful and an example of poor personnel management if his talents were lost to the Gosport area.

If you wish the Scheme to proceed as drafted notwithstanding the representations against it, it will be necessary for our Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee to consider the matter. In that case, I should be grateful for your comments on the representation in general and on the following points: -

1. What were the main reasons for proposing to terminate the current plurality established for the Gosport benefices, unite the three benefices and their constituent parishes, and establish a team ministry for its area and how would this further the Mission of the Church in this area?
2. Please set out the consultation process leading to the proposed draft Scheme, including 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 and that they were offered meetings with the DMPC or its representative.
3. 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. Please comment on the view that the proposals were "set in stone" and that the consultation was nominal.
4. Was there any consultation beyond that with the statutory parties? In particular was there consultation with the incumbents and PCCs of St Faith Lee-on-Solent and St Mary, Alverstoke? Why have those benefices not been included in this reorganisation? Did these proposals arise from a deanery plan?
5. Was there any consultation with these parishes or the deanery about how the Church Commissioners Strategic Funding should be used? To what extent are these reorganisation proposals linked to that funding? Is that funding aimed particularly at parishes with static or declining congregations and, if so, do these three parishes fall into that category? Please also comment on their financial viability.
6. Please give attendance figures for these parishes over the last ten years. How do they compare with those for other parishes in the deanery and across the diocese? Please comment on the suggestion that any recent increases at Holy Trinity and Christ Church are mainly from worshippers

transferring from other parishes because of dissatisfaction with new arrangements there.

7. Why have neither of the current incumbents been designated as the first holders of the team rector and team vicar posts in the proposed new benefice? Please confirm that dispossessing them from their current offices is not the primary purpose of the Scheme and comment on how the draft Scheme sits with the advice in paragraph 2.13 of the Code of Practice to the Mission and Pastoral Measure (copy attached).
8. Please comment on Holy Trinity, Gosport PCC's view that it was misled during the consultation process about whether it was possible for Mr Davis to be appointed as team rector by the Scheme. Would you be prepared to amend the Scheme to provide for this (or to designate him as team vicar)?
9. If the scheme is made as drafted would you intend that the team rector would be appointed first in order that he or she could then participate in the choice of the team vicar?
10. What is your response to the view that loss of trust following the consultation process and not designating Mr Davis as team rector will make the proposals difficult to implement or lead to some people leaving these congregations or the Church of England?
11. Please comment on the views expressed by Mr O'Neill and Ms Peacock that St John's Forton is not suitable to be a "mission hub" or not needed as such. Is this, as suggested, a cornerstone of these proposals? If so, why is it being dealt with separately rather than as part of this draft Scheme? Or is it linked to the use of the Commissioners funding rather than to this proposed reorganisation?
12. How was the name of the proposed new benefice and parish arrived at? Would you be prepared to alter it, as requested by Alderman O'Neill?
13. Are there any other factors which the Commissioners should be aware of in their consideration of these representations?

In considering what information to include in your reply, I should be grateful if you would bear in mind that the Commissioners are now required to consider the representation under the quasi-judicial process laid down by the 2011 Measure. A legal challenge may arise from the Commissioners' decision if, among other things, it is based materially on incorrect information. In some cases, this might necessitate the withdrawal of the Scheme. Of necessity, the Commissioners rely on others to provide the information to assist their deliberations and to this end I should be grateful for your help.

I am hoping that this matter can be considered at the 17 July meeting of our Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee. If the matter is to be considered at that meeting, **we will need to receive your response by Thursday 20 June**, please. This is to allow time for this letter and your reply to be sent to the representors, for them to make any further comments and, if

necessary, for you to respond. As you know we also ask representors if they wish to speak to their representations at the Committee.

If a hearing is to be held, there will also be an opportunity for you or a diocesan representative to attend and speak in favour of the proposals. The diocesan representative may be any appropriate person (e.g. the Chairman or a member or the Secretary of the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee or an Archdeacon) but should not be the Diocesan Registrar or other legal representative. We do not wish the Mission and Pastoral Measure process to take on the characteristics of an adversarial tribunal and have advised the representors that they too should not be legally represented. If a hearing is held, anyone may attend the meeting of the Commissioners that considers the case and representors may have an opportunity to speak to the Committee concerned. Otherwise, if a hearing is not to be held, the case will be considered in private and you will be informed accordingly.

It would be helpful if you would indicate whether in principle you would wish to attend or send a representative to speak at the Committee although I understand that you may not wish to make a final decision about this until you know whether there will be a hearing.

We would normally expect the representations to be considered at the earliest opportunity but please let me know if you are unable to meet the timetable for the 17 July meeting or wish to give the matter further consideration or undertake further local consultations before replying. Once we have informed the representors of the meeting date (which we will do when sending them a copy of your reply) we would hope not to have to defer it. However, all parties will have the right to ask us to defer the matter to a subsequent meeting if justifiable reasons arise.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Jenny Hollingsworth for her information.

Yours sincerely



Rex Andrew

 **Gaulby Judgement**

2.13 In 1999 the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council dismissed an appeal from the Reverend A F B Cheesman & others against a decision by the Commissioners to proceed with a pastoral scheme affecting the benefice of Gaulby in the diocese of Leicester. The issue was whether it was right to bring forward proposals to reduce the size of the benefice of Gaulby by pastoral reorganisation when pastoral breakdown procedures under the Incumbents (Vacation of Benefices) Measure had been brought against the incumbent then discontinued. The Judicial Committee concluded that use of the then Pastoral Measure was appropriate in this case.

The following points emerge from the judgement:

- The need to have regard to the traditions, needs and characteristics of individual parishes in a proposed pastoral reorganisation can include consideration of 'interpersonal factors';
- Such consideration can include the relationships between parishes, between parishioners, or between clergy as well as the ability of particular incumbents to contribute to the better cure of souls;
- The organisation of the diocese into parishes is for the ease and benefit of the people and not the incumbent;
- The justification for a pastoral scheme must be the better cure of souls (with due regard to the furtherance of the mission of the Church of England); if **the sole or dominant purpose** of a scheme was to punish an incumbent or deprive him or her of office solely to remedy a breakdown in the relationship with his or her parishioners, it could not be upheld;
- There must be adequate evidence of any factors taken into consideration in a proposed reorganisation; any bad faith would invalidate a proposed scheme.



The Bishop of Portsmouth
The Rt Revd Christopher Foster

Mr Rex Andrew
Pastoral Division
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20 June 2019

Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011
Benefices of St John, Forton; Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport
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.

The consultation process, which has resulted in the draft Scheme before you, began in October 2018. During this period, there have been multiple meetings with incumbents, PCCs, the deanery chapter, the Deanery Synod, and an initial open public meeting. The time, views and hospitality that have been shared by all involved is greatly appreciated.

The changes contained in the draft Scheme are considerable and a range of views has been shared by those affected. I recognise this has not been an easy process for anyone to experience and for any distress that has been felt, I am sorry.

This draft Scheme, if it were to proceed, would mean that the current incumbents would be dispossessed of their offices and they would not be designated to posts in the new structure. I recognise that there are members of the community and our congregations who are very distressed at the thought of the dispossession of their beloved clergy. This is something that both I and the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC) have prayed on, deliberated and debated extensively and agreed is necessary to ensure that the right structure is created to care for the cure of souls and to further the Mission of the Church across the Gosport area. Therefore, I do wish the Scheme to proceed.

In order to help the Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee to consider this proposal I offer below my responses to the points raised in your letter dated 10 June 2019.

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1. What were the main reasons for proposing to terminate the current plurality established for the Gosport benefices, unite the three benefices and their constituent parishes, and establish a team ministry for its area and how would this further the Mission of the Church in this area?

Since the establishment of the Diocese of Portsmouth in 1927, each bishop has presided over a steady decline in its congregations, in step with the rest of the Church of England. However, with the success of the Pioneer Project in 2016, the diocese saw a small increase in average weekly church attendance. This emboldened the diocese to aim for and strategically resource our churches for growth. The diocese asked the Strategic Development Unit for insights as to where this would have the most impact.

Key indicators were provided to the diocese by the Strategic Development Unit. These indicators allowed the diocese to identify areas of challenge and opportunity where a combination of the following factors applied:

- higher than average decrease in attendance over the previous ten years;
- low attendance when calculated as a percentage of local population;
- areas of strategic importance, such as main towns within a wider area;
- a large centre of population geographically distinct from other population centres and lacking local amenities.

The three areas identified for pastoral reorganisation, including St John, Forton; Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport have the potential in terms of population, but not currently the capacity within their existing individual congregations, to make a significant impact in mission even if they were only to seek to increase their attendance to around 2% of the local population.

The aim of the draft Scheme is to create the right structures and to resource these with the appropriate staffing to enable church communities to grow in depth, impact and number in line with our diocesan vision. We want to do this by developing sustainable mission focussed church communities that can concentrate on the primary calling of the church to make new disciples. To do this we know that as well as adding new resources, we need to free the existing churches from the burdens of finances, administration and buildings so that rather than feeling forced to focus on maintaining the existing church structures they will also be able to support new projects, opportunities and communities. We will do this by:

- Undertaking pastoral reorganisation to create one mission unit consisting of a single parish benefice, with united leadership, ministry team, finance, governance, and administration; some local decision making would be delegated to individual congregations. This new structure would enable the other developments:
- Creating new ministry structure, including at least an ordained stipendiary team leader, a church planting minister, operations support, and specialist ministers to focus on children/young families, outreach and social engagement;
- Planting a new congregation or congregations with a church planting team gathered from inside and outside of the new parish;
- Resourcing existing congregations to promote outreach and growth alongside good teaching and pastoral care;

- Deploying pioneer ministers to engage with points of social need, such as via the food bank, with an emphasis on addressing life issues in the context of whole-life discipleship.

A new diocesan intern scheme, in conjunction with the national CEMES scheme, would be used to enhance elements of the new ministry structures: this would encourage interns, including as many as possible from the local area, to gain experience themselves in church planting, mission, and ministry in a variety of contexts while developing their own vocations. This builds on learning from the Discovery Gap Year and the Harbour Residency Year.

Development of social enterprise opportunities suitable for the needs of the local area and other income generation activities will be explored with the community.

The total Sunday attendance for the three affected parishes of St John, Forton; Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport is 148 people from a total population of circa 21k, representing 0.71% of the local population. The combined parish share contribution is just over £55k and ministry cost is £110k.

Creating a new single parish benefice across the areas of Forton and Gosport will allow better coordination of mission energy, finance, and staffing, with strong vision and leadership, aided by skilled operations/administrative support, underpinning all ministry and mission in the area.

Making growth intentional and putting the right structure in place to reduce legislative and administrative burden is a proven method for achieving numerical growth and so furthering the Mission of the Church. There are equally examples from around the country where not getting the structure right in the beginning hampers the ability of the parish leadership to be able to effect change and grow.

All of the parishes have stated that they wish for the mission of the Church to grow in Forton and Gosport. The concerns raised by the representors objecting to the draft Scheme are in relation to the structure, and the dispossession of the clergy, not the shared aims.

2. **Please set out the consultation process leading to the proposed draft Scheme, including 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 and that they were offered meetings with the DMPC or its representative.**

The timeline for the consultation process was as follows:

- a) **Thursday 4 October 2018:** Private meeting with clergy who may be dispossessed of office should the DMPC decide to proceed with pastoral reorganisation.
- b) **Monday 8 October 2018:** DMPC decide to proceed to informal consultations on proposed pastoral reorganisation.
- c) **Thursday 18 October 2018:** Public deanery meeting held on proposed pastoral reorganisation at St Faith, Lee-on-the-Solent.
- d) **Friday 19 October 2018:** Informal consultation letters sent to all interested parties and to all who attended the public meeting.

- e) **Tuesday 13 November 2018:** Gosport Deanery Chapter invited members of the diocesan team to attend their meeting to discuss the draft proposals
- f) **Thursday 22 November 2018:** The PCCs of Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport met with members of the diocesan team to discuss the draft proposals.
- g) **Sunday 25 November 2018:** The Incumbent of St John, Forton invited members of the diocesan team to attend Sunday worship and speak to members of the congregation after the service about the draft proposals.
- h) **Tuesday 27 November 2018:** The Incumbent, PCC Secretary and Churchwardens of St John, Forton met with representatives of the DMPC to give their views on the draft proposals.
- i) **Wednesday 28 November 2018:** The PCCs of Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport met with representatives of the DMPC to give their views on the draft proposals.
- j) **Friday 30 November 2018:** Deadline for receipt of responses to the informal consultation.
- k) **Wednesday 5 December 2018:** DMPC met to consider the responses to the informal consultation. Due to the volume of responses and the short period of time between the closing date for such and this meeting, the DMPC deferred its decision on whether to proceed to formal consultations or not until the next meeting.
- l) **Monday 28 January 2019:** DMPC discussed the statements of view and agreed to proceed with formal consultations on the draft proposals.
- m) **Friday 1 February 2019:** s.6 formal consultation letters were sent to all interested parties. Those who attended the public meeting were also informed of the decision.
- n) **Friday 15 February 2019:** The PCCs of Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport met with members of the diocesan team to discuss the draft scheme.
- o) **Wednesday 13 March 2019:** The PCCs of Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport met with representatives of the DMPC to their views on the draft scheme.
- p) **Tuesday 19 March 2019:** The PCC and members of the congregation of St John, Forton met with members of the diocesan team to discuss the draft scheme.
- q) **Friday 22 March:** The Incumbent and Churchwarden of St John, Forton met with representatives of the DMPC to discuss their views on the draft scheme.
- r) **Friday 29 March 2019:** Deadline for receipt of responses to the s.6 formal consultation.
- s) **Wednesday 3 April 2019:** DMPC discussed the statements of view and recommended the draft proposals to the Bishop and he approved the draft proposals. It was agreed that the draft scheme would be submitted to the Church

Commissioners and they would be asked to undertake the notice and publication of the draft scheme.

- t) **Thursday 4 April 2019:** A letter was sent to the interested parties informing them of the DMPC's decision. It also said a further letter would be sent within ten days giving more detail on the discussions.
 - u) **Friday 5 April 2019:** The draft scheme and supporting documentation were sent to the Church Commissioners.
 - v) **Friday 5 April 2019:** An email was sent to all those that attended the public meetings letting them know of the DMPC's decision.
 - w) **Friday 12 April 2019:** A letter was sent to all interested parties with further details of the issues discussed at the meeting of the DMPC on 3 April. It offered a further meeting with representatives of the DMPC should the PCCs wish to discuss the decision of the Committee.
 - x) **Monday 15 April 2019:** Church Commissioners publish the draft scheme.
 - y) **Wednesday 29 May 2019:** Deadline for representations for or against the draft scheme.
3. **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. Please comment on the view that the proposals were "set in stone" and that the consultation was nominal.**

At the public meeting at the beginning of the informal consultation period in October 2018 numerous concerns were raised, the potential loss of their clergy, a fear that churches would be closed, how traditional church and patterns of service could be maintained, that the proposed union of benefices did not take existing relationships between parishes into consideration.

However, in one to one conversations with members of the diocesan team, both during and after the meeting, there was a recognition that uniting the benefices made sense. Whilst many expressed sadness to think that they might lose their current clergy, there was hope that with more resources our churches could grow and could be more missionally outward facing. Comments were also made from the floor of the meeting that very similar needs and proposals had been discussed within the Deanery on several occasions over the last 20 year period as the Deanery had realised the need for restructuring to address church decline, but never been able to carry proposals through to completion.

The informal consultation letter asked those who had attended the public meeting and the legally interested parties to give their views on the proposals:

- the proposed termination of any pluralities affecting the benefices;
- the proposed union of the benefice of Bridgemary, and the benefice of Rowner;
- the proposed union of the benefice of Elson, the benefice of Forton, the benefice of Gosport Christ Church and the benefice of Gosport Holy Trinity.

The focus on the benefice level during the informal consultation was to enable the parish structure to be shaped through the meetings with the PCCs during this period.

During these meetings, it became clear that the PCCs unanimously agreed that Elson should be included in the proposed union with Bridgemary and Rowner. Forton also expressed its wish to become a mission hub, to be outside of the traditional parish structure and to have a remit to work across the whole area of Gosport via a Bishop's Mission Order.

Christ Church, Gosport and Holy Trinity, Gosport stated that they would be happy to work more closely together but would like to have separate District Church Councils for managing the separate parish churches.

These views were subsequently incorporated into the initial draft proposals that were brought to the DMPC meeting on 5 December 2018.

The written responses to the s.6 consultation and the views garnered by the members of the DMPC that had attended meetings with the affected PCCs were discussed at length. However, the DMPC agreed that the single parish benefice structure with a team ministry was the appropriate basis for future mission in the area. Therefore, with a unanimous vote in favour, the DMPC decided to recommend the draft Scheme to me without any amendments.

The numerous meetings held with PCCs, deanery chapter and deanery synod, and the changes that have been incorporated into these draft proposals demonstrate that no plan was 'set in stone' and this was not a nominal consultation.

4. Was there any consultation beyond that with the statutory parties? In particular was there consultation with the incumbents and PCCs of St Faith Lee-on-the-Solent and St Mary, Alverstoke? Why have those benefices not been included in this reorganisation? Did these proposals arise from a deanery plan?

St Mary, Alverstoke asked to be included in the informal consultation process. Members of the diocesan team attended a parish meeting discussing the draft proposals on Wednesday 14 November. The Incumbent and members of the PCC attended a meeting with representatives of the DMPC on Wednesday 28 November 2018.

St Faith, Lee-on-the-Solent did not request to be included in the pastoral reorganisation. The Incumbent was fully informed of the proposals as he sits on the DMPC and through his role as Assistant Area Dean.

The DMPC agreed, at its meeting on Monday 28 January 2019, that Alverstoke was not to be included in this proposed pastoral reorganisation as it is a very different socio-economic demographic to that of Forton and Gosport. It is recognised that all our churches may require assistance at different times to help further their mission in their parish, however St Mary, Alverstoke has seen a 26% increase in its usual Sunday attendance figures in the past five years and currently has 1.63% of its population attending. Additionally, the parish of Alverstoke already encompasses three Anglican churches (St. Mary's, St Faith's and St. Francis), under a single PCC. If the proposed Scheme is approved, the urban centre of Gosport would then have 2 fairly equally sized adjacent parishes, one comprising the existing Alverstoke parish, and the other the combined Holy Trinity, Christ Church and Forton, both with multiple centre of worships and a single PCC, and therefore achieving a parity of provision without Alverstoke parish being a part of the current proposed Scheme.

Lee-on-the-Solent is a discreet community with very defined boundaries, that very much sits as a separate large village to the South Western side of Gosport Deanery. It would not therefore be helpful for it to be included as part of a proposal to better restructure provision for the urban town of Gosport. Additionally, St Faith, Lee-on-the-Solent has also seen an increase of 19% in usual Sunday attendance over the past five years and has 1.92% of its population in attendance, and therefore the drivers for the current proposals do not apply to that part of the Deanery.

There is currently no deanery plan for Gosport.

- 5. Was there any consultation with these parishes or the deanery about how the Church Commissioners Strategic Funding should be used? To what extent are these reorganisation proposals linked to that funding? Is that funding aimed particularly at parishes with static or declining congregations and, if so, do these three parishes fall into that category? Please also comment on their financial viability.**

During each of the meetings between the PCCs and the diocesan team, the opportunities around possible Strategic Development Funding from the Church Commissioners was discussed.

As above, these reorganisation proposals were spurred by the investigation of the Strategic and Development Unit into where we could significantly increase the impact of the mission of the Church in our communities. The funding is accessible to dioceses that can evidence that intervention with this funding will make a measureable impact on church growth and sustainability in an area.

The figures as outlined in answer to the question below, demonstrate quite clearly that St John, Forton has been declining in numbers for a long period of time. Whereas this is not the case for Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport, they cannot on their own become self-sustaining.

A representation against the draft Scheme evidences that since 2017, Holy Trinity, Gosport has been stating that its parish share apportionment is not sustainable. However, the three parishes combined only meet the cost of one clergy post.

The structures that have been put forward within the draft Scheme are structures that the DMPC agreed need to be in place irrespective of whether we are awarded additional funding by the Church Commissioners.

- 6. Please give attendance figures for these parishes over the last ten years. How do they compare with those for other parishes in the deanery and across the diocese? Please comment on the suggestion that any recent increases at Holy Trinity and Christ Church are mainly from worshippers transferring from other parishes because of dissatisfaction with new arrangements there.**

The attendance figures for the deanery for over the last ten years are below in table 1 and they are displayed as a percentage of the population in table 2.

The figures for Christ Church, Gosport; and Holy Trinity, Gosport look considerably healthier over the ten year period in comparison to the rest of the deanery. Over the past five years, St Mary, Alverstoke and St Faith, Lee-on-the-Solent have seen larger increases.

The parish returns also note that the congregations for Christ Church and Holy Trinity are approximately 50% and 80% gathered from outside of the parishes. There is anecdotal evidence of people moving between churches over a number of years for a number of reasons but this is not documented.

However, the more significant issue is that there needs to be a sustainable structure in place across all parishes in the deanery. Therefore, Bridgemary, Elson and Rowner will be brought together as a united, single parish, benefice. Following their work with the Council for Social Responsibility, St John, Forton are clear about what they are called to do in mission for their community. The current congregation of St John's desire is to make their church a chapel of ease to free them for mission, this necessitates incorporating the geographical area of the parish as part of an expanded benefice.

Table 1

Usual Sunday Attendance (Adult + Child)												
Parish	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percentage change past 5 Years	Percentage change past 10 Years
Bridgemary: St Matthew	39	32	30	20	34	34	32	25	24	27	-20.59%	-30.77%
Elson: St Thomas	52	48	59	84	51	45	47	40	42	43	-4.44%	-17.31%
Rowner: St Mary the Virgin	82	79	87	80	52	77	85	67	51	55	-28.57%	-32.83%
North West Gosport	173	189	178	183	187	156	144	132	117	128	-19.87%	-27.75%
Forton: St John the Evangelist	38	38	33	41	45	47	45	29	22	29	-38.30%	-25.64%
Gosport: Christ Church	52	52	52	57	54	53	51	54	52	60	13.21%	15.38%
Gosport: Holy Trinity	41	43	46	49	54	54	58	59	57	59	9.26%	43.90%
South East Gosport	132	133	131	147	153	154	152	142	131	148	-3.89%	12.12%
Alverstoke: St Mary	310	298	243	236	232	213	259	255	265	266	26.28%	-13.23%
Lee-on-the-Solent: St Faith	228	264	229	188	154	175	185	211	213	209	18.43%	-8.33%

Table 2

Percentage of Parish Population											
Parish population 2011	Parish	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
8,829	Bridgemary: St Matthew	0.5%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
10,417	Elson: St Thomas	0.5%	0.5%	0.8%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
15,312	Rowner: St Mary the Virgin	0.5%	0.5%	0.8%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%
34358	North West Gosport	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%
12,473	Forton: St John the Evangelist	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
5,465	Gosport: Christ Church	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	1.1%
2,934	Gosport: Holy Trinity	1.4%	1.5%	1.8%	1.7%	1.8%	1.8%	1.9%	2.0%	1.9%	2.0%
20872	South East Gosport	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.7%
16532	Alverstoke: St Mary	1.9%	1.8%	1.5%	1.4%	1.4%	1.3%	1.7%	1.5%	1.6%	1.6%
10863	Lee-on-the-Solent: St Faith	2.1%	2.3%	2.1%	1.5%	1.4%	1.6%	1.7%	1.9%	2.0%	1.9%

7. Why have neither of the current incumbents been designated as the first holders of the team rector and team vicar posts in the proposed new benefice? Please confirm that dispossessing them from their current offices is not the primary purpose of the Scheme and comment on how the draft Scheme sits with the advice in paragraph 2.19 of the Code of Practice to the Mission and Pastoral Measure (copy attached).

Dispossession of our current clergy is not the primary purpose of the Scheme.

At the meeting of the DMPC on 3 April 2019, members recognised that in the past it had dealt with proposed pastoral schemes in which certain existing clergy were 'designated' to a new post. The example was given of the most recent scheme that was made for the West Wight Team Ministry. In this case, both clergy in that team had been recruited, with the agreement and input of the affected parishes, with the possible future team ministry structure in mind explicitly advised

In this case, though the number of clergy posts in the proposed draft Scheme remains the same, the roles themselves will be different to the clergy roles that currently exist. The example of the 'team rector' and 'church-planting team vicar' has been widely circulated, as this is a potential team ministry model that DMPC members would like to see – a team rector with strategic oversight for both traditional parish ministry and the creation of new congregations in a range of traditions; and a team vicar with the specific expertise to create brand new worshipping communities; plus other clergy and lay people with different skills. However, this model is not set in stone – it could equally be that the team rector or a pioneer minister has the church-planting expertise.

Members therefore agreed that an open and transparent recruitment process was beneficial to ensure that clergy and lay ministers are appointed with the relevant gifts for these new roles.

The changes brought in regarding compensation for loss of office under the 2018 amendment were specifically brought in to enable dioceses to undertake pastoral reorganisation that may result in the dispossession of clergy, in order to further the Mission of the Church.

When General Synod voted on this, there was considerable support from within the House of Clergy as well as the House of Laity. It was felt that this indicates that there is, in the wider Church, a recognition that we need to find ways of being able to undertake such pastoral reorganisations when we need to.

Dispossessions without subsequent designation of first office-holders from existing incumbents is not something the DMPC or I take lightly. In all four draft Schemes that have come before you, the new offices in the proposed Schemes will not obviously accommodate or suit all of our existing clergy. Where there is a reduction in similar posts, the DMPC did not feel it could designate one clergy person over another to that office. It was also noted that some of the existing clergy have felt called to other roles in the Church or have been unsure as to whether they are yet called to a proposed new office in their current area and the legislation enables them to be compensated for their loss of office while they discern the next phase of their ministry.

Currently the church is not reaching 99% of the population of Forton and Gosport. There is huge potential to expand the impact of the Church on the lives of people in the area by diversifying the way that we bring the message of Jesus to those people. In order to provide traditional ministry and new forms of worship through church planting in a strategically coherent way, we need a structure in place that releases its ordained and lay ministers to minister and promotes mutual, sustainable flourishing. The DMPC believes that the single parish benefice structure with a team ministry is the best structure to support this mission. This is in line with the advice in relation to the Gaulby judgement.

- 8. Please comment on Holy Trinity, Gosport PCC's view that it was misled during the consultation process about whether it was possible for Mr Davis to be appointed as team rector by the Scheme. Would you be prepared to amend the Scheme to provide for this (or to designate him as team vicar)?**

It is regrettable that after four meetings with members of the diocesan team, two of which were also with representatives of the DMPC, that the Churchwardens and PCCs of Christ Church, Gosport and Holy Trinity, Gosport seem to have been unsure

as to the option that the DMPC has, under the Measure, to make first appointments to the offices. From the 14 parishes in the formal consultation process, these are the only two who seem not to have been fully aware.

As stated in the above timeline, following the decision of DMPC at its meeting on 3 April 2019, an initial letter was sent to all the interested parties telling them of the decision but this was also followed with a subsequent letter on 11 April 2019 that included a more in-depth explanation of a number of the main issues raised that had been deliberated upon by the DMPC in order to enable them to reach their decision. This included a specific section on designation of clergy posts, how the DMPC had done them in previous schemes and why it was not choosing to do so now.

The issues around the potential dispossession of our clergy have been prayed on, considered and deliberated by the DMPC and myself over the past eight months. The DMPC has made its recommendation to me in the draft Scheme and I will not amend it now.

- 9. If the scheme is made as drafted would you intend that the team rector would be appointed first in order that he or she could then participate in the choice of the team vicar?**

The intention is to recruit the team rector and have them participate in the recruitment of the team vicar.

- 10. What is your response to the view that loss of trust following the consultation process and not designating Mr Davis as team rector will make the proposals difficult to implement or lead to some people leaving these congregations or the Church of England?**

The Churchwardens of Christ Church, Gosport and Holy Trinity, Gosport have made a representation against the draft Scheme due to the prospect of the dispossession of their incumbent though acknowledging that they are in favour of the Scheme in principle. The incumbent of St John, Forton and its PCC are supportive of the draft Scheme and the wider vision and so I am hopeful of their goodwill.

I recognise that irrespective of whether this draft Scheme proceeds or not there will be work to be undertaken to enable those of differing views to come together in reconciliation and I would pray that through that process all would find their spiritual home in our churches.

There is of course reputational risk for the Church by undertaking this Scheme. However, there is even more reputational risk if the mission of the church continues to essentially retreat as it is impacting fewer and fewer peoples' lives. Therefore, we have to intentionally aim for growth, strategically, sustainably and have the right structure to enable it.

These changes are Gospel driven with mission as the motivation. We must do all that we can to draw others into friendship, relationship and discipleship with Jesus.

- 11. Please comment on the views expressed by Mr O'Neill and Ms Peacock that St John's Forton is not suitable to be a "mission hub" or not needed as such. Is this, as suggested, a cornerstone of these proposals? If so, why is it being dealt with separately rather than as part of this draft Scheme? Or is it linked to the use of the Commissioners funding rather than to this proposed reorganisation?**

The St. John's church building sits in a prominent position on the main A32, and is only a very short distance from St. Vincent's Sixth Form College, and also large areas of housing where significant numbers of young adults have been identified as still living in their parents' homes. We acknowledge that major investment will be needed to enable the building to fulfil its potential as a mission hub, and that forms a key part of our current application to the Strategic Development Fund, but it is ideally suited as a location for a mission hub. The church have recently started to welcome large numbers of young people through enabling the church to be used as a venue for live music, which has helped show the clear potential for significant impact going forwards.

This draft Scheme is focussed on creating a benefice and a parish structure that will be sustainable. There is the need to get the legal framework in place that will enable the ministry team to invigorate mission in the area. It was felt it was better to get the parochial structure in place first and address the future of the building of St John, Forton separately.

The aspirations for St John's are a key part of the application to the Strategic Development Fund.

12. How was the name of the proposed new benefice and parish arrived at? Would you be prepared to alter it, as requested by Alderman O'Neill?

The suggested name for the proposed new benefice was created in line with precedent. However, it can be amended by a Bishop's pastoral order, should this Scheme proceed and the new parish wishes to. This possibility has already been discussed by the DMPC and been viewed favourably.

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

There are no further factors to my knowledge.

Should this matter be brought to an oral hearing of the Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee, my representatives will attend and respond to any questions raised. Should it be dealt with on the papers and there are any further questions please let me know and we will supply further written responses as soon as possible.

With good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Christopher Portsmouth:

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The Bishop's explanation of Diocesan Strategy



Bishop's Statement of Diocesan Strategy

Since the establishment of the Diocese of Portsmouth in 1927, each bishop has presided over a steady decline in its congregations, in step with the rest of the Church of England. However, with the success of the Pioneer Project in 2016 and other initiatives, the Diocese saw a small increase in average weekly church attendance. This emboldened the diocese to aim for and strategically resource our churches for growth. The diocese asked the Strategic Development Unit for insights as to where this would have the most impact.

Key indicators were provided to the diocese by the Strategic Development Unit. These indicators allowed the diocese to identify areas of challenge and opportunity where a combination of the following factors applied:

- higher than average decrease in attendance over the previous ten years;
- low attendance when calculated as a percentage of local population;
- areas of strategic importance, such as main towns within a wider area;
- a large centre of population geographically distinct from other population centres and/or lacking local amenities.

The four areas identified for pastoral reorganisation, in this context, have the potential in terms of population, but not currently the capacity within their existing congregations, to make a significant impact in mission even if they were only to seek to increase their attendance to around 2% of the local population.

The aim of the draft Schemes is to create the right structures and to resource these with the appropriate staffing to enable church communities to grow in depth, impact and number in line with our diocesan vision. We want to do this by developing sustainable mission focussed church communities that can concentrate on the primary calling of the church to make new disciples. To do this we know that as well as adding new resources, we need to free the existing churches from the burdens of finances, administration and buildings so that rather than feeling forced to focus on maintaining the existing church structures they will also be able to support new projects, opportunities and communities. We will do this by:

- Undertaking pastoral reorganisation to create one mission unit consisting of a single parish benefice, with united leadership, ministry team, finance, governance, and administration; supported by some local decision making would be delegated to individual congregations. This new structure would enable the other developments:
- Creating new ministry structure, including at least an ordained stipendiary team leader, a church planting minister, operations support, and specialist ministers to focus on children/young families, outreach and social engagement;
- Planting a new congregation or congregations with a church planting team gathered from inside and outside of the new parish;
- Resourcing existing congregations to promote outreach and growth alongside good teaching and pastoral care;

- Deploying pioneer ministers to engage with points of social need, such as via the food bank and debt advice centre, with an emphasis on addressing life issues in the context of whole-life discipleship.

A new diocesan intern scheme, in conjunction with the national CEMES scheme, would be used to enhance elements of the new ministry structures: this would encourage interns, including as many as possible from the local area, to gain experience themselves in church planting, mission, and ministry in a variety of contexts while developing their own vocations. This builds on learning from the Discovery Gap Year and the Harbour Residency Year.

Development of social enterprise opportunities suitable for the needs of the local area and other income generation activities will be explored with the community.

Creating new single parish benefices will allow better coordination of mission energy, finance, and staffing, with strong vision and leadership, aided by skilled operations/administrative support, underpinning all ministry and mission in the area.

Making growth intentional and putting the right structure in place to reduce legislative and administrative burden is a proven method for achieving numerical growth and so furthering the Mission of the Church. There are equally examples from around the country where not getting the structure right in the beginning hampers the ability of the parish leadership to be able to effect change and grow.