

My response to some parts of the Bishop's responding letter to the questions raised by the Church Commissioners to the diocese...

a)

Bishop - "When proposing to undertake changes as significant as those contained in the draft scheme it is inevitable that there will be strong, differing points of view held by all concerned. This process has not been an easy process for anyone to experience and for the distress that has been felt, I am sorry"

This apology is all well and good when written to the Church Commissioners but the community of Leigh Park & Warren Park feel as the clergy ministry was portrayed in a very demeaning public manner as they were publicly criticised in the local media and on Social Media for their 'lack of community engagement', that this apology from the bishop ought to be made in a public way via the media too.

Surely all the feedback the diocese has now received, and the Church Commissioners too, must prove the 'true' extent of 'Community Engagement' these Ministers encounter in their Ministry.

Front page 5th paragraph & Question 17)

A) Bishop - "This draft scheme, if it were to proceed, would mean that the current incumbent and priest-in-charge 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 have prayed on, deliberated and debated extensively and agreed it 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 greater Leigh Park estates."

2) " Do you think there will be sufficient goodwill in the parishes to implement these proposals successfully if the draft scheme proceeds? Please comment on the view that there will be a reputational risk for the Church and that some existing congregation members may leave the Church

Bishop – "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 from society and to impact fewer and fewer people's lives. Therefore we have to intentionally aim for growth in depth, impact and number, strategically and sustainably, and put in place the right structure to enable it."

Does the 'Cure of Souls' not include all within the parishes regardless of whether they attend a Sunday Service or not, or whether they engage with the Church by coming into the building? Does the 'Cure of Souls' not mean 'Everyone' as everyone is built in the image of God? Are those 'Souls', then, not allowed to speak up for what 'they' would like to serve them in 'their' community? Do their voices not count for anything? Is the reputation of the Church more important than God's children whom we serve within our community already far and wide, through schools, work, foodbanks, citizen advice, counselling, and so forth and who are very much a part of the Church's life and work. Many of whom have come for baptisms and in doing so are in communion with the faith of our Church. Do they count for absolutely nothing? And for those who are long standing members of the Church Congregations, are they that undervalued by the Church that the Church would rather allow them to leave something that has been a life long – in some cases – commitment to the life

and work of the Church in their lives to just let them leave just to protect the reputation of the Church? Surely the reputation of the Church would be more damaged by showing they no longer cared for their members who too would like to be a part of that 'wider Church'. It's the 'old wine in new skins' example again... 'Out with the old in with the new' What ever happened to the Good Shephard searching of that lost sheep. Would Jesus do this to 'his' Church just to save 'reputation' when knowing it would more likely cause more reputational damage? How nice it is to feel we are so valued by our own diocese! - Clearly not.

Personally having interacted with the local community throughout this process, I feel this just proves the point that the community's feelings on the matter do not count, never have done and never will as long as they are in opposition to what the diocese wants. The community spoke very loud and clear but the fact remains the diocese have no idea what the community of Leigh Park and Warren Park are truly like. If they did they would ensure the reputation of the Church was based on 'listening' to include those they are hoping to engage with... those whom the clergy and people already engage with on a daily basis.

2)

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 give weight that too much weight is given to church attendance in defining whether parishes are succeeding in mission and on the comparison of mission statistics provided by the Venerable Peter Sutton.

Bishop - "The percentage change in usual Sunday attendance from 2009 to 2018 for St Francis, Leigh Park was a decline of 12.07%. For the same period, West Leigh, St Alban saw an 11.36% increase and was the only parish in the deanery to see an increase in this measurement. Unfortunately, during the same period Warren Park, St Clare's suffered a decline of 75%.

Firstly, St Alban's Church is connected to a Church of England School, where part of the criteria is to attend a Church for a set period of time. St Alban's has always been renowned for their congregation numbers being relating to this reason. There was a time when St Albans used to be absolutely packed with children and young families for this reason then when the children were accepted into their chosen Church school they stopped attending church and numbers dropped until the next intake. I have personally experienced this over the years being in a neighbouring church of St Francis from when we used to attend services at St Albans for special services many years ago. These increases are mainly due to the young families attending for this reason. This is also mentioned from some people within the community, of which I have also personally witnessed listening to people tell me this was their reason for church attendance. This happens in other Church School connected churches too not just St Albans. So although their statistics may have improved within the deanery one wonders if it will continue to incline or decline once the school year begins with new intakes. With regards to St Clare's decline... according to the Strategic Review which took place in 2016, it was decided that the post which an assistant priest once held would not be replaced by another. Instead it was decided the post would be replaced by two pioneer ministers who would church plant within the community and assist with food poverty. They would not be responsible for taking any services. This left Reverend Jonathan Jeffery to run two churches with services single handed. With this in mind a decision had to be made by the PCC's how to organise services at both churches. When St Clare's had a stipend priest based there, more people attended the services as the services were held at 10am, a sensible time for most people. However, when it came to light Jonathan would be running services single handed the decision had to be made to change St Clare's service to 8.30 in the morning twice a month, plus one week out of the month as 'Mission Praise' which was able to be

led by lay people, and their fourth week of the month their service is held joint at St Francis on the last week. If there is a five week month then St Francis attends a joint service at St Clare's. Occasional offices are shared together.

Fr Jonathan presides at both the 8.30am services at St Clares and then proceeds to St Francis to take the service at 10am. This was the only way both churches could operate with services and one priest. 8.30am is too early for most people to attend a morning service, especially if they have young families. This would explain the drop in attendance levels for this church.

Also in today's society life has changed, everyone is busy or want to spend time with their families at home and so for their own reasons cannot or do not wish to attend a Sunday morning service. This is where it is important that we as the Parish Church of the community engage with people in their daily lives and meet them 'where they are' in life with the life of our community and this is what our Church Mission is all about...Taking God out into the world and 'engaging'.

3)

What is your response to the argument that there are significant differences between West Leigh and the two other parishes? Do you expect the pattern of existing services would change significantly in a united parish and if so would there be expectation that current worshippers would attend services at other churches? Would the dual carriageway and lack of public transport be likely to reduce attendance at such services?

Bishop – “The representations that have highlighted differences between West Leigh, St Alban and the other two parishes of St Francis, Leigh Park and Warren Park, St Clare have stated that there is an existing formal relationship between St Francis and St Clare but they do not have that relationship with St Alban. This is true. However, though there is not the same intimacy it does not correlate that the people in the parishes are inherently different.”

In 2016 the Portsmouth Council for Social Responsibility undertook work with St Alban to look at its community profile to help inform what the parish should be doing in the future to further its mission in the area. It was realised that a community profile for St Alban could not be undertaken in isolation from the communities of St Francis and St Clare.”

My concerns here is that this was the year the strategic review was undertaken in the deanery. If, as suggested, Council for Social Responsibility informed St Alban's should work with St Francis and St Clare why was this never discussed between the parishes? I certainly do not recall any such information. This is the first time I have personally heard about this and being a member on the PCC this should have been brought up in discussion with our parish in 2016. Yes the strategic plan mentions about working closer together, yet no discussions have taken place to my knowledge on the information the bishop and his staff provide here.

“The pattern of services is to remain as they currently are. This will be enabled through use of Self Supporting Clergy, in addition to the Team Rector and Team Vicar, and through the training and deployment of more lay ministers such as Readers. Subsequently, there is no expectation for people to travel from Warren Park to West Leigh for services. Therefore there is no expectation of a reduction in the attendance of at services”.

This information was not given to us in Leigh Park and Warren Park throughout the process. Throughout the process we were told the diocese team will speak to the community after the legal framework of posts have been put into place for Team Rector and Team Church Planting Vicar and that they would discuss with us what other members we would like to fill the remaining 3 out of 5

positions. Through out the whole of this process so far the answers from the diocesan team kept changing to the point no one knew how the future would shape. Also, how is this information from the bishop different to how churches are run now – church planting vicar aside – One team rector to take services in one church, Self Supporting minister in another, the only difference this proves to me is that by removing one of the present clergy the church is making way for non payment clergy to do the same job as the present paid clergy do now. Also, as much as I fully support training clergy you'll still be removing experienced clergy to allow this to happen – 'Sacrificial Lambs' as a member of the community told me recently. That is insulting to the present clergy with vast experience of the community in which they serve. We used to train clergy at St Francis, which is when the attendance numbers were higher because we have the resources to do so, so why now after many years of our call to help has fallen on deaf ears, does the diocese now decide to include them in their plan. This plan is not really new, it is an old plan revised! I understand the Church Planting will be paid?... But a 'Church planting' role is different to that of a 'Team Vicar' who isn't church planting.

6)

Was the alternative proposal put forward by the PCCs of Leigh Park and Warren Park considered by the DMPC? If So, what are the reasons for preferring the arrangements proposed in the draft scheme?

Bishop – "A group ministry could serve a similar purpose of cooperating in ministry across an area and some of the affected parishes asked us to consider this as an alternative. However, the DMPC did not believe that a group ministry was the appropriate structure for the following reasons:

***This pastoral reorganisation is seeking to create a sustainable structure where strategic mission-focused decisions are made in one PCC for the one area.**

***The diocesan experience of other group ministries has been that, whilst a group ministry may work well in its first iteration, when existing clergy share a joint vision, this relational working does not always survive clergy changes or differences in personalities.**

***Group ministry provides a far weaker structure on which to base the deployment of additional posts, such as operations manager, community worker etc. then would be the case for a single parish with a team ministry. A group ministry cannot itself legally act as employer for paid posts.**

***A group ministry does not give authority to other incumbent members of the team to act outside of their own parish when it comes to being involved in matters such as agendas for PCC meetings and the strategic decision making about mission, ministry and finance which happens there.**

***In group ministry, responsibility for the cure of souls for all areas is not shared between all members of the group."**

Throughout our meetings during this gruelling process it has been reiterated how Group Ministry would not work in comparison to Team Ministry. It was constantly pushed aside regardless how often we tried to convince the diocese otherwise.

However, since these consultations it has been brought to light that St John's Rowlands Castle, Blendworth, Charlton and Idsworth, as well as Catherington and Clanfield are all presently vacant and they have been advertised as 'vicar responsible for Rowlands Castle, Blendworth, Chalton and Idsworth, another vicar for Catherington and Clanfield and as well a House for Duty to support them all. There is no Pastoral Reorganisation recommended for any of these vacant parishes, and in fact, Rowlands Castle, Blendworth and Charlton are, to my understanding, to remain separate benefices

with one vicar in each who can be licensed in each other's parishes but will not be a 'Team' and they will have separate PCC's and are being asked to explore about working together as a 'group'.

So in effect... 'Group Ministry' – which we have been told does not work by the Diocesan team??....

Why when we have been told group ministry is not appropriate for the diocesan Scheme for our parishes is it then acceptable to parishes which are vacant and have the perfect opportunity to try this new scheme out. Why choose to remove settled clergy from parishes that work closely and passionately with their communities when you can have a 'blank canvas' of opportunity in vacant parishes. Would this not be in the Spirit of the Measure?...Not removing clergy and making them redundant but using the vacant Churches to try something new.

If 'Group Ministry' is readily available to them then why not us too?

9)

Why was it decided not to designate the two current incumbent and priest-in-charge as the first holders of posts in the proposed team ministry? Please comment on the view that one or both should be named in order to build on their existing work..

Bishop – “At the meeting of the DMPC 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 Wigh 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 explicitly in mind and indicated in appointment process. 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.”

I don't feel this is an adequate answer. Each parish is unique in what ministry it provides to their individual communities. Every time a new vicar is installed into a Church they bring with them a different way of serving their ministry. You cannot, and should not, base a huge decision like this scheme on something like this. Each parish should be valued on its own merit and gifts. Just because something doesn't work for one parish does not mean the same will happen in every parish.

15)

Please confirm that dispossessing the current incumbent and priest-in-charge 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

Bishop – “Disposition of our current clergy is not the primary purpose of the Scheme.

The DMPC recognises that the current service clergy are much loved by their congregations and that the wider community places a high value on traditional ministry. However, currently the church is not reaching 99% of the population in the greater Leigh Park estates. There is huge potential to expand the impact of the Church on the lives of people in the estates by diversifying the ways what we bring the message of Jesus to those people.”

Not reaching 99% of the population?... Our Social Media presence tells us otherwise. Our life of our Church and the Gospel reach people far and wide within our community. Especially to those who are house about and this is their own way of being a part of the life of the Church. 99% of the community?... just because statistics say people are not walking through the doors on a Sunday

morning does not mean we are not reaching them in other ways. We are very engaged with our community. We just have to look and see the amount of people who turned up to the meeting.

That 99% of our community pack out the Church on Christmas eve with standing room only. That 99% of the population are very much a part of our church life, just not inside of a building. The 'Church' are the people not just buildings. Attendance may be lower than most but our engagement with the community through Mission work is incredibly high. Many within our community are baptised and we welcome them with open arms.

This information regarding the lack of 'Church' to 99% of the population just goes to show that Portsmouth Diocese really does not know the extent of the life and work within our parishes. Therefore if the diocese is basing their outcome on figures of who attend church services only then this whole scheme needs to be relooked at, as after much changing in the diocesan website and Facebook pages, the answers have been inconsistent. When I, along with others wrote to the Bishop the following days another Media piece was released from the diocese saying it wasn't about how many people come to church on a Sunday....

Our Church is about going out into the world...as Jesus commanded us to do. In conclusion, I am not over happy with the response from the bishop and diocese with their answers to most of the questions.

This Scheme still feels as though it's a way to remove certain clergy from posts within the diocese and wipe away all their hard work of building up a very important relationship with the community in which they serve. The diocese are risking the reputation of the Church with this draft proposal no matter how they try to dress it up.

The ministry at St Francis and St Clare's is more than about how many come through the door on a Sunday morning. not purely based on numbers on a Sunday attendance. Our ministry is community focussed. This is where God sends us. We do a lot of work in schools as well as the prayer spaces and many other projects within the community. We are reaching the people the diocese do not see because they do not become a statistic.

I do agree Mission is very important to the reputation of the "Church" but what is also important is 'how' it is done and how people who are highly valued by their community are treated to make this plan happen. Why can this plan not go ahead as a group ministry with clergy both remaining. This would rebuild the reputation of the Church within our community again where as at the moment it is pretty much damaged. If the Church were to stand up and listen to those whom they are ministering to it will have more of a chance of working together with those it is trying to reach. Surely this is what is important? Surely this is what Jesus would want, after all did he not listen to those he was ministering to?

In all honesty if the scheme stays exactly as it is I fear it will not work within this community and in doing so will not further the mission of this Church as it refuses to understand the needs of the people here through the work already being done in Leigh Park and Warren Park on a daily basis.

Over all my concerns for this scheme still remains in place. I do not feel this Scheme has been researched thoroughly enough, there are still a lot of discrepancies. A lot of information produced in the document by the Bishop here was not made available to the PCC's of St Francis and St Clare so a lot of the information in the Bishop's document about what the Scheme offers is being read for the first time, and in doing so we have not had adequate time in which to research deeper.

The answers are not always constant to what we were told at our meetings of St Francis and St Clare and the answers received at the meetings changed regularly which meant there was no definite outcome discussed...until I read what is in the bishop's reply regarding services.

I feel the diocese ought to be given time to reflect on what has taken place over recent months, and reconsider another way to explore mission within these communities. One that would work....One that would not risk damaging the reputation of the 'Church' any further. One that would put the needs of the Community first by actually knowing what is truly needed rather than basing answers on lack of research.

Paula Jeffrey-Powell

Subject: FW: Response to Bishop's letter. Deadline today

From: Carolyn Owens
Sent: 08 July 2019 09:45
To: James Davidson-Brett <james.davidson-brett@churchofengland.org>
Subject: Response to Bishop's letter. Deadline today

Dear Mr Davidson-Brett,

**Re: Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011
Benefices of St Francis, Leigh Park; Warren Park, St Clare; and West Leigh, St Alban
Proposed Pastoral Scheme**

Further to our conversation on Thursday last, please find below my comments on Bishop Christopher Foster's reply to the questions posed by your colleague, Rex Andrew.

Please also note that I will be attending on the 17th July and will be prepared to speak to the Committee regarding my representations.

Question 1

"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."

Whilst this might be the aim, it does not follow that it will be the outcome. The imperative in the legislation is the furtherance of mission and the counter proposal by the St Francis and St Clare PCCs has demonstrated a better connection with that imperative.

"All of the parishes are agreed that more resource is desired for them to take care of existing congregations, create new congregations and work and to work in their communities. 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."

The concerns about structure and dispossession of the clergy cannot be simply brushed aside as less important than the shared aims. In fact these concerns go to the heart of fundamental questions about what ministry means, about what Spirit led growth looks like and about how the Church maintains trust and develops its integrity across communities. These questions directly speak into a debate about what best "makes or assists in making better provision for the cure of souls" (S3(3)a Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011) in the context of the furtherance of mission here in Leigh Park and more widely in the Church of England.

Question 2

"The percentage change in usual Sunday attendance from 2009 to 2018 for St Francis, Leigh Park was a decline of 12.07%. For the same period, West Leigh, St Alban saw an 11.36% increase and was the only parish in the deanery to see an increase in this measurement. Unfortunately, during the same period Warren Park, St Clare suffered a decline of 75%"

The decline in St Clare's Sunday attendance figures directly correlates with a difficult time in relation to staffing

there, culminating in the resignation of the Priest in Charge in 2013 and the subsequent removal of the clergy post in favour of a Pioneer post. The Diocese has not encouraged any SSM support or offered any assistance in the parish to maintain the traditional church structure or the Sunday service rota and Jonathan (the Vicar), is therefore responsible for the Sunday services in both St Francis and St Clare's. As a result the Sunday services at St Clare's follow a different pattern. There has never been a suggestion by the Diocese that this would be held against the parish, where ministry in other forms flourishes.

"The total Sunday attendance of all three congregations is 110 people from a total population of 26,207 that is 0.42% of the population of the parishes. The combined parish share contribution is £44k while the allocated ministry cost for their three stipendiary posts is £165k, with 73% of that cost being met by the parish share contributions of larger parishes in other areas in the diocese. We recognise that usual Sunday attendance (USA) figures do not reveal the full picture of the health of a parish and that schools work happens regularly. The numbers of occasional offices, although they have declined, are relatively high; however, these forms of engagement have not readily translated into any other form of church attendance or engagement, into active discipleship, or into planned giving. Therefore, USA remains a significant indicator of the longer-term sustainability of the parish and its ability to undertake its mission.

The Venerable Peter Sutton has highlighted that some of the larger churches have undertaken fewer occasional offices, schools visits and services for schools and civic organisations than St Francis, Leigh Park. Whilst this is good it is not assisting the parish to attain ongoing sustainability whereas the churches named by the Ven Sutton are sustainable."

That the Bishop dismisses mission work in the parish with the phrase "schools work happens regularly" is shocking to me. The Gospel imperative is to make Jesus known in the hearts of others and there is not a child on these estates who is not familiar with Jesus because of the work of the Church here, or a family which has not been held before God. It is truly disturbing that the Bishop has greater regard for the Sunday attendance figures than for meaningful community engagement. He demonstrates a significantly flawed understanding of this community which is not a firm foundation on which to build for the future.

In addition, there has never been any question of these parishes being financially self sustaining without social enterprise investment and long term grant funding or the parachuting in of out-of-parish worshippers. If the entire population of the estates bolstered our USA figures this would still not happen. Only a really middle-class institution with no organic connection to estates ministry would suggest otherwise. There is simply not enough money here. If this is an argument in favour of church planting because church planters bring their giving with them, so be it - but that is neither organic nor authentic to this community and is, as a result, no more sustainable in the long term than anything else. We are all going to hell in a handcart if we believe, in principle, that the rich should not subsidise those with less financial good fortune and the suggestion that the Church should balk at causing wealthy parishes to meet the outstanding costs of the poorest parishes in the Diocese is frightening.

Financial self sustainability has never been raised with Jonathan, nor has there been any conversation with him regarding financial viability. Both St Francis and St Clare's parishes have been subject to a massive rise in parish share in recent years and both parishes pay that share in full. As well as being out of touch with the people of this community it is inequitable for the Diocese to put in place a process for reorganisation based on this data without it first being the subject of open conversation with the PCCs and Jonathan.

Question 3

"The representations that have highlighted differences between West Leigh, St Alban and the other two parishes of St Francis, Leigh Park and Warren Park, St Clare have stated that there is an existing formal relationship between St Francis and St Clare but they do not have that relationship with St Alban. This is true. However, though there is not the same intimacy of relationship, it does not correlate that the people in the parishes are inherently different."

Of course it does not correlate that because the churches don't have the same intimacy of relationship people are inherently different. Across the world people are not inherently different, never mind across the Petersfield Road. That is not the argument. The point is that the churches actually maintain a much closer relationship than the wider communities do because the dual carriage way which marks the geographical (rather than parish) boundary of West Leigh is both a literal and symbolic boundary. Outside of the church people do not associate themselves with their neighbouring community. It is typical that the Diocese would produce statistics and data to

of the DMPC. The wider vision expressed through our Resourcing Growth SDF application, and the PCCs' proposals are the same for points six to ten of the PCCs' plan."

We have been told repeatedly that no application for SDF funding has yet been made. Had it been done before without our knowledge? Has it been done now, since the DMPC decision? In which case, I feel a real sense of this being a done deal.

"The DMPC is clear that a single parish benefice with the necessary team ministry will offer the most suitable structure to enable a coordinated approach to mission across Leigh Park, Warren Park and West Leigh. This is a densely populated urban/suburban area where parish boundaries are either unknown or irrelevant to the 99% of people who do not currently attend any church."

The parish boundaries may be irrelevant but the actual, geographical boundaries are not.

"The diocese believes that the benefits of this structure are.....[to end Q 6]"

There are several points I wish to raise here:-

- a) the Bishop fails to give examples or data evidencing the smooth working of team ministries in similar (or any) benefices/parishes. Indeed, I am not sure that there is overwhelming evidence of this.
- b) the Bishop asserts that "diocesan experience of other group ministries has been that, whilst a group ministry may work well in its first iteration, when existing clergy share a joint vision, this relational working does not always survive clergy changes or differences in personality." However, as well as not giving evidence of better team ministry working he also fails to mention that in the neighbouring parishes of Blendworth, Chalton, Idsworth, Rowland's Castle, Catherington and Clanfield there is a current recruitment drive to appoint to three posts cross licensed to each other's parishes with a view to developing a shared ministry. One of these posts is House for Duty but the other two are permanent, common tenure appointments. This is how committed the bishop is to formal team ministry in strategic planning.
- c) the Bishop asserts that a group is a weaker structure, but I assert that it is a more creative, fluid and flexible structure directly answering the needs and views of this community while still providing for innovative mission and worship initiatives. Furthermore, it appears that the Church Representation and Ministers Measure 2019 (Sch C M37 - M42) specifically allows that parishes "in the area of the same group ministry" can form a joint council which will be a body corporate and viewed under S3 of the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 as a PCC. This must surely mean that the group which the St Francis and St Clare PCCs have proposed (comprising the parish of St Alban and the new parish of St Francis and St Clare) could - as previously submitted - be governed by a joint council which would be able to act as an employer and make strategic decisions regarding mission, ministry and finance. Perhaps I have misunderstood the new legislation because this is contrary to the Bishop's view and I would be glad of some clarification please.

Question 7

"The diocese has been well versed in the mission and ministry of the parishes via the current serving clergy; Havant Deanery; the work of the CSR with West Leigh, St Alban; the many and varied applications to the Mission Opportunities Fund and subsequent coverage in the diocesan newsletter and bulletins. This has been underscored by meetings with the parishes by members of the diocesan team and members of Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC) over the past eight months. Information from the incumbent and priest-in-charge and from the Havant Deanery Plan (2016) fed in to the initial consultation which focussed solely on unifying the benefices. There was no further detail underpinning the proposals, that came out of the meetings with the clergy and their PCCs in the informal consultation process"

There has been no proper, open discussion. It is ridiculous to think that the work here is known by our applications to the MOF. On 14th June I wrote to the diocesan Mission Development Officer to ask how our feedback from these bids has fed into the strategic mission planning for the Diocese and how it is that despite this real and exciting community engagement and mission work the church here is still described by the Diocese as static/declining. I have not had a reply, but in his letter to you the Bishop uses this evidence as one of the best examples of how the work of the parish is known to the Diocese. There is a real disconnect and illogicality about this - and, in any event, it seems to me to be a little feeble to say that the Diocese will launch a massive, test-case reorganisation with that as its main point of reference for a working knowledge of the parish! It demonstrates scant regard for the intimate

show how alike all the socially and economically deprived people are as a way of homogenising us all. I acknowledge that with regard to the proposal, there is little for the Church Commissioners to take on this point, except to note that it is yet another example of the hierarchy of the Church failing to understand or heed the voice of those it says it wants to engage. "The pattern of services is to remain as they currently are. This will be enabled through use of more self-supporting clergy in addition to the Team Rector and Team Vicar, and through the training and deployment of more lay ministers, such as Readers. Subsequently, there is no expectation for people to travel from Warren Park to West Leigh for services. Therefore, there is no expectation of a reduction in the attendance at services."

This is the first time that SSM clergy and Readers have been mentioned. I do not understand where these people will suddenly come from, because such support has been asked for in the past and not been forthcoming but, in relation to these proposals, I think this raises real concerns. Has this plan been properly thought through, and if so why has it not been discussed with the PCCs and Jonathan? Where will these people come from and what will happen in the meantime. Why has this support not been forthcoming before? Putting in place a plan for the future which looks as if it will be more effective than what currently happens, but which will be more effective because you have ignored, overlooked and failed to support what currently happens is iniquitous and is not a proper starting place for the journey. It reduces trust and is an inappropriate way to proceed. It may not be flawed in law, but is flawed in equitable process and in setting precedent.

Question 4

"The Havant Deanery Plan – July 2016 looks at progress since the Deanery Review, current status and recommendations. In relation to St Francis, Leigh Park; Warren Park, St Clare; and West Leigh, St Alban, it states that "discussions should be held about how these parishes work best together, including future parish structure".

I assume that the Deanery officers anticipated that those discussions would include the PCCs and the Vicar.

"The vacant post which had previously existed at Warren Park, St Clare was therefore not renewed. Instead, a community pioneer post was created (housed in St Clare's Vicarage) to co-ordinate mission across the greater Leigh Park estates. It is intended that this post will continue to be a pioneer post within the proposed new structure."

I'm sure it would assist the PCCs and the Church Commissioners to be furnished with the average weekly growth figures for the three years of pioneer ministry that the parishes have now experienced, bearing in mind that this period has also coincided with the decline in weekly attendance at St Clare's.

"It is intended that the proposed team will be further expanded and assisted by its Readers, self-supporting ministers and lay pastoral assistants. National research suggests that focal ministry in a larger area can be a key support. If the draft Scheme were to proceed, this would be something that the Team Rector could explore with the Team Vicar, the wider team and the PCC. Whereas traditionally such an approach has meant appointing a person to have oversight of one church, there are also further models which we would want to explore for sharing responsibilities such as services, occasional offices, schools work etc. all of which involve sharing with clergy in their cure of souls and vision for mission.

See above (Q3)

Question 5

"As above, these current proposals are based on work that the Deanery had already undertaken and codified in its plan in 2016. The possibility of Strategic Development Funding has enabled us to make a bid for additional resources to be provided for the area, in order to nurture and grow the existing traditional congregations and the community outreach that they undertake, and in order to plant new congregations."

As above, I suggest that the Deanery expected the development of work in the parishes to be based on meaningful, transparent and sensible discussion and partnership with the Diocese, which has not happened. The Bishop therefore fails to prove his point in relation to the deanery plan.

Question 6

"The PCCs of St Frances, Leigh Park and Warren Park, St Clare proposed a ten point plan in response to the proposals

and impactful work that happens here together with a complete lack of understanding of the community itself. You might ask, so what? What difference does that make? I think the difference that it makes is that it casts a real shadow over the legitimacy of the Diocesan claim that the current proposals are the best way forward for these parishes.

The Diocese started this process with no proper knowledge of these estates and that has hindered the journey and the bringing together of the best plan for the future. By the time we were having meetings as a PCC with the Diocesan team and members of the DMPC there was a very real perception that it was too late to make a difference to the outcome. Your question for the Bishop asks "why were the current incumbent and priest-in-charge not asked for their input at an earlier stage?" and it is noticeable that he does not answer that question.

Question 8

"Neither model is sustainable for either congregation in the long-term. However, there needs to be a structure that enables both forms of church to operate with integrity while also being responsible to each other for mutual flourishing."

I am uncertain about the Bishop's point here in relation to Harbour Church. Could he, perhaps, clarify? Could he also outline the ways in which this conversation about structure, which enables both forms of church to operate with integrity, has been open and shared so as to enable us all to enjoy the benefits of real mutual flourishing. Being told to do something against your expressed wishes does not generally result in a mutuality of anything.

Question 9

Having read on your website the questions to and answers from the Bishop in regard to the IOW and Gosport schemes as well as our own it seems to me as if there is a blanket policy in relation to this question (and others) which does not indicate a detailed and nuanced fitting of each scheme to the exact needs of each parish. These are very different places - different in terms of context, community, social and missional needs - and yet the outcome is identical in all of them, as are the Bishops answers. Literally, word for word in some cases. This feels very uncomfortable to me because it comes on the back of my belief that the DMPC and the Diocesan team did not properly engage in discussion and partnered dialogue with the parishes ahead of putting the proposals together. It seems to me that this is such a shaky foundation for reorganisation that any decision-making which has come subsequently, however earnestly undertaken, is unstable. This cannot be in the best interests of the parishes, the communities, the Diocese or the mission of the Church and is not likely to have a sustainable and positive long term outcome.

Question 11

"Prior to the meeting of the DMPC on Monday 8 October, the incumbent of St Francis, Leigh Park and Warren Park, St Clare and the Priest-in-Charge of West Leigh, St Alban were asked to attend meetings at the diocesan office with an external HR advisor to be told of the proposed pastoral reorganisation of their benefices and that, if it did come to pass, this would mean that they might be dispossessed of their office. This has been criticised by a number of representors and at meetings with some of the PCCs. However, it is not clear how it could have been otherwise done. It would have been unthinkable for the clergy to have discovered this second-hand."

The reason this has been criticised is because the clergy should have been part of an on-going, long term conversation and dialogue (remember mutual flourishing?) not had the whole thing sprung on them with two days notice. I am alarmed that the Bishop has failed to understand this. That he persists with the argument previously put forward by Jenny Hollingsworth that it would have been unthinkable for the clergy to have discovered the situation second-hand is absurd. Of course it would have been unthinkable. It would have been totally outrageous, but the fact that it could have been worse doesn't mean that the way happened it was right. This argument is so far from the mark of how it should have been handled in order to ensure a positive and appropriate outcome for our communities and for us that I find myself worried for the Church going forward.

"The informal consultation period began with a public meeting at St Wilfrid's, Cowplain on Wednesday 17 October 2018. It is accepted that the decision to hold the meeting in a neutral venue was unhelpful for those who wished to attend and that one of the local churches should have been asked to host the meeting. As it was too short notice to change the venue, the diocese did pay for buses to pick up people from St Clare's and St Francis."

I appreciate that my comment on this will not make a difference to the outcome but I would like the Church Commissioners to note that I have never before heard this acceptance that the meeting should have happened more locally and this community has received no apology for it. It is disingenuous to say that it was too short notice to change the venue because this was not said at the time. At the time people were told that the meeting had to be at a neutral venue and that it would not be changed. There was, for the record, one bus which was organised only after people here complained. It picked up from St Alban's too, although only one person there was without transport.

"Over 100 people attended the public meeting. A large number of attendees were clear that they did not want any change if any of the proposals meant that they could lose their clergy. There was a presumption that the diocese did not know or care about the communities in Leigh Park or Warren Park. However, in one to one conversations with members of the diocesan team, both during and after the meeting, there was also some recognition that uniting the benefices made sense and that, whilst it was very sad to think that a member of their they might lose their current clergy, they or a family member had also gone through a similar redundancy process at some point."

There was not a presumption that the Diocese did not know or care about the communities of Leigh Park or Warren Park. There was evidence that the Diocese had not bothered to find out about and therefore did not know about Leigh Park and Warren Park. This evidence was compounded by the attitude of the Diocesan team when faced with the authentic and honest reactions of the Leigh Park audience.

I find it extraordinary that in Q10 the Bishop gives just a passing reference to the petition and Facebook campaign which community representatives started but that, by comparison, he commits a whole five lines to describing how people understood about redundancy when talking one to one with members of the Diocesan team. In fact, what people mostly wanted to talk about was how the church touched their lives. The fact that the Bishop would rather major on their understanding of the commercial needs of work place restructuring processes rather than their testimony suggests he is trying to make their views reflect the Diocesan team's position. Of course people here understand and know about redundancy and the difficulty of making ends meet, about pressing housing needs and about loss. I think it is outrageous that he should attempt to justify the dispossession of clergy to you in this way. The reason this is important is - well, it just is. I find myself in a position where authority is not being held to account because the behaviour in question is not precluded by any legislation. So, although the Church Commissioners won't find it relevant to an assessment of the proposals I have to say it anyway.

Question 12

See 9 above.

Question 13

"To say that the four draft Schemes are against the spirit of the Mission and Pastoral Measure and the Code of Practice is to suggest that it was not intended that dispossession of clergy should be undertaken even though this is clearly allowed for by the legislation. This is not the case. The changes 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."

There is no such suggestion inherent in the argument that a wide scale dispossession of clergy is against the spirit of the legislation (see Conclusion below)

Question 14

"As above, consideration has been given to the ability of the current incumbent and priest-in-charge to contribute to the better cure of souls in the proposed new structure but the DMPC did not feel it could choose who should be appointed to the proposed traditional post. The DMPC decided it would be fair for the incumbent and priest-in-charge to be able to see which roles they might be called to and to apply for those posts in an open recruitment process and to be compensated for their loss of office."

As the question implies, the point is that the ability of the current incumbent and priest-in-charge to contribute to the better cure of souls should have been considered in the putting together of the proposals and the structure, not superimposed on it afterwards. This is because having due regard to the furtherance of mission on these estates requires a particular understanding of these communities and these people including the existing clergy - just as will

be the case for the other schemes under consideration. There should not be, however much the DMPC and the Bishop agonise over it, a one size fits all structure. That is not progressive, it is not creative, it is not nuanced, it is not properly strategic or dynamic and it is not going to provide a firm foundation for mission.

Question 15

"However, currently the church is not reaching 99% of the population in the greater Leigh Park estates. There is huge potential to expand the impact of the Church on the lives of people in the estates by diversifying the ways that we bring the message of Jesus to those people."

It is simply not true that the church is not reaching 99% of the population here and it is really important to remember that when thinking about what I have said, for example, in Q14. It is such a huge mistake to think that mission is meaningless and that the church is not reaching people, based on attendance figures. It is a significant flaw in the argument because the Bishop relies so heavily on it as a fact.

Question 16

"As demonstrated by the timeline above, an extensive consultation process has been undertaken. A suggestion of mediation was raised at the meeting between the PCCs of St Francis, Leigh Park and Warren Park, St Clare and the representatives of the DMPC at its meeting on Tuesday 21 May 2019. At that stage it was suggested that this could further delay the process and it would be unlikely to yield a result where all parties were in agreement as how to proceed with pastoral reorganisation in this area."

There have indeed been many meetings but, as I have indicated already, these have not constituted meaningful and informed dialogue and many in the community have been left with the distinct impression that the Diocese consulted because this is required rather than because anyone would pay appropriate heed to the outcome.

It is not true that we first raised the question of mediation in the meeting of 21 May. In fact, it formed part of our submission and counter-proposal to the DMPC at the end of March. Perhaps the Bishop hasn't had the opportunity to read all of that document?

On 28th February when the PCCs of St Francis and St Clare met with the Diocesan reps we began to put forward our alternative plan. At this point it should really have been incumbent upon the Diocesan team to think about and discuss the mediation options with us. We only became aware of the advice of the code of practice in this regard a little later when undertaking more research on the legislation. I would like to suppose that the Diocesan team were familiar with it from the outset and therefore I fail to understand why it was not mooted by them at an earlier point. In any event, when I asked at the meeting on 21st May why it hadn't been offered I was told that it might not have worked and that would waste time. I refer you to my earlier correspondence for my thoughts on that, but for the purposes of this letter I simply suggest that it is another example of the Diocese failing to meet expectations and failing to work with the foot soldiers at the frontline. History shows that that is a situation which always ends badly.

Question 17

"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 from society, and to impact fewer and fewer people's lives. Therefore, we have to intentionally aim for growth in depth, impact and number, strategically and sustainably, and put in place the right structure to enable it."

The reputational risk is not just amongst the congregation but throughout the wider community. It is a gross misrepresentation of mission in this place to suggest that it is in retreat from society and impacting on fewer and fewer lives. Mission here, as in many places, is messy, gritty and real. It's about going out not coming in and it doesn't respect the niceties of conventional church commitment. The structure best placed to enable a dynamic flourishing of that organic, authentic work is not one imposed by authority which doesn't know the soil.

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

Yes. Perhaps the Bishop would like to try practicing what he preaches in this regard.

Question 18

"Both I and the DMPC acknowledge that dispossession of office would be incredibly difficult for both of our serving clergy. It is also recognised that having school-age children is a blessing for the Revd and Mrs Jeffery but will be an extra concern for them should Revd Jeffery be dispossessed. Should this arise, I will seek to support them in every practical way to ensure as smooth a transition as possible in such circumstances for the family, to Revd Jeffery's next ministry."

This shouldn't matter and, of course, it will have no impact on the outcome but the Bishop is aware that I do not have my husband's name and that I am called Carolyn Owens (Ms Owens formally). My name is not and never has been Mrs Jeffery. I don't wish to be petty, but in truth, given all the circumstances, I find it exhausting and insulting that this should be wrong in a paragraph referring to the pastoral care I can expect to receive.

In addition, Jonathan was called to ministry here and we both still feel that call. It's not as simple as saying it's our time to leave. Neither of us experience our different vocations in that way. The pain and distress that this process has therefore caused to Jonathan in terms of his ministry and vocation should not be underestimated. The stress, anxiety and sheer wounding nature of it has impacted in significant ways on both of us and, naturally, on our three children. There are, of course, anxieties about being homeless and without a job, but what I am talking about is a deeper and much more painful thing than that. This is the background for my children's growing up.

"Canon Karina Green and Revd Jonathan Jeffery have been offered pastoral support consistently through the consultation process. Jenny Hollingsworth has also been holding meetings with Revd Jeffery throughout the consultation process and I have also had pastoral meetings with him. Both Jenny and I are available to provide and source whatever support Revd Jeffery and his family should require."

When either of us has had cause to contact her, Jenny has regularly offered to pay for counselling for us. The pastoral support offered to Jonathan by the senior leaders of the Diocese has not existed. He has been supported by Peter Sutton, but although this was mooted by Jenny it was not organised by her. You will note that the relationship between Jonathan and his Archdeacon, Joanne Grenfell, remains the elephant in the room which no-one will address. She has not spoken to or communicated with him throughout the process and as a result there is no-one in the Diocese who combines pastoral oversight for him with a position of current authority apart from the Bishop. Christopher has seen him on a couple of occasions, but one of those meetings was about something else and, anyway, it is not always appropriate to approach a Diocesan Bishop for a chat! Nobody in the team is proactive in relation to any sort of care. Jonathan has had meetings with Jenny when he has had to ask for them because of some particular issue - such as when it became clear that he was being accused of stirring up discord on the estate, but I don't think that it is a fair representation of the truth to say that she has been holding meetings with him throughout the process, as if this were part of a pastoral care plan.

Conclusions

The Bishop makes an interesting and in parts persuasive argument for the ministry model he has outlined. However, it is a model which:-

Will put a massive strain on traditional, incarnational ministry

Undermines the value and impact of that ministry

Dismisses the missional intentionality of that ministry

Underestimates the Spirit-led effect of that ministry in the real lives of thousands of people on these estates, in favour of an adherence to the importance of USA data

Has the effect of dispossessing the current clergy

Because the purpose of the exercise is the furtherance of mission (S1 Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011) the Bishop might say that none of this matters because the proposed model will, nonetheless, further the mission of the Church in this area more effectively than the current arrangement or the counter-proposal. However, I respectfully suggest that there are several issues arising from his letter which the Church Commissioners might address in this regard:-

1) there needs to be a far more nuanced and open conversation about what traditional ministry means, what it represents and the tangible impact it has beyond regular attendance figures. We have given examples of this and can do so again if that would be helpful, but I will not reiterate them here. Suffice to say that when he speaks about

traditional ministry the Bishop has repeatedly referred to the nurturing of our existing congregations. This is to entirely miss the point about an inclusive ministry which is for all people, at all times, in all places and which reaches much more deeply and much further into the community than has ever been acknowledged.

I'm not just complaining that this is insulting or unfair. It is both of those things, but I imagine that makes no difference to the outcome of this hearing. The issue is that it is massively and fundamentally important in assessing the pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical mission of the Church here and elsewhere (S106 Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011) and is an issue with far wider implications than the Bishop's replies suggest. In light of the failure to have this conversation openly, my points above assume a real significance.

2) it seems from the Bishop's answers that the DMPC have pursued the model outlined by him without any proper working knowledge of the soil of this community. It is laughable to say that members of the Diocesan team know us from our applications to the Mission Opportunities Fund and subsequent media coverage. It is anathema to me that those in authority over this community should think they are well versed in its needs and wishes by adopting such a cavalier approach instead of pursuing meaningful, equitable dialogue and open, transparent, properly informed discussion.

My outrage may be irrelevant to this process, but the bigger point remains for you to consider. The DMPC's best insight into the needs and wishes of the wider community was the information garnered through the informal consultation phase, but in his letter of reply the Bishop only references this in passing with the line "there has been a campaign on Facebook and associated petition to save the vicars of St Francis, Leigh Park and Warren Park, St Clare and of West Leigh, St Alban." In reality there was an unprecedented contribution from the wider community, with the Facebook Page and the Petition being set up by separate and different members of the community, (neither of whom are regular Sunday attendees and who do not really know each other) and many people writing to the Diocese to express their view regarding the proposals. Clearly, if all those who signed the petition were committed members of our Sunday congregation we wouldn't be in this position, but that should only serve to make the response more interesting and more relevant. The Bishop speaks about the reputational risk to the church of continuing to "essentially retreat from society and impact fewer and fewer people's lives" and yet the vocal and deep-rooted response of the non church-going community is simply dismissed in his reply. It suggests to me that he has no understanding of what reaching a community such as this really means, but more significantly for the purposes of the Church Commissioners, that he completely fails to understand what that means moving forward.

Being a pioneer may be ecclesial in intent but it is about going out and meeting people where they are. It is not about making them fit our structures or our language or even our vision and ambition however progressive we think we are. The Bishop's response says all the right words to you about an exciting future engaging those very people whose openly engaged views he goes on to dismiss with barely a reference to them. I'm sure that he and the DMPC have read and taken account of all the submissions and views expressed and I appreciate that not changing the proposal as a result does not per se indicate a pre-judgement. It certainly leads people to feel that there has been a pre determination of the matter and, for reasons of trust and acceptance, this perception is an issue in itself, but for the purposes of moving the proposals on it is not the biggest issue.

The real problem that arises from the Bishop's answers is that the way he uses the views and information, letters, petition and input gathered during the informal consultation demonstrates a real misunderstanding of the nature of estates ministry, of Leigh Park and of the church's role here. Personally I think it also demonstrates an alarming misunderstanding of the appropriate use of authority across a community and a lack of engagement with the way that use of authority will be viewed. The reputational risk for institutions here is always high, but top down structures which ask for input and then ignore it cause huge problems for themselves. The Bishop's apparent failure to understand this community, what outreach here looks like, what impact here means, compounded by his failure to articulate and verbalise an engagement with what significant numbers of people here have said to him suggests not a pre-judgement, but a lack of judgement in the planning of these proposals. These failures themselves constitute a "retreat from real people's lives" and have every potential to be a hindrance to mission moving forward because they undermine the firm foundation which is required for growth.

3) there are examples, highlighted above, of the Bishop answering questions in his letter in ways which incorporate new information that we have not heard before. This is hurtful and frustrating to some of us, but my hurt and frustration do not necessarily constitute a reason for considering the proposal to be flawed. The issue is more to do

with equitability and practicality. For example, it is hugely inequitable that Jonathan, as incumbent of two of the affected parishes, has never been told that the ministerial imperative on the estate was to increase Sunday attendance. He has not had MDR since early 2016 (when this was not raised) and the two conversations he asked for with Simon Whitbread in no way indicated the eventual direction of travel. It would not be acceptable to treat an employee in this way, and it is no more acceptable for the Diocesan team to treat office holders like it just because they can. It is a significant breach of trust which, although lawful, cannot constitute good practice and further undermines the scheme proposed by being both inequitable and setting a dangerous precedent.

A similar example is the Bishop's sudden inclusion of a handful of SSM ministers and lay readers in the proposed plan. Until the Bishop's letter came we had been told repeatedly that no application for a SDF grant had been written and that no plan existed for the post-scheme team. We have asked on many occasions for such assistance in the parish and none has been forthcoming because the Bishop has said that he cannot make non stipendiary ministers come to the estates. The practicalities of this therefore remain sketchy - where will these people come from and how will they suddenly be procured? What will happen if they are not forthcoming, or if they take time to come forward? It is again inappropriate to treat office holders in this way, simply on the basis that because they are not employees the Diocese doesn't have to behave equitably. This failure may not, on the face of it, mean that the proposals will not work, but it again indicates a breach of trust which is relevant to the whole and has significant wider implications.

4) the law in relation to dispossessions needs to be addressed. It is not the case that we have suggested "that it was not intended that dispossession of clergy should be undertaken". Clearly this is not the case. The 2018 amendment to the Measure is enabling legislation which specifically allows for actual dispossession to occur by providing a compensation framework. As is often the way in legal matters, the point is far more subtle and relates to a presumption of technical dispossession contained within all the supporting documentation. This has been outlined in detail both in my earlier submission and in the St Francis PCC submission, as well as in the submissions regarding the Isle Of Wight reorganisation and I won't waste your time by setting it out again here. The point is that it is bad law to say that because the legislation doesn't say you can't do something, you can do it. The creation of law and precedent doesn't work that way and this is an instance where a very close regard needs to be given to the spirit of the legislation as evidenced by all of the supporting documentation. The Bishop's assertion that the considerable support from within the Houses of Clergy and Laity for the amendment indicates "that there isdevelopment" does not answer the fact that the code of practice and the notes from the Church Commissioners' briefing indicate that dispossessions will be rare and unusual and does not therefore meet the argument that to dispossess clergy in four draft schemes without meaningful prior discussion of viability and desirability is contrary to the spirit of the legislation.

4) there are further issues regarding the designation of posts. I understand from the Bishops's letter that the DMPC considered this specifically in relation to the Leigh Park scheme, but in their letter of explanation to the parishes and in the minutes of their meeting provided to Diocesan Synod it appeared that the matter of designation of posts was considered as a matter across all of the schemes ahead of each individual discussion.

Furthermore in a meeting at St Clare's ahead of the DMPC's April decision with members of the Diocesan team and the PCCs of St Francis and St Clare Archdeacon Gavin Collins reported that the Bishop had decided that it would not be fair to designate posts in some schemes and not others where there would not be the same number of posts as existing clergy and so had made the decision that there should be no designation of posts across any of the schemes. That constitutes an undue fettering of discretion, which it is not unreasonable to suppose will have impacted on the DMPC's final decision. The Bishop and members of the Committee may deny this, maintaining that a full and robust discussion of the issues ensued ahead of a final decision, but the fact remains that there is an impression of pre determination about this following Archdeacon Gavin's comments and the documentation relating to the DMPC meeting.

In addition, at the outset of the process nobody from the Diocese explained that the legislation allows for posts to be designated. When asked at the public meeting in October 2018 why Jonathan and Karina had to be dispossessed of office the Diocesan team said that it was a legal requirement. When we subsequently found out through our own research that it was not a legal requirement we raised the issue with the team. Jenny Hollingsworth said that it was not her recollection of the meeting that we were told this, although it was the recollection of those of us who had heard it, so much so that I had to ask Jenny if the DMPC members were actually aware of the legislation. I raise it

now because I have read at Q 8 in the letter from the Bishop regarding the Gosport proposals that the Holy Trinity and Christ Church PCCs were given the same impression. The Bishop answers this by saying that "From the 14 parishes in the formal consultation process, these are the only two who seem not to have been fully aware."

This is hugely disingenuous and represents a serious flaw in the process because it is not a proper representation of the truth and, I suggest, is a breach of trust bordering on bad faith. Our PCCs were only aware of the reality of the legislation because we researched it. If we had relied, as we should have been able to do, on the advice given by the Diocese we too would not have known that it is even possible to designate posts until after the decision was made because the Diocesan officers told us that dispossession was a legal requirement in the circumstances and failed to fill in the gaps to enable a constructive dialogue. My personal disgust on behalf of the Gosport PCCs is manifest and I respectfully submit that perhaps yours should be too.

5) in all the circumstances the counter proposal by the St Francis and St Clare PCCs represents a dynamic and exciting alternative. Whilst it cannot be said definitively that the DMPC or the Bishop had pre determined the outcome of the consultation I am confused about the reasons the Bishop gives for the DMPCs refusal to amend the proposal to allow for a group ministry. The Church Representation and Ministers Measure 2019, Sch C, M37 - M42 expressly allows for the creation of a joint council where connected parishes (including parishes "in the area of the same group ministry") choose to make such a scheme. M38 (1) states that such a joint council will be a body corporate and that Section 3 of the Parochial Church Councils (Powers) Measure 1956 will apply to the joint council as if it were a PCC. I cannot see therefore why it would be the case that the proposed joint council could not act as employer for paid posts. The Bishops's point regarding the shared cure of souls can be overcome by the clergy being licensed in each others' parishes.

I appreciate that this is a less streamlined approach, but strategic streamlining is not the imperative here; the best furtherance of mission - pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical - is the imperative and for all the reasons I have demonstrated the model proposed by the Diocese is not the best fit for that. In addition, it is not even logical or consistent across the Diocese. I attach below a link to the job descriptions for posts in our neighbouring parishes of Blendworth, Chalton, Idsworth, Rowland's Castle, Catherington and Clanfield, all of which are currently in vacancy. I have enquired of Jenny Hollingsworth what the Diocesan policy is on the whole matter, but I have not had a reply. I have pointed out that to the real people of Leigh Park and Warren Park and, indeed, to me it might seem like double standards and hypocrisy. Again, my feelings about this are not what is important, but the precedent and the reputational risk to the Church are significant factors for consideration.

<https://cofeportsmouth.contentfiles.net/media/vacancies/vacancy/2019/05/The Parishes of BCI-RC-CC Exploration of Working together for bhDLfPg.pdf>

With kind regards,
Carolyn

Carolyn Owens,

Subject:

FW: Parish reorganisation

Dear sir, I am sending you my response to the Bishop of Portsmouth.

I feel that the reorganisation as outlined by the bishop will still not work. The joining of the parishes would be sensible and the help to lessen the burden on the parishes a good idea. Although the bishop states that the bypass will make no difference and that the people are not different will affect the parishes. The people are different and are viewed differently by each other within the areas. When St. Francis and St. Clare's became a united benefice there was a very obvious decline between the parishes. Many at St. Clare's no longer attend church and certainly will not attend at St. Francis, maybe 5 or 6 people. More will attend St. Clare's but it isn't much better. The two parishes have always been more connected but it hasn't worked. This will certainly happen with St. Albans, we have never done very much together. From a Leigh Park point of view St. Albans is viewed more as an upper class area, snooty or posher. I am not saying this is how I view the situation. Leigh Park has always been viewed as a rougher area, more deprived, again not necessarily true either. In earlier years we were very much a training parish in Leigh Park and had many young priests come and live within the parish. It was always viewed that if you could make it in Leigh Park you can cope any where. Many of our priests have in fact gone on to high influential posts but all would probably say that Leigh Park is a individual place. Not everyone does make it here and a few years back we did have a husband and wife pioneer couple come to work within the parish. They were not very well received and were considered as trouble makers by many. They didn't finish their contract and at the public meeting it was discovered that the bishops people did not realise they had left their jobs several months earlier.

It is true that the public meeting was very disruptive but the feelings of loosing the current clergy is still at the top of our concerns. I understand it would be difficult to decide which member of clergy should get which job but surely with all the disgruntlement that there is that it would be better to go forward using the two members of clergy we already have. There is no discord between the two clergy and so the community can see that the scheme could work it would be better for it to go ahead with people they know, respect and more importantly trust. I would like the scheme to work but really don't think it will. I appreciate that numbers have gone down drastically compared to the number of people within the parishes but we are not the abnormal with in the Church of England. I don't know what the answer is but do know that it probably won't make much difference unfortunately. The west Leigh area has a very large helping system at the Sharps Copse schools with, maternity services, help systems and financial advice. Leigh Park is under helped and there seems to be a lot of Social Services intervention. We have a supervised concentration, young people's councillor and other such things but the parish does seem to look after its own. We have a very well used food bank and do a community lunch service at one of the schools. I am 57 and lived and grown up in Leigh Park all of my life. There are those that give it a bad name and there are problems but it is a strong parish with lots of inner city problems even though it is not a city. Keep our priests and give this scheme a chance get rid of them and it won't work. I still think that what the bishop has answered is a lot of white wash and I don't think it has been handled as well as he has said. The diocese has not understood the differences here and won't budge or admit it might be wrong. I am sorry this has been lengthy but it is a very important and life changing decision made with out proper research.

Thank you Carolyn Shannon

James Davidson-Brett

From: Mandy Hawke < >
Sent: 05 July 2019 15:29
To: James Davidson-Brett
Subject: St Francis Church Leigh Park.

I am a member of St Francis Church, Leigh Park and write against the appeal and in response to the Bishop's letter. Please could you consider my reply to the Bishop's response to your questions?
Whilst I accept you do not want to hear about what I have felt about the consultation process again, I would still like you to understand that our main concern in the parish and widely community, as the informal public meeting demonstrated, was that the DMPC refused to consider any change to enabling Father Jonathan to have a post in the new plans. We could not make them understand the huge amount of work he has done in setting a solid foundation for developing the work of the church on the estate. He also has their trust and for many people in the community this is not easily earned. We stated on many occasions that we did not want to lose this foundation nor knowledge of how the community works.
It is clear that our "Vision – the five year plan" had already many ideas of addressing growth. This was in place before we had any idea about the proposals and the Diocesan should have known about this; although it was clear that members of the DMPC did not. This may be because the Archdeacon of Havant, Joanne Grenfall, was only at the first public meeting and never attended any further meetings so maybe that would have helped, as she would have been able to answer the questions we had about why it was never considered in the plan. We always said we were ready to make changes; after all our "Vison" was addressing this. Our stumbling block was that Jonathan was doing this alone (backed by a very hard working wife, Carolyn, who is as dynamic as Jonathan is!)

Reference was made in the Bishop's response to using lay readers, self-supporting clergy and ordained stipendiary. This is the first we have heard of them! We also question why they were not considered when Jonathan has constantly been asking for more support and help. Why is it on offer now but has not been available in the past? It was news to us that group ministry cannot employ staff. We wonder if the DMPC knew this as they did not use it as an argument when dismissing our plans for Group ministry. We are unclear why this should be a problem as clearly it works currently and could be applied here?
The Bishop made constant reference to the Havant Deanery Plan 2016 (before we set our 5 year Vision in place) but this was focused solely on unifying the benefices. There was no further detail underpinning the proposals that came out of the meetings with the clergy and their PCC's in the informal consultation process.
We feel that the DPMC are still totally unaware of how people, living on the estate, value things. Knowing that the church is there when they need it is of great value to them. I have the privilege of working in the Prayer Spaces at schools and this has made me aware that many children do know about God and offer valuable insights into their faith. This can only come from their home back grounds and what Jonathan does in the regular school assemblies. Who can tell what this means for the children's' futures when they may find the need to turn to the Church? In my experience the children value Jonathan's presence and are able to chat freely with him.

We hope that whatever the outcome of the proposal there will be the opportunity for the community to be able to be consulted and really heard about what they want from the church rather than impose something on them in the belief that the Church knows best!
Our congregations will never be able to afford to pay to make the church sustainable; the money does not exist in this community. Many are struggling to survive so have little spare to fund the church. That is not to say that they generously give their talents and support which cannot be undervalued.
It will be hard to measure the impact the church has on the community if the only measure is church attendance. We believe we reach people differently and it works for them. More resources to develop this would be fundamental to engaging with more people and evolving their faith journey.

There is still much debate about how little support Jonathon and Carolyn have had from the diocese. The DMPC stated what they said happened but it is clearly not true about telephone support or calls offering support. It seems a sad reflection of how the Church operates that more support was not factored into the process from the start as

many clergy and their families will have been concerned about their futures. We can only hope that a lesson has been learned for any further proposals of this nature.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

MandyHawke

guiding them in the right direction they have no care for their own reputation. However, they also have the same careless attitude for the well being of others. As the Bishop says in his letter.. "I recognise that there are members of the community and congregations who are very distressed at the thought of the dispossession (In other words redundancy and possibly homelessness) of their (beloved) clergy. This is something that both I and the DMPC have prayed on, deliberated and debated and agreed is necessary to ensure the right structure....."

This seems to imply anything which happens to the existing clergy and congregations is simply collateral damage and a price worth paying.

In conclusion, please see the answer to question eighteen.

Despite the fact that my daughter (Rev Jeffery's wife) has been well known to the Diocese for many years, they refer to her as Mrs Jeffery and not by the name which she has always used, her maiden name..which is Owens.

Yours most sincerely
And with best wishes
Jill Owens

Sent from my iPad