



 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

CHURCH
COMMISSIONERS

Andrea Mulkeen
*Pastoral and Closed Churches
Secretary*

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**To the representors and
statutory interested parties**

(by e-mail only except for those for whom we
have a postal address only)

Dear All

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

1. The Church Commissioners have now given careful consideration to the 39 representations against and three representations in favour received about the draft Pastoral Scheme providing for:
 - (i) terminating the plurality established for the benefices of St Francis, Leigh Park; and Warren Park St Clare;
 - (ii) uniting the benefices and parishes of St Francis, Leigh Park; Warren Park St Clare; and West Leigh, St Alban and establishing a team ministry for the area of the new benefice of Leigh Park, Warren Park and West Leigh; and
 - (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.
2. The Commissioners have concluded that the Scheme should not be made, notwithstanding the representations in favour of it, and the following statement indicates the reasons for their decision.

Background

3. This draft Scheme was one of four brought forward by the Bishop of Portsmouth and his Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC) with the aim of strategically resourcing churches for growth, building on the perceived success of a Pioneer Project in 2016 and other initiatives which had seen a small increase in average weekly church attendance. Two of the other draft Schemes

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(for St John, Forton, Christ Church, Gosport and Holy Trinity, Gosport; and Newport, Carisbrooke and Barton on the Isle of Wight) had also attracted adverse representations, which were considered by the Commissioners on the same day. There were no representations against the fourth draft Scheme, relating to the benefices of Bridgemary, Rowner and Elson and it could now be made, although the Bishop had asked that it should not be until a decision had been made on these other three cases. All four areas were also the subject of an application by the Diocese for assistance from the Strategic Development Fund administered by the Strategic Investment Board on behalf of the Archbishops' Council.

Summary of the representations against the draft Scheme

4. Those representing against the draft Scheme had five broad areas of concern. They objected to specific provisions of the Scheme; they questioned the basis on which it had been proposed; many had concerns about the consultation process in general; some said it was legally flawed in specific respects; and many were concerned about its effect on the community, the Church and the affected clergy.

Objections to provisions of the Scheme

5. Many of the representors said that the communities of Leigh Park and Warren Park had much in common but that for historical and practical reasons West Leigh was distinct from them. They said that because all were large former council estates with significant levels of deprivation, they appeared similar from the outside but were socially different, were divided by a busy dual carriageway, and that West Leigh had always been part of Havant whereas Leigh Park and Warren Park were developed by Portsmouth City Council. In Church terms they said Leigh Park and Warren Park, which were held in plurality, had long worked together. They therefore opposed the uniting of the three benefices and particularly the three parishes. Some were concerned that there would be fewer services or that they would have to travel to services and said there was little public transport between them in an area where many did not have cars.
6. Many expressed concerns about the staffing of the proposed new team ministry. They said that the Havant Deanery Plan allocated three full-time stipendiary posts to the three parishes, but the draft Scheme provided for only two, a team rector and one team vicar. They were further concerned that the team vicar post had been described as one for "a church planting team vicar" and that all the traditional pastoral care work, currently undertaken by one incumbent and one priest-in-charge, would fall on the team rector for a parish which would have a population of 25,000. One pointed out that the similar draft Scheme for Carisbrooke provided for two team vicars, one of whom would have the church planting role.
7. Nearly all considered that one or both of the present incumbent and priest-in-charge, and especially the Reverend Jonathan Jeffery, incumbent of Leigh Park and Warren Park, should have been designated to hold new offices in the team ministry. This was both because they believed it wrong that they should be

dispossessed from their current offices and required to apply for the new posts, and because there would be a lack of continuity if the team was staffed entirely by new clergy unfamiliar with the area, whereas it would be more effective to build on the work of the current incumbent and priest-in-charge.

8. Some, in particular the PCCs of Leigh Park and Warren Park, made an alternative reorganisation proposal. They said that the Leigh Park and Warren Park benefices and parishes should be united, with Jonathan Jeffery as incumbent; West Leigh should remain a separate benefice held by the Reverend Karina Green; the benefices should be in a group ministry with a joint council for the parishes; and a church planting minister should be allocated to the group (they identified specific locations for church plants).
9. They said that, in addition, the Strategic Development Funding should provide for a Business Manager (responsible to the group for all administrative matters) and a Community Pioneer (responsible for developing the debt counselling and food poverty initiatives across the group) and that the group should work on buildings projects, social enterprise initiatives and as a co-sharing and cohesive collaborative whole. They said that would be a dynamic model for the furtherance of mission across the wider Leigh Park estate.

Reasons for the proposals

10. Many of the representors questioned the reasons for the proposed reorganisation put forward by diocesan representatives. Several said that it was said to have been proposed on the basis of detailed studies of what the local communities wanted but they saw no evidence of such work being carried out. They said that when questioned about that, the Bishop had said on the Diocesan website that that would be for the next stage of the project. They said that that there was ignorance at the diocesan level and among middle-class members of the Bishop's Council about what was actually happening in terms of mission and ministry on those working-class estates. They said that no members of the Bishop's Council had visited the parishes and that senior clergy were mostly present only for special events. The Reverend Jonathan Jeffery said that he had had no discussion with the Archdeacon about mission since 2015 and no contact at all with her since 2016. The Venerable Peter Sutton, former Archdeacon of the Isle of Wight, said that that failure to engage in meaningful conversations with Mr Jeffery or in a mediation process had resulted in proposals which were "top down and uncompromising".
11. They said that that ignorance was demonstrated at the informal consultation meeting held on 17th October 2018 when diocesan representatives appeared not to know that the Leigh Park parish ran a foodbank or that the previous Pioneer ministers had left the parish. They said that the diocesan representatives spoke of "different ways of doing ministry" being needed but when questioned about what that meant had no response or gave examples such as foodbanks or work with schools and community engagement which were already being done by Jonathan Jeffery.

12. Most of the representors praised Jonathan Jeffery's work in the highest terms. They said that he visited local schools three or four times a week and was recognised and liked by many children in the parish, that many individuals had benefited from his pastoral care, and that he and his wife had taken the initiative in many community projects, including Prayer Space in Schools, the Starlight Festival, a Food Poverty initiative and a Community pantomime, some as a result of applications to the diocesan Mission Opportunities Fund and which had received very positive feedback, of which they gave examples. They said that he conducted a large number of occasional offices and the Venerable Peter Sutton provided mission statistics which he said showed that Leigh Park compared favourably to other parishes, perceived as more successful, in terms of baptisms, school assemblies attended, and the numbers attending special events. He said that although church attendance may be relatively low a reasonable number of new worshippers were being attracted. Others said that church attendance should not be seen as the primary measure of success. They said that many in that working-class community supported and valued the Church but did not attend and that there were a number of competing denominations in the area. They said that all this refuted the statement in the Diocesan rationale that these were static or declining parishes and showed that Mr Jeffery was capable of delivering the type of ministry envisaged and that he should therefore be named as team rector.
13. Several referred to the fact that the Leigh Park and Warren Park parishes had developed their own vision for future ministry and Jonathan Jeffery pointed out that he had submitted proposals for reducing the administrative burdens on parishes very much on the lines now proposed. He and others also pointed out that these parishes had been relatively under-resourced and more could have been achieved with the sort of support which would be provided through the SDF funding. Some also asked what evidence there was that the proposed alternative forms of ministry had been successful elsewhere.

Consultation Process

14. Representors expressed many concerns about the consultation process. They variously said that:
 - the incumbent and priest-in-charge were not consulted about the development of the proposals and when Jonathan Jeffery met the Diocesan Strategic Manager, Simon Whitbread, and Mission Development Officer, Andrew Hargreaves, to discuss parish resourcing, no mention had been made of possible pastoral reorganisation;
 - the incumbent and priest-in-charge were summoned to a meeting at short notice and with no preliminary discussion to be told of the proposal that they should be dispossessed;
 - the informal consultations were seen as a welcome opportunity for members of a community, which felt generally that its views were not heard, to have their say, but was now seen as an opportunity missed as they felt that their views had been ignored, in particular that any new

structure should retain the existing clergy and build on their work (as supported by the large numbers signing petitions and making their views known on Facebook);

- the meeting on 17th October 2018 was held at an inconvenient location outside the parishes concerned, limiting the number able to attend;
- the format of the meeting was patronising and “top down” discouraging some from expressing their views;
- the note of the meeting underplayed the extent of support for particular views by only recording each view once and also gave a false impression that passionately expressed views were given in an aggressive way;
- there was an unwelcome implication that the parishes had failed;
- it was wrongly suggested that Jonathan Jeffery had stirred up opposition to the proposals;
- questions had not been satisfactorily answered; and
- there was now no goodwill to take the proposals forward.

Legal Points

15. Some representors raised legal points regarding the Mission and Pastoral Measure process which they thought amounted to procedural flaws.
16. They said that the Bishop’s decision prior to consideration of these and the three similar sets of proposals by the DMPC that no clergy should be designated to the proposed new offices, and all should therefore be dispossessed and required to apply for them, amounted to a fettering of the Committee’s discretion given that the Measure provided for such designations to be made.
17. Several gave extracts from the Code of Practice to the Measure which they said showed that dispossessions from office should be rare and only occur where unavoidable and where existing arrangements were unviable or undesirable. They said that dispossessions on the scale envisaged across the four draft Schemes were against the spirit of the Measure.
18. Some referred to the Gaulby judgement and commented on it in the Code of Practice. In particular they said that the Judgement indicated that the ability of particular incumbents to contribute to the better cure of souls should be considered when developing proposals for reorganisation. In this case they said that no account had been taken of the abilities of the current incumbent and priest-in-charge to do so in the proposed arrangements.

19. They said there had been no offer of mediation as required by the legislation. *(NB this is not a requirement under the Measure but is recommended in the Code of Practice).*

Effects of the draft Scheme

20. Those opposed to the draft Scheme said that if it proceeded it would have harmful effects on the community, the Church and the dispossessed incumbent and priest-in-charge and their families.
21. As regards the community they said that it would reinforce the impression that the views of local people were ignored and that changes were imposed on them in a top down manner. Mr Jeffery said that the Church appeared to be treating the community in the same way as in many secular initiatives which had "promised much but delivered little".
22. As regards the Church, they said that it would suffer a high level of reputational risk from the feeling in the community that taking away their existing clergy showed that they were undervalued. They said that there would be no goodwill to take forward the proposals and some said that they or others might cease to attend or be involved with the Church.
23. Many said that the draft Scheme would have a very adverse effect on the clergy who were dispossessed and their families, pointing out that they would have to leave their homes and, in Mr Jeffery's case, that it would disrupt his children's schooling. They said that little in the way of pastoral care had been offered to them since they were informed of their possible dispossession.

Summary of the representations in support of the draft Scheme

24. The three representations in favour of the draft Scheme came from the PCC of St Alban, West Leigh, the Archdeacon of Portsdown and one of the Joint Area Deans of Havant.
25. The St Alban's PCC said that it had been discussing over the past 18 months how to engage with its community in the light of changes in society and gave examples of new initiatives. Its members generally saw creating a single benefice as a positive move, recognising that it needed more support and resources. They were excited by the opportunity to explore new ways of doing mission and engaging with the community although some had reservations, as expressed in their attached individual comments, and would wish to see St Alban's keep its existing weekly Eucharist alongside new ideas and styles of worship. The PCC secretary said that the proposals initially came as a shock but that was followed by a realisation that they would make what they had discussed and prayed about a reality. The Incumbent also expressed her whole-hearted support.
26. The Archdeacon said the proposals had her full support and the Joint Area Dean said that new forms of church, a variety of worship styles and creative ways of engaging unchurched people were needed and supported the Scheme, which he

thought would equip the Greater Leigh Park churches for mission in ways that were appropriate and seen to be resourced from within.

Summary of the Bishop of Portsmouth's response

27. The Bishop explained that since the establishment of the Diocese of Portsmouth in 1927, each bishop had presided over a steady decline in its congregations, in step with the rest of the Church of England. However, with the success of a Pioneer Project in 2016 and other initiatives, the Diocese had seen a small increase in average weekly church attendance. This had emboldened him to aim for and strategically resource the Diocese's churches for growth and the Diocese had asked the National Church Institutions' Strategic Development Unit for insights as to where this would have the most impact.
28. Key indicators provided by the Strategic Development Unit had allowed the Diocese to identify four 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.
29. The four areas identified for pastoral reorganisation, in this context, had 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.
30. The Bishop said that the aim of this draft Scheme (and the similar draft schemes for the other three identified areas) was 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 the diocesan vision. He and his DMPC wished to do this by developing sustainable mission focussed church communities that could concentrate on the primary calling of the church to make new disciples. To do so they understood that as well as adding new resources, they needed 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 would also be able to support new projects, opportunities and communities.
31. They intended to 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 delegated to individual congregations. This new structure would enable the other developments:

- Creating a 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.

32. 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 would build on learning from the Discovery Gap Year and the Harbour Residency Year. The development of social enterprise opportunities suitable for the needs of the local area and other income generation activities would be explored with the community.
33. The Bishop believed that creating new single parish benefices would 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.
34. He said that making growth intentional and putting the right structure in place to reduce legislative and administrative burden was a proven method for achieving numerical growth and so furthering the Mission of the Church. There were equally examples from around the country where not getting the structure right in the beginning had hampered the ability of the parish leadership to be able to effect change and grow.
35. The Bishop said that these three parishes had a total population of just over 26,200, and a total Sunday attendance of only 110 people, 0.42% of the local population. Even increasing their attendance to 2% of the local population would make a significant impact on mission.
36. He provided the parish attendance figures for the affected parishes over the last ten years (2009-2018). He said that the percentage decline in usual Sunday attendance for St Francis, Leigh Park was 12.07%, the third lowest among the Havant Deanery's 21 parishes; St Clare, Warren Park saw a

decline of 75%; and St Alban, West Leigh saw an increase of 11.36% and was the only parish in the deanery to see an increase in that measurement.

37. He fully accepted that the above figures supplied by the parishes annually via the Mission Statistics did not give a complete picture of the life of a parish but considered that usual Sunday attendance remained the figure that most accurately reflected members of the church that could contribute to mission and ministry as well as giving financially to its life, and thereby underpinning its sustainability for the future.
38. He also provided a table showing the percentage of the population attending each parish in the deanery over the same period. On that measure he said Warren Park's decline was the sixth highest among the 140 parishes in the Diocese (1st place being a 100% decline due to a closure or a parish not making a return, and 140th being the parish with the largest increase). Three churches did not make a return for 2018 and there were two closed churches. Leigh Park was placed at number 97 and West Leigh at 117.
39. He said that the combined parish share for the three parishes was £44,000 against a ministry cost of £165,000, which meant that 73% of that cost was being met by the parish share contributions of larger parishes in other areas in the diocese.
40. He acknowledged that the numbers of occasional offices, although they had declined, were relatively high. These forms of engagement had however not readily translated into any other form of church attendance or engagement, into active discipleship, or into planned giving.
41. With regard to the comparison figures provided by the Venerable Peter Sutton, showing that some of the larger churches had undertaken fewer occasional offices and had less engagement with schools and civic organisations than St Francis, Leigh Park, the Bishop said whilst that was good, it was not assisting the parish to attain ongoing sustainability whereas those churches were sustainable.
42. The Bishop accepted that the three parishes did have their own identities and said that each area would keep its church as the focal point. He also agreed that there was not the same intimacy of relationship between St Alban, West Leigh and the other two parishes, as between St Francis, Leigh Park and St Clare, Warren Park, but said it did not correlate that the people in the parishes were inherently different. He said that was reflected in the work undertaken in 2016 by Portsmouth Council for Social Responsibility which realised that a community profile for St Alban could not be undertaken in isolation from the communities of St Francis, Leigh Park and St Clare, Warren Park. He provided the basic social statistics for the three parishes garnered from the 2011 Census and more detailed and more recent Mosaic segmentation data from 2016 supplied by Experian.
43. He explained that following a Pioneer Review of the Diocese in 2014 and the Havant Deanery Plan in 2016, it had been decided that the West of

Waterlooville Major Development Area and the Greater Leigh Park area would be best served by pioneer appointments and a community pioneer post (housed in the St Clare's vicarage) had been created in place of the vacant incumbent post for Warren Park. That post would be carried over into the proposed team ministry as the third stipendiary clergy post. The team would also be assisted by 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.

44. He said that would enable the pattern of services to be maintained so there would be no need for people to travel between the existing parishes and so no reduction in attendance. He pointed out that for the 99% who did not currently attend church, parish boundaries were an irrelevance and that the dual carriageway already divided the parish of West Park itself.
45. He said that the current proposals were based on the work already done by the Deanery and codified in its 2016 plan, but the Strategic Development Funding would provide extra resources to nurture and grow the existing traditional congregations and their community outreach and to plant new congregations. The intention of uniting the benefices and parishes was to reduce the administrative burden on the clergy and lay ministry team to release them for ministry to further mission.
46. With regard to the consultation process the Bishop said that the DMPC was aware of the mission and ministry currently taking place in these parishes, via the serving clergy, the deanery, the CSR's work with West Leigh and the various applications to the Mission Opportunities Fund.
47. He gave details of the consultation process which he said had included multiple meetings with the affected clergy, PCCs, the deanery chapter and the deanery synod. He acknowledged that the decision to hold the initial public meeting at St Wilfrid's, Cowplain was unhelpful for many wishing to attend, who would have preferred it to have been in one of their local churches and said that buses had been provided in response to that concern.
48. He acknowledged that the Diocese had been criticised for calling the affected clergy to meetings with an external HR advisor prior to the consultations to inform them that if the proposed reorganisation proceeded it would lead to their dispossession from their current offices. However, he said it would have been unthinkable for them to have discovered that second-hand.
49. He said that it was clear that many who attended the public meeting did not want change if it would mean losing their current clergy and that there was a presumption amongst them that the Diocese did not know or care about their communities. However, he said that in one-to-one conversations and in responses to the informal consultations there had been some recognition that uniting the benefices made sense and the PCCs agreed that less duplication of administration would be welcome and that a team ministry would be an appropriate structure provided that the parishes retained their churches and the current service pattern. He pointed out that the DMPC had deferred its

decision on the proposals by six weeks to allow its members to study the responses in depth. He stressed that the initial consultation had been focussed at the benefice level with ideas about the parish structure shaped by the meetings with the PCCs during the informal consultations.

50. The Bishop did not believe there had been any prejudgement by the DMPC about a team ministry or skewing of the proposals in favour of one. He said that consideration had been given to the alternative proposals put forward by the Leigh Park and Warren Park PCCs, which he said differed from the Diocesan proposals mainly in preferring a group ministry to a team and in designating the current clergy to the new posts. However, the DMPC felt that a single parish benefice with a team ministry was the most suitable structure to enable a coordinated approach to mission across Leigh Park, Warren Park and West Leigh.
51. The DMPC saw the benefits of the proposed structure as providing: one decision-making body; a coordinated plan for mission and ministry across the area; a focus on creating space in church for those without an active Christian faith; the protection of both traditional and new forms of worship; the ability to appoint stipendiary and self-supporting lay and ordained ministers across the team, co-ordinate their energies and achieve economies of scale in their work; a coordinated approach to the use and management of buildings; and planning across the team to encourage stewardship and the generation of a sustaining income.
52. Reasons why the DMPC did not favour a group ministry included: the lack of a body to make strategic mission-focused decisions; the diocesan experience that groups may work well at the start, but not in the longer term due to clergy changes or differences in personality; a weaker structure for the deployment of additional posts, as a group ministry cannot legally act as an employer; responsibility for the cure of souls for all areas not being shared between all members of the group; and lack of authority for incumbent-status members outside their own parishes.
53. It would be intended in a single-parish benefice, that the PCC would delegate some functions to small local DCCs which would remain in control of finances relating to their congregational worship and the more minor aspects of their buildings. DCCs would relate to the PCC via common elected members and by the clergy who could attend any DCC meetings. Each DCC would also retain responsibility for its own church building and the restricted funds relating to it. Decisions about mission and outreach would be made by the PCC, allowing finance and resources to follow strategic mission decisions across the team. He noted that the West Leigh PCC was in favour of a team ministry.
54. The Bishop considered that the single parish benefice structure supported by a team ministry would enable both intentional growth in the traditional congregations and also church planting to grow new congregations among the majority who did not currently worship in church within normal parochial structures, with collegial support for each other. He thought that neither the

traditional parish structure, with the burden of legal administrative and buildings responsibilities, which had seen a steady decline in attendance, or a model such as the Diocese's Harbour Church plant, set up in a commercial property on the high street with an expensive lease as well as maintenance and repair liabilities, was appropriate to these parishes. He said a number of examples of church planting and team ministry had been examined and the proposed structure took account of the different issues experienced and the lessons learnt.

55. The Bishop confirmed that dispossession of the current clergy was not the primary purpose of the Scheme. He said that the roles that were being envisaged would be different to the clergy roles that already existed. The example of the 'team rector' and 'church-planting team vicar' had been widely circulated, as that was a potential team ministry model that his DMPC members would like to see. That model was however not set in stone, as it could be that the team rector or a pioneer minister had the church-planting expertise, hence the desire to have these appointments made via an open and transparent recruitment process to ensure that those appointed had the relevant gifts for these new roles.
56. However, the DMPC did intend that one of the incumbent status clergy in the proposed team would be responsible for traditional ministry and the other for church planting. It recognised that there were currently two loved members of the clergy both undertaking good traditional ministry in their parishes but had decided that it could not choose between one or the other for the traditional post in a new structure. It felt that it would be fair for them to see which roles they might be called to and to apply for these in open competition and be compensated for the loss of their current offices. The Bishop said he would have been willing to consider designating the current clergy to posts in the new structure had the DMPC recommended that course, but it did not.
57. The Bishop did not consider the dispossessions in this and the three similar draft Schemes were against the spirit of the Measure and its Code of Practice, as the legislation clearly allowed for such a course. He also said that the level of support in General Synod for the recent changes to the compensation provisions indicated that there was a recognition in the wider Church that ways needed to be found to enable dioceses to undertake pastoral reorganisation which might result in dispossession of clergy in order to further its Mission. Dispossession of existing incumbents was not something that the Diocese took lightly but the new offices being proposed would not obviously accommodate or suit all of their existing clergy. He also pointed out that some of the affected clergy had themselves felt called to other roles or had been unsure of their calling to the proposed new offices.
58. He acknowledged that dispossession from office would be incredibly difficult for both of the clergy, particularly for Mr and Mrs Jeffery and their family, and said that they would be appropriately supported in every practical way and that both had been offered pastoral support consistently throughout the process.

59. The current proposals had emerged from an extensive consultation process, but the Bishop recognised that irrespective of the outcome of the proposed Scheme there would be work to be done to enable those of differing views to come together in reconciliation, and he hoped all would find their spiritual home in their churches. He noted that a suggestion of mediation had been raised at a meeting between the PCCs of St Francis, Leigh Park and Warren Park, St Clare and representatives of the DMPC in May 2019 but had not been pursued as it was felt that that could further delay the process and was unlikely to yield a result where all parties agreed on the way forward for pastoral reorganisation in this area. He accepted there would be a reputational risk to the Church in proceeding with the Scheme but thought there was a greater risk if the mission of the church continued to essentially retreat from society and impacted fewer and fewer people's lives.
60. The Bishop was adamant that there was no question among the DMPC of traditional ministry being seen as a 'bad thing'. They recognised that it was difficult to quantify or measure the significant impact of pastoral care and ministry in the community and wanted traditional church congregations to continue to be nurtured and developed, whilst also having a structure in place to enable new worshipping communities to flourish. Recruiting clergy who were skilled at working across traditional parish ministry and new forms of church would be a vital part of the recruitment process for the proposed new parish structures.

The sifting group's decision

61. The case had been examined by the Committee's case sifting representatives who recommended the matter should be considered at a Public Hearing rather than on the papers alone. The Group felt that fairness to the representors required a Hearing and that the Committee would be significantly helped in its consideration by the opportunity to question them and diocesan representatives

Supplementary views of representors against the draft Scheme

62. Eight representors against the draft Scheme submitted further comments on the Bishop's response.

Meeting of the Commissioners' Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee of 17 July 2019

63. Approximately 30 people attended the meeting of the Commissioners' Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee. The Rev Jonathan Jeffery, Ms Carolyn Owens and Mrs Alison Watson spoke against the draft Scheme. The Rev Canon Karina Green and Mr David Vincent (a churchwarden at West Leigh St Alban) spoke in favour of it. The Rt Reverend Christopher Foster, accompanied by the Rt Rev Joanne Grenfell (the former Archdeacon of Portsdown) and Mrs Jenny Hollingsworth, spoke for the Diocese. The speakers responded to questions from members of the Committee.

64. Mrs Watson introduced herself as the PCC Secretary of St Francis's Leigh Park and said that the PCC's main concern was that no clergy were being designated as first holders of the envisaged posts of team rector and team vicar, as they could have been, which would mean that the clergy currently in post would be dispossessed.
65. Her PCC was also concerned over the proposals to link Leigh Park and Warren Park, which communities worked well together, with West Leigh, with which they did not. She thought that those at West Leigh, St Alban also did not want to lose their identity.
66. She felt it wrong for the Bishop and the DMPC to rely on usual Sunday attendance figures to measure how well the Leigh Park and Warren Park parishes engaged with their communities. Much of the mission work in which they were engaged involved people who fell in the category of 'daily on the edge' whose circumstances meant that this did not necessarily translate to church/Sunday attendance.
67. Her PCC had felt that the consultations had been unduly rushed, with inadequate minutes or notes made available by the Diocese, which had resulted in previous discussions and points being needlessly repeated. The PCC would have welcomed a mediation process given the gravity of impact of the Bishop's proposals on the communities. It would work with whatever the outcome of the process was but were Jonathan Jefferey Green and Karina to be dispossessed, many congregation members would leave the Church of England.
68. Ms Owens, the wife of the Reverend Jonathan Jeffery, said that she and her husband had felt called by God to Leigh Park and they and their family had lived on the estate since 2001. They knew and were passionate about the community and the ministry currently in place was real and organic. She felt that the Bishop's proposals on the other hand were neither organic nor bespoke and were not nuanced for the particular circumstances of these parishes.
69. She considered that the consultation process had been flawed. There had been no informal consultation to develop the proposals and the DMPC had misled them by saying that there was a legal requirement for there to be an open application process for the proposed new posts. This was effectively a pre-determination by the Bishop and was against the guidance given in the Code of Practice to the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011.
70. She felt that the Bishop was giving undue importance to usual Sunday attendance figures, as effective ministry was more than this and was the outcome of patient and long-term work already under way including food banks, which the Diocese had given as an example of a new approach. They had their own planned strategy and had made counter proposals for the way forward which had not been listened to. Any strategy would only flourish with the support of the local community and people were clear that wanted this led by the current clergy.

71. Mr Jeffery said he had felt called by God to serve at Leigh Park and Warren Park and still felt called to do so in the future. He thought that the consultations leading up to the Bishop's proposals had promised much but had not delivered: the Diocese had looked but not seen and listened but not heard.
72. He emphasised some of the points made in his written representation. The Code of Practice to the Measure said that dispossessions should be rare; the Bishop had fettered the DMPC's discretion by adopting a blanket dispossession policy; the Bishop and DMPC had a pre-determined view regardless of the views expressed by the consultees; and the proposals were based on a lack of knowledge of the area.
73. He said that he had been humbled by the level of support for his ministry from parishioners and urged the Committee not to ignore the reputational risk to the Church were it to treat its clergy, and disregard the views of the parishioners, in this way. He agreed with the Bishop that the Church should not retreat from society, but he questioned whether what was proposed here was a good use of the Strategic Development Fund money.
74. In response to a question about how ministry operated in Leigh Park and Warren Park, including who had performed the 68 baptisms in the last year, Mr Jeffery said that he had carried out all the occasional offices, including the baptisms, himself. He also undertook schools' ministry at eight local schools, taking three assemblies a week, RE lessons and seasonal events and had arranged for the creation of prayer spaces in schools. Ministry in these parishes depended on building the trust of local people and he thought that the large turn-out for Church run events showed that he had achieved this.
75. A member asked the speakers against to expand on their vision for mission in these parishes and explain why they thought their proposed alternative structure would be better for the cure of souls. Ms Owens said that having 'Vision' was at the core and that they had begun working on a five-year plan which had been stalled by the current process but would be developed if it did not go ahead. The parishes did feel encumbered by structure, but the proposals would just replace one such structure with another. In their view a group ministry with cross-licensing and a joint council would be more organic. They were not opposed to initiatives such as church planting but felt that these should be alongside what was already in place and their development should be distinct but together.
76. Mr Jeffery agreed that there had been a basic PCC vision in place before the scheme came into play which would just need to be fleshed out.
77. When asked about the use of social media in arousing opposition to the Diocesan proposals, Mrs Watson said that during a joint service, one of the members of the congregation had discussed the diocesan proposals with a fellow parent at a local school who had started the Facebook petition. This campaign therefore had little to do with the PCCs but had been taken up by many for whom this was a format they were used to. However, those who had

participated in the Facebook campaign were horrified by the proposed dispossessions of their local clergy.

78. In response to a question about why so many people in the area felt 'disenfranchisement' from those in authority, Mr Jeffery said that most parishioners in Leigh Park and Warren Park payed rent to Portsmouth City Council, but they felt they were never heard by it because the Local Authority in which they voted was Havant.
79. Asked about his relationship with the Archdeacon and the Bishop, Mr Jeffery said that he had met the Bishop on two occasions (one of which was not about these proposals) and was still waiting to hear from him with regards his request for mediation regarding his relationship with the Archdeacon, which had now been overtaken by events as she had moved on.
80. When asked how their alternative proposal would work for West Leigh, Ms Owens said that her husband and the Reverend Karina Green worked well together, and the parishes also had a pleasant and neighbourly relationship. What was being proposed would break that in favour of a speculative new arrangement with no evidence about why this would work better. Instead, she felt that what was required was to build on existing structures. Targeted outreach was already happening, and the Diocese was therefore wrong in many of its assumptions. She reiterated that what was required here was a Group ministry with a Joint Council to reduce the administrative burden.
81. Canon Karina Green spoke in favour of the draft Scheme on behalf of St Alban's West Leigh PCC and said that on a personal note she had felt vulnerable and unsettled by the proposals. The discussions so far had just confirmed her view that change was never easy, but it was important to remember that all were called to follow and serve a loving God.
82. She said that St Alban's PCC's views were that:
 - (i) a single parish would be more effective than having three separate ones;
 - (ii) there was a need to do something creative now or there would be no Church presence in West Leigh in five years' time;
 - (iii) financially the parish was viable at present, but might not be so in the future as it had many young families and others who were struggling;
 - (iv) the Church presence in any parish did not depend on the particular minister in post as all clergy serve and then move on. The community however remained and would take any new minister into their hearts; and
 - (v) the proposals had engendered both excitement and fear, but they hoped they would enable something new to emerge, in particular working with others in a more coordinated way, a streamlined administration, and a team to build a new vision.
83. A Committee member asked how she expected the new structure to be taken forward in view of what might be interpreted as the PCC's hesitant support for it in the written responses. Canon Green said that this was an initial letter, but the views of the PCC had developed since then, and it was now looking forward to

moving ahead and could increasingly see the benefits of the proposals, notwithstanding concerns for the future.

84. On whether it was realistic to expect more Readers and pastoral lay assistants to come forward to support to the clergy, as envisaged by the Bishop, she said that all were called to serve God through baptism, and it would be important to encourage those with the right gifts, but it was not necessarily the case that people would have to be licensed.
85. In response to a question about whether having a PCC and three District Church Councils would just add an extra tier of administration, she said that it was currently difficult to get members for three PCCs but that some people would be more willing to join a smaller body which met less frequently. The PCC would then be free to deal with issues requiring a wider view and having fewer churchwardens would avoid them doubling up on administrative responsibilities and free some for other roles.
86. As regards the merits of a group ministry compared with a team ministry, Canon Green thought that although groups worked well in some areas a team seemed more appropriate here as there would be a greater degree of cohesiveness across the different estates.
87. The Bishop of Portsmouth said that the main purpose of the proposals was to “grow in order to give” and that we must re-offer God’s gift. The intention was to create the appropriate space to enhance current ministry while enabling more engagement with others who the Church was not reaching. The draft Scheme would lead to the provision of more resources rather than less for the area and was not intended to inhibit or restrain what was already being done. The Diocesan vision was for people to Live, Pray and Serve and that they should be aspirational and visionary in looking for growth. However, a bigger and bolder Church was not an end in itself and the new structure was intended to promote deeper spiritual life, an impact in the community and growing numbers in order to bring the gifts of the Gospel to more people.
88. The Bishop recognised that the Scheme was causing hurt and opposition and deeply regretted that hurt and pain. He said that the three affected parishes had their individuality but were broadly similar although not identical communities. Some opportunities for mission were already being grasped well but more could be taken with greater coordination and the application of more resources. These three parishes as they were presently constituted were not sustainable in the longer term: the proposed structure was intended to resource a mixed-economy Church and to provide resilience to sustain and grow it for the future.
89. Asked why many of the representors seemed to have been left with the impression from the early consultations that it was a legal requirement for the clergy to be dispossessed from their current offices and to have to apply for the proposed new ones, Mrs Hollingsworth said that she was sorry that more formal notes of what was said at the meetings had not been made. What she had said was that the current office holders would be dispossessed as a legal consequence of the proposals on which the diocese was consulting, but she

had not said that it was a legal requirement for the proposals to be drafted in this way.

90. When asked whether he would wish the proposed reorganisation to go ahead if there was no SDF money, the Bishop said that he would, as the proposed reorganisation had been initiated before the SDF bid had been made. He referred the Committee to the response to a similar question on the Forton and Gosport draft Scheme which the Committee had heard earlier.

(In that case it had been explained that the SDF bids had been in two phases. The Diocese had identified in conjunction with the Strategic Investment Unit areas, of which this was one, where it wished to target mission. The proposals had been brought forward to facilitate this and the Mission and Pastoral Measure process had begun on 5th October 2018. The first phase SDF bid which had been made on 20th October 2018 and which had led to the Press article to which a member referred had not related to the areas where reorganisation was proposed but to funding for Pioneer Ministry in the city of Portsmouth. The second phase application for funds to support mission specifically in the areas where reorganisation was proposed had not been submitted until 20th May 2019, after the Bishop had already signed proposals for the reorganisation Schemes).

91. A member asked what was meant by doing ministry in different ways, and how this related to the particular needs of estates? Bishop Joanne said that this was informed by her background in outer estate ministry in Liverpool and Sheffield, supplemented by research she had undertaken during a sabbatical into best practice in other dioceses, such as Exeter and Blackburn. In being aware of the challenges, as well as existing talents, the aim was to encourage all types of ministry within a broad mixed economy.
92. The diocesan proposals were not about doing away with existing ministry but seeking growth. Money followed mission, and not the other way around. The diocese was seeking to grow discipleship, which in some cases would lead to greater attendance and giving in strong worshipping communities.
93. She was asked whether the diocesan policy of blanket dispossession for this draft Scheme and the three similar ones was compatible with the Gaulby Judgement and the guidance in the Code of Practice to the 2011 Measure, which stated that the ability of individual clergy to contribute to the better cure of souls was a consideration which could be taken into account when developing reorganisation proposals?
94. Bishop Joanne thought that having such a policy did not contradict the Gaulby Judgement and advice in the Code. She said that the DMPC was aware of the gifts and skills of the existing clergy, but it was not yet clear how they might apply to the proposed new posts and what these would require. She felt it was therefore fairer to all to have an open and transparent application process by advertising the new posts to both internal and external applicants. New ideas might emerge from such an approach, which would bring new energies for growth.

95. In relation to the concern that the current clergy might have been given the impression, by being dispossessed, that there was no point in applying for the new roles, as their skills were not what was being sought, she felt that it gave the clergy concerned the opportunity to make their own decisions, which might be different, about whether to apply.. She understood that this might be difficult for some but felt that the overriding consideration was to make the right appointments and not to pre-judge them.
96. Mrs Hollingsworth added that the Gaulby Judgement also said that reorganisation was not for the ease of the diocese or clergy but was for the better provision for the cure of souls. What was being proposed was to provide a sustainable ministry reaching to a wider community than was currently the case.
97. As to whether the affected clergy had been provided with adequate care and support through the difficult process, Bishop Christopher said it was impossible to say that any process was perfect and there were always lessons to be learned. However, the Diocese had ensured that the affected clergy were the first to know about its intentions. They had been offered paid-for support from an outside HR consultant and counselling and it had also been made clear to them that they could approach trade unions. He and other senior clergy had also made themselves available to listen to their concerns and some of the clergy had taken up the opportunity to raise their concerns directly with him. Additionally, the clergy were also included in the various meetings as outlined.

Reasons for the Commissioners' decision

98. The main reason for the Commissioners' decision that the draft Scheme should not be made was that they were not satisfied on the evidence before them that it would make for the better cure of souls in these parishes or that it was necessary to further the mission of the Church in the area.
99. They were of the view that the style of estates ministry currently being provided in the existing parishes and particularly in Leigh Park and Warren Park was an important element in providing for the cure of souls and furtherance of mission in the area. They thought that this was based on a high degree of community engagement and a long-term building of trust. They noted that there was a high level of involvement in schools' ministry and community events and the provision of pastoral care through services such as food banks. They thought that these seemed to match many of the examples given by diocesan representatives during the local consultation process of "different ways of doing mission" and did not think that the Diocese had provided sufficient or convincing examples of other ways in which mission might be enhanced, which were dependent on the draft Scheme.
100. In this context they accepted the view expressed by many representors that Usual Sunday Attendance, although relevant, was not necessarily the most significant measure of whether mission was flourishing in areas such as this and were favourably impressed by the mission statistics supplied by the

Venerable Peter Sutton. They were also sceptical about whether these parishes were ever likely to be financially self-sustaining.


101. They did not consider that a blanket diocesan policy of dispossessing all of the existing clergy in such proposed reorganisation was in itself contrary to the spirit of the Gaulby Judgement and did not think it unreasonable, of itself, for the Bishop and DMPC to have adopted it in this case and the three similar draft Schemes. They thought that the statement in the Code of Practice that dispossessions would be rare was simply a factual one in relation to the overall number of pastoral reorganisation schemes. However, they were clear that where there was such a policy, it must be approached with an open mind and exceptions should be made if circumstances so required.
102. In this case they shared the concern of many of those who had made representations against the draft Scheme that dispossession of all the current clergy would significantly damage the reputation of the Church on these estates and might lead to many current members of the congregations and those engaged with it severing their connection with the Church. They thought that the adverse effect of this on mission in the area was likely to be such that it would outweigh the benefits of implementing the draft Scheme.
103. For these two main reasons they considered that the draft Scheme should not be allowed to proceed. This did not mean that they saw no place for other mission initiatives alongside the traditional parish ministry. However, they did not consider that the reorganisation proposed in the draft Scheme was essential for this to happen. They noted, for example, that complementary forms of mission might be authorised by a Bishop's Mission Order. Greater coordination of mission and ministry across the area could be achieved by a group ministry and a joint council.
104. In making their decision the Commissioners wish to emphasise that although Funding for the Strategic Development Fund comes from the Commissioners' resources decisions about its allocations are made by the Strategic Investment Board of the Archbishops' Council and no members of the Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee, which considered the representations about the draft Scheme on behalf of the Commissioners, is a member of the SIB.
105. The Commissioners also considered the other points made by those against and in favour of the draft Scheme but did not think any of these sufficient to outweigh the two main reasons for their decision outlined above.

Conclusion

106. For these reasons the Commissioners concluded that the draft Scheme should not be made, notwithstanding the representations in favour of it. This decision is without prejudice to the right of the Bishop, in consultation with his Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, to prepare fresh proposals under the provisions of the Mission and Pastoral Measure at a future date, leading to the issue by the Commissioners of a new draft Scheme.

107. The Commissioners realise that their decision will disappoint those who believe the draft Scheme was the right one but hope that this statement will indicate that their decision was reached only after careful consideration of all the relevant factors.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Mulkeen', written in a cursive style.

AM

Andrea Mulkeen
Pastoral and Closed Churches Secretary