

**GENERAL SYNOD**  
**THE DIOCESES COMMISSION**  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2019**

## Summary

The Dioceses Commission is required to report annually to the General Synod. This is its twelfth report

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### Membership and Staff

1. The Commission consists of a Chair and Vice-Chair appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the latter from among the members of the Houses of Clergy and Laity of the General Synod; four members elected by the Synod; and four members appointed by the Appointments Committee.

2. The membership and staff of the Commission are as follows:

Chair:	Vacant
Vice-Chair:	The Revd Paul Benfield (Blackburn) [Acting Chair]
Elected Members:	Mr Malcolm Halliday (Leeds) The Revd Canon Geoffrey Harbord (Sheffield) The Revd Dr Robert Munro (Chester) Mr Gavin Oldham (Oxford) (from February 2019)
Appointed Members:	The Rt Revd Christopher Foster, Bishop of Portsmouth Ms Ruth Martin The Rt Revd Dame Sarah Mullally, Bishop of London Mrs Jacqueline Stamper (Blackburn) (from June 2019)
Secretary:	Mr Jonathan Neil-Smith

3. The Commission welcomed two new members in 2019. Gavin Oldham was elected to its ranks. Gavin is a former Church Commissioner and member of the Archbishops' Council's Finance Committee; and is a General Synod member from the Diocese of Oxford. Mrs Jacqueline Stamper also brings to it her wide experience in Higher Education, as well as being a General Synod member from the Diocese of Blackburn.

### Duties and Powers of the Commission

4. The Commission's duties and powers, laid down by the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure 2007, are summarized with other information about the Commission and its work, in the Commission's area of the Church of England web site: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/dioceses-commission>
5. The Commission is conscious that no major proposals for Reorganisation Schemes have been on the horizon since the formation of the Diocese of Leeds in 2014. It continues to engage in other responsibilities, notably its statutory role in respect of the filling of suffragan sees. At its December meeting it initiated a facilitated review of its role and responsibilities. In the course of 2020 input will be sought from a range of stakeholders. It is hoped that this exercise will help give an incoming Chair greater clarity about the tasks facing the Commission.

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**Suffragan Sees**

6. The Commission continues to take care that any proposal to fill suffragan sees should be rooted in the diocese's mission strategy, cohere with the roles of others in the diocesan senior leadership team, and include roles that are inherently episcopal. In exercising its responsibilities under section 17 of the Dioceses and Pastoral Mission Measure 2007, the Commission considered, and agreed to, submissions for the filling of the following sees during the year:
- Doncaster (in the Diocese of Sheffield)
  - Dudley (in the Diocese of Worcester)
  - Horsham (in the Diocese of Chichester)
  - Lewes (in the Diocese of Chichester)
  - St Germans (in the Diocese of Truro)
  - Sherwood (in the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham)
  - Stafford (in the Diocese of Lichfield)
  - Stockport (in the Diocese of Chester)
7. Having approved the filling of a suffragan see, the Commission sometimes reviews how the intended role description is working out. In 2020 it intends to review the operation of the See of Islington (in the Diocese of London).

**Review of the Sees of Beverley, Ebbsfleet, Maidstone and Richborough**

8. In the autumn of 2018 the Commission started a review of the Sees of Beverley, Ebbsfleet, Maidstone and Richborough, focusing on the workload attached to these Sees. Its Report was published in May 2019 – see: [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/report\\_-\\_30-4-19\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/report_-_30-4-19_-_final.pdf) . Its main findings were that the workload attached to all these Sees was very considerable, not just in terms of the number of parishes under their extended care, but in the light of the fact that they were so dispersed geographically. The report recommended that each See should be filled should any of them fall vacant, and that the resourcing of the post holders should be augmented with chaplaincy support. This latter recommendation has resource implications and has been referred to the Church Commissioners for its consideration.

**Joint diocesan working**

9. The Commission's survey of diocesan practice in respect of joint working across boundaries was published in January: see <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/joint%20working%20summary%20doc%20-%2030-1-19.pdf> . This revealed less energy than hitherto in this area. The Commission reflected further on this during the year, and further discussions with a number of dioceses are planned.

[On behalf of the Commission]

PAUL BENFIELD (Acting Chair) 31 December 2019

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