

DIOCESAN REORGANISATION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE CREATION OF THE DIOCESE OF LEEDS

Introduction

1. The attached note was prepared at the request of the Chair of the Governance Group, the Rt Revd Nick Baines (Bishop of Leeds) in the autumn of 2020. Its focus is on lessons learned from the creation of the Diocese of Leeds in 2014, with the principal aim of identifying key lessons to inform consideration of any further diocesan reorganisation proposals elsewhere. It was informed by my work as Secretary to the Dioceses Commission between 2011 and 2021.
2. The note has been shared with the Dioceses Commission, the House of Bishops' Standing Committee and number of other NCI groups which have an interest in this area of work. Its authorship is mine, but it is published with the agreement of the Commission.

Overview of paper

3. Some key points:
 - Identifying scope of the scheme – which dioceses / boundaries?
 - Clarity about objectives – mission benefits and/or financial savings?
 - Realism about finance – initial financial investment needed before any savings are likely to be realised
 - Need for a dedicated programme/project manager, with a project plan
 - Current legislation should be fit for purpose (especially if one existing diocese retains its legal identity)
 - Episcopal leadership – buy in needed to help engender support within the dioceses for the intended vision for the future
4. This is a many-layered subject and it was necessary to limit the scope of this paper (which has been sourced from readily available data, without a wide consultation with external stakeholders). It should be noted that as a data-led review it could not address all the human/relational/cultural/behavioural learnings. My note is unlikely to be the last word on this subject.

(Signed)

Jonathan Neil-Smith,

Secretary to the Dioceses Commission [2011-21]

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DIOCESAN REORGANISATION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE CREATION OF THE DIOCESE OF LEEDS

1. This note has been prepared at the request of the Chair of the Governance Task Group to help assess the case for further diocesan reorganisation in the light of the experience of the Bradford, Ripon and Leeds, and Wakefield Reorganisation Scheme 2014 (hereinafter to be referred to as ‘the West Yorkshire Scheme.’). Its author as Secretary of the Dioceses Commission since 2011 worked closely on the Scheme in that capacity so this inevitably has a bearing on the observations that follow; and the analysis that follows is based on readily available documentation and data (without any further consultation with external stakeholders at this stage). Members of the Commission saw a draft at its meeting on 28 September) and supported the broad thrust of the analysis, but this note is not theirs, but the Secretary’s. Andy Brookes (former diocesan secretary of London, and a freelance management consultant), Dr Ken Eames (Statistical Researcher, Research & Statistics Unit at the NCIs) and David White (Head of Financial Policy & Planning at the NCIs) all made helpful inputs which are reflected in the paper.
2. In particular, this note seeks to address the following:
 - What are the learnings from the West Yorkshire process?
 - What happened afterwards? Did it realise the benefits it set out to achieve?
 - What diocesan model or structure would best serve the church in the future?
 - How would this model ensure the most effective use of resources, the greatest operational effectiveness, missional agility and efficiency?¹

Learnings from the West Yorkshire process

3. An initial evaluation of the West Yorkshire Scheme was carried out on behalf of the Dioceses Commission by Professor Hilary Russell (one of its then members) in 2014. This intended to capture some immediate issues about the process while they were fresh in the mind of those immediately involved². At the time it was recognised that it was “...not an evaluation of the Review’s substance or outcome. It would be far too early for that kind of exercise: full implementation of the Scheme will take years rather than months. In no sense, therefore, is this the last word on the subject.”³ Professor Russell’s review nevertheless made some significant observations about such issues as
 - the early appointment of a facilitator (or programme manager), supported by a programme management board;

¹ See HB(20)58, para 26

² See <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/Dioceses%20of%20Bradford%2C%20Ripon%20and%20Leeds%20and%20Wakefield%20Reorganisation%20Scheme%20Evaluation.pdf>

³ See Foreword to Prof Russell’s Review by the then Commission Chair, Prof Michael Clarke

- having sufficient staff and financial resourcing in place;
- good communication (particularly about HR aspects);
- clarity of roles as between the Commission / Dioceses / Provincial Office; and
- retaining strategic focus (to avoid peripheral parish boundary issues distracting focus from the core objectives).

Many of these issues were to be picked up later on as it became possible to look back through a longer lens.

4. A meeting attended by key stakeholders was held on 22 November 2017 to consider learnings from the West Yorkshire Scheme. A note of this meeting is attached as ANNEX A. The key learnings can be summarised as follows:
 - **Honesty and realism about the objectives:** The Leeds Scheme had involved the dissolution of all the existing dioceses – Bradford, Ripon & Leeds and Wakefield. Wakefield had been opposed but the other two had not wanted to proceed without it. This process had meant that (1) effective pre-planning had been impossible; & (2) there had been no continuity of episcopal leadership at the point of change, nor of key executive bodies such as the DBFs. Such acute difficulties would be avoided in future if, say, two neighbouring dioceses were to agree to merge with one retaining its legal identity. But this would require political realism and careful and sensitive communication about what some would perceive as a take-over. (One reason why the Leeds diocese adopted the initial name ‘West Yorkshire & the Dales’ had been to avoid any impression of a takeover.)
 - **Robust financial analysis:** The Leeds estimates had been drawn up with the full co-operation of the existing dioceses (whose DBF Chairs endorsed the figures and underlying assumptions). What was lacking was any experience of an amalgamation of this kind (which was at the maximal end of what had ever been envisaged when the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure had been passed in 2007 following the Toyne Report⁴). In particular, without dedicated additional resources it was palpably beyond the capacity of the dioceses to manage such a big change while still keeping day-to-day operations going, particularly as no one diocese was in a lead role. Insufficient account had been taken of the financial cost of implementing change (eg the need to employ a change / programme manager) and, also, of HR costs to manage the transition. Other elements of the estimates had in fact proved pretty accurate (though the diocese had latterly chosen to add the cost of its new offices and the book values of property belonging to benefices that were transferred to neighbouring dioceses – including the benefices which had been transferred to Carlisle by a Pastoral Scheme before the new diocese was created - to the figures, neither of which can

⁴ *A Measure for Measures: In Mission and Ministry: Report of the Review of the Dioceses, Pastoral and related Measures* – GS 1528: 2004. It set out its general approach thus: “It is ‘the past’ that has produced our present map of Dioceses – a map that bears little resemblance to the reality of the present distribution, structure or mobility of population. Having considered this situation carefully, we concluded that there is a prima facie case for taking a fresh look at the distribution of Dioceses and their boundaries. To that end, one of our main recommendations is that a new Dioceses Commission ‘with teeth’ should be given the brief to keep under active review the diocesan structure of the Church of England, and to make specific proposals for reorganisation to the General Synod.”

strictly speaking be regarded as legitimate scheme costs, the former because it was a choice made by the new diocese, the latter because benefice property is not diocesan property).

- **Implementation resource:** Linked to the above was the need to employ an experienced programme manager to co-ordinate the change; and to free up the Secretary of the Dioceses Commission from other Church House responsibilities in order to have the capacity to co-ordinate the support needed at national level. The Dioceses Commission had no budget to fund additional staff, so resources for the former post should be earmarked by the Archbishops' Council as part of a national mission strategy. Work on practical issues such as systems integration and moving towards joint working between the existing dioceses should, with the benefit of hindsight, have started earlier.
- **Legal changes:** Although the experience of the Leeds Scheme did show that some legislative changes could be beneficial (eg there was no need for the new diocese to have a Pro-Cathedral), the basic framework requiring consent of the diocesan synods and General Synod was not in dispute. The framework of the Dioceses, Pastoral and Mission Measure could still provide a manageable framework for future reorganisation, particularly the kind of merger canvassed above. (Some legislative changes resulting from experience gained in preparing the Leeds Scheme were made by the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure 2014. These now enable a scheme under the 2007 Measure to rename existing suffragan sees and to create new suffragan sees; both of which had to be undertaken outside the Leeds Scheme in order to achieve the desired result.)

Did the West Yorkshire Scheme realise its objectives?

5. At the outset the Commission stated that its aim would be to establish whether the shape and boundaries of the existing dioceses tended to facilitate the Church's mission to the people and communities of Yorkshire or whether different boundaries would enable the Church to relate to them more effectively. Its central recommendation was that "...a new single entity with new boundaries is essential to give strategic leadership and to provide the stimulus, the stability and security needed for the Church in this area to develop its mission"⁵.
6. According to the Dioceses Commission's document - YDCR6- the mission case for a diocese across the whole of West Yorkshire and the Yorkshire Dales was based upon the following key criteria:
 - *The opportunity to re-imagine and re-envision the mission of the Church of England in a changed and changing context and enable it to speak with a single voice to and for the area.*
 - *Effective scoping of episcopal leadership and engagement across the whole social, political and cultural landscape.*
 - *The formation of an episcopal team focussed in a coherent area scheme.*

⁵ See the Commission's 2012 Report (YCDR 5), para 1.13

- *The enhancement of the local mission of parishes and networks through stronger strategic support and resourcing, enriching and sharing good practice.*
 - *Provision of a centre for that resourcing in one diocesan office where missional creative energies can focus and flourish.*
 - *The retention of three cathedrals within one diocese, each with distinctive missional strategies, being essential to honouring both past history and future holistic mission.*
7. At a meeting between the Leeds Diocesan Senior Staff and representatives of the Dioceses Commission on 7 June 2016, the following observations were among points recorded:
- “There was a widely held view that the new structures had given people licence to do things in a more creative way and had thereby released a lot of energy for mission...
- ...The 3 cathedrals worked well together and were benefiting from inter-cathedral collegiality (through one College of Canons). There was a desire to plan for the future and the continued uncertainty about the continuance of the current level of Commissioners’ funding was unhelpful. Their mission to wider world continued to be central to their ministry...
-The new episcopal areas (co-terminous with archdeaconries) were working very well. They formed cohesive mission units where a bishop and archdeacon could together related to parishes, local communities and civic society (which did not generally see the distinction between area and diocesan bishops)...”⁶
8. The opening in September 2016 of the new Leeds Diocesan Office in York Place (a few minutes’ walk from Leeds City Station) was a significant development. It was widely regarded as being a means of achieving a new culture, and engendering new more flexible ways of working. It had replaced four offices – the old Ripon & Leeds office in St Mary’s Gate; the Bradford office in Silsden, the Wakefield office, and the Bradford/Ripon & Leeds Education office in Harrogate.
9. One of the financial assumptions made by the Commission (in consultation with the former dioceses) was that ‘The capital cost of any new office accommodation required will be no greater than the capital currently invested in the current arrangements for the three dioceses and that aggregate office running costs will be reduced by one-third.’⁷ It is hard to make accurate like-for-like comparisons as not all the former offices were disposed of at the same time, but it can be said that the diocese in effect the diocese ‘future proofed’ its office accommodation by moving into high specification offices in the centre of Leeds, offering much higher quality provision than had existed hitherto.
10. In the Commission’s 2012 Report the following aspiration was stated in relation to administrative costs:

⁶ Extract from a minute drafted by the Secretary of the Dioceses Commission

⁷ See the Commission’s 2012 Report, YDCR 5, para 5.3 (d)

“There will be a reduction in administrative staff supporting the work of the Diocesan Office(s) and bishops as the new Diocese exploits opportunities for more efficient and effective working. This will progressively take place over 5 years by which time total salary costs will be 10% lower than at present. The Commission’s hope is that such reductions are capable of being achieved by natural wastage without the need for any formal redundancy programme, but its estimate makes a provision for redundancy payments to be made to facilitate half the reduction (should this prove necessary).”⁸

Is it possible to assess what happened in reality?

11. Looking at the relevant diocesan accounts, a direct comparison with staff levels pre the amalgamation proved difficult as there was not sufficient consistency as to how such costs were categorised. It is however possible to compare staffing costs in the new diocese’s budgets over a 5-year period from 2015 (the first year of the new diocese) to 2020, as follows:

	2015	Adjusted CPI	2020	% change
Staff salary costs	£3.126m	£3.385m	£3,400m	+0.1%
Staff numbers (FTE)	86		90.3	+5%
Support costs	£1.463m	£1.584m	£1.502m	-1.1%

12. While on the fact of it, the aspiration that a 10% saving would be made in staff salaries has not been achieved, the diocese – along with the rest of the Church of England – would have been devoting additional resources to safeguarding work, so it possible to conclude that any savings made as a result of merged operations have been counterbalanced by additional expenditure in other such areas. Seen more positively, almost by definition a larger diocesan team covering the new combined diocese must have greater depth and resilience than those of the former dioceses.

13. It is also possible to look at some nationally available statistics to compare some key indices both before (2013) and after the change of dioceses (2018)⁹ as follows:

	2013	2018	% change	Nat change
Average weekly attendance	40,800	34,600	-15.2%	-11.9%
Usual Sunday attendance	29,400	25,900	-10.8%	-10.25%
Total Electoral Roll	41,000	38,500	-6.1%	-4.2%
Total giving	£17.2m	£16.8m	-2.3%	+14.9%
Total income	£35.4m	£37.4m	+5.3%	+7%

⁸ See the Commission’s 2012 Report, YDCR 5, para 5.3 (f)

⁹ More detailed information can be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/research-and-statistics/key-areas-research#parish-finance-statistics>

14. These statistics are clearly rather a crude yardstick by which to judge the success or otherwise of the new diocese, and five years is inevitably a relatively short period in which to measure trends in terms of missionary endeavour. These indices indicate that the new diocese has performed worse than the overall national pattern, but not disastrously so, and there may be a host of factors that should be taken into account (such as the demography of Northern dioceses), which might be worthy of further study and analysis. There is of course no way of knowing how the former dioceses would have fared.
15. History will need to be the judge as to whether over time all the objectives cited for the creation of the new diocese will be realised, but in terms of some nettle-grasping decisions taken by the senior staff in respect of the running of the new episcopal areas and in adopting a new parish share system¹⁰, it would certainly seem to be the case that – following a great deal of hard work by those on the ground – the diocese is proactively taking steps to realise the objectives set in 2014.

Is there an optimal diocesan structure for the future?

16. Early on in its life the Dioceses Commission stated that its policy was that “...the optimum number and size of dioceses in any region should be determined according to local circumstances rather than a ‘one size fits all’ national approach...”¹¹. It had been assisted in its thinking by a note from its then Secretary, Dr Colin Podmore, extracts from which are set out below:

“A diocese is, first and foremost, a local church, of which the diocesan bishop is the ‘principal minister’ (Canon C 18, para. 4). It is an area under the pastoral care (*episkope* or oversight) of a diocesan bishop, who is ‘the chief pastor of all that are within his diocese, as well laity as clergy, and their father in God’ (Canon C 18, para. 1).

A bishop is a successor of the Apostles (a word meaning ‘someone sent on a mission’) and is thus a leader in mission. (Both the 1662 and Common Worship Ordinals make the connection between the Apostles and bishops, and Common Worship speaks of the bishop ‘leading his people in mission’.) A diocese is thus an area of mission.

In most cases the area of mission which a diocese comprises corresponds to one or more counties. The identity of counties as local communities is stronger in some parts of the country than in others and perception of such identity varies, depending on people’s age, occupation and lifestyle. In some cases, history plays a very strong part in such identity and is therefore highly relevant to the Church’s mission. Factors

¹⁰ See: <https://www.leeds.anglican.org/finance/parish-share-in-2019>, the parish share collection rate was 86%.

¹¹ Dioceses Commission Annual Report 2009, GS Misc 950, para 2

such as work locations, public transport, commuting, shopping and leisure facilities are also significant.

Boundaries are also relevant to co-operation with other churches, though it may be thought that conforming boundaries to identifiable local communities (and hence, in most cases, to secular boundaries such as county boundaries) for the sake of mission should have priority. Where other factors are equal, it will be important to have regard to the boundaries of our most significant ecumenical partners (the Roman Catholic Church and the Methodist Church) in particular.

Though traditionally each diocese has had its own diocesan administration, a diocese is not fundamentally a unit of administration. The Commission will be expected to encourage developments (already well underway in some cases) towards shared and joint administration.

In some cases the needs of pastoral oversight, mission and administrative efficiency may all point in the direction of a single diocese. In others, effective oversight and mission to the local community may suggest a unit of one size, whereas administrative efficiency will suggest an area of larger size for some, most or even all administrative functions. Shared or joint administration may result in a growing sense of becoming a single local church, or it may be right – for the sake of effective oversight and mission – for neighbouring dioceses to share administration but retain separate identities.”¹²

17. Shared diocesan administration has proved difficult to achieve in practice, as evidenced by two reports on Joint Working issued by the Commission¹³, and given the dynamics of decision-making within a diocese, notably the reluctance to pool diocesan sovereignty. Where it has happened, it has tended to be in areas such as ministerial training and safeguarding where it has enabled higher calibre staff/facilities than would have been possible within a single diocese. The experience of the last few years suggests that while there may be some scope for greater cross-border co-operation between dioceses, this area is unlikely to deliver huge benefits: if this had been the case, there would have been more energy behind this agenda.
18. Returning to the optimum size of a diocese, the Commission’s stance has been essentially pragmatic rather than doctrinaire, no doubt influenced by the need to gain political traction for change within dioceses subject to proposals for change. Attempting to implement a dirigiste agenda would sit uneasily with the statutory consultation process for reorganisation schemes.
19. The West Yorkshire Scheme was always recognised to be close to the maximal end of what could be achieved under current legislation. It needs to be remembered that the Commission first consulted widely as to the scope of the scheme – whether Sheffield

¹² DC.R(5): ‘Bishops and Dioceses’ – a note by Dr Colin Podmore, 2008

¹³ The 2nd 2018 Report is available here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/joint%20working%20summary%20doc%20-%202030-1-19.pdf>

and York should also have been included – before deciding to publish a scheme to unite the former dioceses of Bradford, Ripon & Leeds and Wakefield. What can be learnt from this scheme in terms of overall thinking about the optimal size of dioceses?

20. Rather than get fixated on some kind of magic template, it might be more instructive to build upon Dr Podmore's comments above, and identify one of the key learnings as being detaching *areas of mission* from *areas of administration*. The West Yorkshire Scheme can be credited with breathing new life into **episcopal areas** – the 5 episcopal areas coterminous with archdeaconries being a key element of the whole scheme. Combining these with an umbrella administration providing common services in a financially resilient way may well be a model that the rest of the Church of England should not ignore (and corresponds to existing practice in other dioceses such as Chelmsford, London, Oxford and Southwark). It would not be too difficult to look at other parts of England, e.g. the West Midlands or the North West, and to consider if missional benefits could flow from more coherent diocesan structures.
21. There has been comment on **the number of bishops** in the new diocese exceeding the previous total within the former three dioceses. This was not the original intention behind the Commission's Scheme which envisaged the same number of bishops (but one fewer archdeacon), but in 2015 it acceded to a request from the Bishop of Leeds to revive the dormant See of Richmond to provide an additional area bishop for the Leeds area [the name was changed to Kirkstall in 2018]. The Commission had been mindful that following the resignation of John Tuckett in November 2014 a greater responsibility for bringing the new diocese into being fell upon the diocesan bishop. The missional challenges facing the Leeds area also brought episcopal capacity into sharper focus. The Commission therefore agreed to this additional area see on the basis that it was justified as a transitional measure and could be reviewed in the normal way as and when the See fell vacant. It is worth noting that coupled with the merger of the former Archdeaconries of Craven and Richmond as part of the creation of the new diocese to form a single archdeaconry (co-terminous with the Episcopal Area of Ripon), the combined number of archdeacons and bishops is the same as in the former three dioceses. The Leeds experience nevertheless indicates that a degree of pragmatism is required in considering the number of senior posts.
22. Another of the key elements of the West Yorkshire Scheme was the perceived advantage of greater coherence with **civic boundaries**, which followed wide consultation with civic authorities as well as within the Church. The degree of incoherence was marked with the City of Leeds being divided between 4 dioceses. While complete coherence is probably unachievable, the question should perhaps be asked as to whether the Church's mission in places such as Hampshire, Kent or the North East is impeded by our current structures.
23. **Financial concerns** of course loom large presently, not least due to the effects of Covid-19, but, as has been said earlier, finance was not the driver of the West Yorkshire Scheme. As stated in para 9, it was estimated that significant financial

savings would accrue over time but these were always likely to come primarily from painful staff cuts and there perhaps needs to be greater honesty about that from those who espouse amalgamations on these grounds. While greater diocesan financial resilience was one benefit in Leeds, the position elsewhere is complicated by significant disparities in the level of diocesan assets¹⁴, an issue which is, I understand, being looked at elsewhere. One lesson of Leeds though is that diocesan reorganisation is not a quick fix – the Leeds proposals being in gestation for 4 years prior to approval and then followed by an implementation period of 2-3 years. While a simpler scheme – such as one diocese taking over a neighbouring one – could potentially be achieved much more quickly, the planning blight incurred from reorganisation could accentuate financial weaknesses in the short term. The perceived gain would need to be very evident to make the change worthwhile, and to garner the necessary political support.

24. One understandable concern has been **the time taken** to bring about diocesan reorganisation via the existing statutory mechanism. Reference has been made to the West Yorkshire Scheme being at the maximal end of what could be achieved (necessitating wide initial consultation about its overall shape). A ‘two-diocese scheme’ without major boundary changes around its periphery could possibly be achieved within around 2 years, particularly if wide agreement on the ground made it politically possible to keep any formal period for consultation to the minimum. A note attached as ANNEX 2 seeks to show how this might work within the current legal framework. If a faster timescale was deemed necessary, that would probably require prior amendment of the Dioceses, Pastoral & Mission Measure 2007.
25. A further comment about the new diocese has been the decision to retain the **three cathedrals**. It is significant that the Commission received very strong support from both the church and civic communities for all three cathedrals to retain their status, that in the light of this it could see no tangible mission gain from doing otherwise. Ripon was in many ways the most traditional cathedral given its historic links with St Wilfrid (though it had only been a cathedral since 1836); Bradford had an iconic status witnessing to the Christian faith in a city composed of many other faiths; and Wakefield had built up strong civic associations. The Commission therefore judged that they could each carve out a distinctive role in the new diocese. It did, however, build into the scheme a provision which would enable a reduction in the number of Commissioners’ Canons to one should the diocesan bishop so direct. It had also been conscious that there were other examples of dioceses with more than one cathedral within the Anglican Communion within the British Isles¹⁵. The retention of the cathedrals was certainly seen as ‘a deal breaker’ within the three dioceses and the probability is that Bradford as well as Wakefield diocesan synods would have voted against the scheme if its cathedral had not been retained. It is worth noting for any

¹⁴ See the Ven Simon Heathfield’s Synod Question - https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/Question%2043%20Ven%20Simon%20Heathfield_0.pdf; this area is currently being looked at by a Mutuality in Finances Sub-Group of the Vision & Strategy Exercise under the leadership of the House of Bishops.

¹⁵ The Church of Ireland had retained cathedrals when its dioceses had merged and the Diocese of Argyll and the Isles in the Scottish Episcopal Church had two cathedrals.

future scheme that the Leeds scheme would probably not have proceeded at all without the retention of the three cathedrals.

Ensuring the most effective use of resources, the greatest operational effectiveness, missional agility and efficiency

26. Given the operational difficulty of achieving these aims across dioceses without amalgamations and merger, it is perhaps instructive to note that the new single structure of the Diocese of Leeds *did* enable there to be a unified administration in core areas such as finance, ministry, mission, legal services, church buildings and safeguarding. There is bound to be a degree of subjectivity in attempting to measure just how effective the current arrangements are compared with those pre-2014, but, as recorded in ANNEX 1, the diocese has been proactive in applying for SDF funding, pursuing mission initiatives and with pastoral reorganisation. The creation of a new diocese also enabled a streamlined structure to be put in place, with a single Board of 18 merging the roles of the DBF and the Bishop's Council. Just as one cannot perhaps prove beyond reasonable doubt if the new arrangements are more effective than the old, one could equally well speculate as to whether the pre-existing structures could have coped with current missional challenges.

Conclusion

27. The cautionary words of Canon Paul Welsby, then Prolocutor for the Southern Province, from his speech to the General Synod on 5 November 1973, remain relevant in 2020:

'If the restructuring of the diocesan system will further the Church's mission to the world of the 1970s and 1980s and if the Church's resources of [men] and money make it feasible, then the Church must take the matter extremely seriously. If, however, it believes that its time, its energy and its resources can be more profitably employed in other ways, then it will not allow itself to be distracted, or its resources to be depleted, by embarking on an exercise which will be time-consuming and fraught with administrative difficulties.'

28. Certainly the experience of the West Yorkshire Scheme suggests that further schemes should 'not by any to be enterprised, nor taken in hand, unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly...' ¹⁶. But, to carry forward the analogy, Leeds has surely shown that such schemes can bear fruit, and may warrant the intentional commitment to making them work. It will nevertheless be of crucial importance to take on board the following:
- Clarity about the missional benefits;
 - Identifying the scope of the scheme as early as possible;
 - Undertaking a robust financial analysis and project plan;
 - Having a programme manager in place;
 - Identifying a source of funding for the programme manager and inevitable implementation costs.

¹⁶ From the Introduction to the BCP Marriage Service

29. Finally, no scheme of this kind is likely to succeed without **episcopal leadership**. The leadership shown by Bishops John Packer and Nick Baines in the former Bradford and Ripon & Leeds was absolutely crucial in delivering support for change within those dioceses. Likewise the former Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, provided vital support at national and provincial level. One of the lessons from the West Yorkshire Scheme was that such leadership is also required at the moment of transition (which could not happen there because of the dissolution of all the existing Sees, and the temporary absence of a diocesan bishop until one had been appointed by the Crown). The most obvious way round this – short of legislation that would fetter the prerogative of the Crown to nominate a new diocesan bishop – would be to ensure that one See remains in situ in any future scheme.

JONATHAN NEIL-SMITH

Secretary, the Dioceses Commission

13 October 2020 (revised 16 November 2020)

DIOCESE OF LEEDS REVIEW MEETING: KEY FINDINGS

1. The former Archbishop of York convened a meeting in Church House, Westminster on Wednesday 22 November 2017 to review the creation of the Diocese of Leeds. A list of those who attended is attached as ANNEX A.
2. The Bishop of Leeds spoke further to his Preparatory Papers which had been circulated to those present. He welcomed the meeting and suggested that the focus should not be to voice criticism nor apportion blame but objectively to consider lessons to be learnt should there be any intention to do something similar again.
3. The following were among the key points made:
 - **Estimating the costs:** it had cost far more than projected. In any commercial merger a 'due diligence' exercise would have been carried out. Although the estimates had been prepared with the full co-operation of the 3 dioceses, they seriously underestimated the transitional costs, particularly the need to allow for capacity to manage the change alongside the day-to-day running of the dioceses. [The contingency of £1m had been insufficient].
 - **Preparation:** the dioceses felt constrained from detailed preparatory work prior to the scheme being agreed (as Wakefield was opposed to it). There had been no legal bar on contingency planning though this was not universally held to be so. Could more have been done both in terms of embedding the need for change, and in contingency planning? Should a *Shadow Board* be in place with powers to run a diocese from day 1?
 - **Planning blight and uncertainty:** the three years of consultation (2010-13) prolonged uncertainty. This was followed by c.4 years of implementation (2013-17). This has led to planning blight and had been difficult for staff. Could this be shortened?
 - **Take over / merger?** Dissolving all 3 dioceses, rather than annexing 2 to 1, while politically justifiable, meant that all existing structures formally ceased to exist, and that no diocesan bishop was in post to implement the new diocese.
 - **Role of the Archbishop:** the ABY considered that he had formally to remain neutral given Wakefield's opposition¹⁷. How could the necessary pastoral support to bishops be provided; and his provincial leadership be exercised?
 - **Ownership by the National Church:** it had not been clear that key stakeholders such as the Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops had considered the scheme from a strategic perspective and/or given it explicit endorsement (even though it had received overwhelming support in the July 2013 Synod vote). This needed to be addressed in any future scheme.
 - **Leadership:** one person needed to be a lead role, convening key stakeholders on a regular basis to help manage such a significant change. A guiding

¹⁷ Once the Wakefield Diocesan Synod had voted against the scheme, S.7(2) of the Measure specified that the scheme could not then proceed unless the ABY authorised the Commission to lay the scheme before the General Synod. As the decision maker in respect of that issue, the ABY had to take care not to create the impression of having prejudged the issue before it came to him for consideration and decision.

coalition - the diocese(s)/the NCIs meeting - was needed to stay with the process with regular face-to-face meeting of key stakeholders; and a programme board within the diocese(s).

- **Transitional capacity & funding:** John Tuckett had been employed as a 'Programme Manager' (prior to being Diocesan Secretary for the new diocese). Sufficient staff resources needed to be in place to manage the change on the ground, with capacity for 'soft' as well as 'hard' wiring. If Leeds was a precedent, the loss of key staff – and its impact financially and in terms of staff morale - needed to be anticipated. (Should there be a designated chaplain?) The Church Commissioners initially funded JT's post (effectively from the contingency sum), but the cost needed to be properly identified and budgeted for.
- **Communications:** good communications to parishes and staff were vital throughout the process
- **Appointment of new diocesan bishop:** primary legislation – an Enabling Measure? - would be needed to avoid a situation in which the new bishop could only have been appointed once the new diocese existed. In the light of such a change, a scheme could have named the new bishop (but would that have been costly politically?). The 6 CNC diocesan representatives had been weighted to Bradford, but as a result of an electoral process. Legislation would have been needed to allocate 2 places to each diocese.
- **Compensation:** it would have been more equitable to pay compensation as of right rather than on application (N.B. this was also covered by formal Rules agreed by Synod).
- **Episcopal capacity:** it became evident that the Leeds area needed its own area bishop in addition to the diocesan, given his strategic role
- **Mission:** the new diocese was in a much better place than the previous 3: the area system was proving its worth, with the area bishops engaging with their communities; 50% of parishes in Bradford were growing; nettles were being grasped in Leeds. The diocesan bishop was free to play a regional role, and to articulate a clear vision for the diocese. The name 'Leeds' was important for clarity of mission. The larger diocese gave more scope to develop clergy. The benefits needed to be clearly articulated.
- **Refreshing diocesan structures:** all aspects of the diocese had been reviewed (and some irregularities had been exposed). Although painful at times, the diocese was now benefiting from the process.
- **New Offices:** the diocese had invested c.£4m in new offices in Central Leeds. Although this had exceeded the estimates, it had helped the diocese make a fresh start, and it had provided excellent facilities.
- **Cathedrals:** it had undoubtedly been a mission benefit to have retained the 3 cathedrals. Retaining them had been 'a deal breaker' in the consultation process.
- **Episcopal housing:** the diocese had met additional costs of housing additional suffragan [area] bishops, whereas the Commissioners had netted the sale proceeds of 2 See Houses. Was this equitable? Should the See House capital have been ring-fenced for diocesan use? The Commissioners had provided c£1m of transitional funding but the diocese had to devote considerable resource to bidding for this money.

- **Identification of scheme costs:** while a paper had sought to identify all the costs consequential upon the scheme, it included such elements as the notional costs of transferred benefice property (c£3.5m); and the cost of enhanced but standardised stipend and housing provision across all the areas (c.£0.25m pa). Reference had been made to the diocese having a £3.5m deficit. The diocese maintained clergy numbers, and managed 3 parallel parish share systems for 2013-17, as part of the transition but it was not clear how much of the deficit could be directly attributed to the scheme. Any presentation of scheme costs needed to be set alongside the benefits.
4. It was suggested that this note might be shared with the Archbishops' Council and the Dioceses Commission to inform further consideration of such schemes.

JNS

26/11/17 (revd 13/12/17)

ANNEX A

Attendees

The Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York
 The Rt Revd Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds
 Ms Caroline Boddington, Archbishops' Appointments Secretary
 Mr Andrew Brown, Secretary to the Church Commissioners
 Ms Debbie Child, Joint Diocesan Secretary, the Diocese of Leeds
 Canon Prof Michael Clarke, Chair, the Dioceses Commission
 Mr Ashley Ellis, Joint Diocesan Secretary, the Diocese of Leeds
 Mr Peter Foskett, Registrar, the Diocese of Leeds
 The Revd Alexander McGregor, Deputy Legal Adviser, the Archbishops' Council
 The Revd Malcolm Macnaughton, Chief of Staff to the Archbishop of York
 Ms Loretta Minghella, First Church Estates Commissioner
 Mr William Nye, LVO, Secretary-General, the Archbishops' Council
 Mr Jonathan Neil-Smith, Secretary to the Dioceses Commission
 Canon Dr John Spence CBE DL, Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee

POSSIBLE ‘TWO DIOCESE’ REORGANISATION SCHEME**Possible legal scenario**

Step set out in the Dioceses, Pastoral & Mission Measure 2007	Estimated time needed before next step	Comments
Dioceses submit proposal to the Dioceses Commission [s.5(3)] following consultation with their Diocesan Synods [s.5(3)]	6 months before draft scheme published – time dependent on the extent of the Commission’s consultation with interested parties at this stage	Assumes that significant prior consultation has taken place within both dioceses, including statutory consultation with their diocesan synods
The Commission, following consultation with interested parties, prepare a statement of the effects of the proposals on the mission of the CofE and a financial estimate [s.6(2)]	Combine with draft scheme (see comment)	Anticipate that such a statement and estimate would be prepared alongside the draft scheme
In light of (2) the Commission prepares a draft scheme giving effect to the proposals. [s.6(2)(a)] <u>or</u> not	See above	
The Commission then formally consults interested parties on the draft scheme, its statement and the financial estimate. The minimum consultation period is 3 months. [s.6(4)]	3-6 months	Interested parties defined in s.6(1) as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each diocesan bishop (& the Archbishop) • Each diocesan synod • Each bishop’s council • Each cathedral chapter • The Church Commissioners • The Charity Commission • Such other persons or bodies that would in the Commission’s opinion be particularly affected – the Commission <u>could</u> decide to include all incumbents & PCCs, which could considerably broaden the scope of this

		exercise, and extend the time needed to consider responses
The Commission decides whether, <u>or not</u> , to proceed in the light of the consultation. [s.6(5)]	3 months (depending on the outcome of the consultation)	Time needed by the Commission depends on the issues raised in the consultation
The Commission makes any amendments to the draft scheme as it sees fit.[s.6(6)]	?	Extent of legal work dependent on outcome of consultation
The Commission submits the draft scheme to the diocesan synods. [s.6(7)]	3 months	May depend on scheduling of Synod meetings
Diocesan Synods give consent [s.7(1)], if any does not, the ABC – in his capacity as Archbishop of the Province - can still decide that the scheme should be laid before General Synod [s.7(2)]	Combine with above	The ABC/ABY can take such a step if the interest of the diocese concerned is judged to be sufficiently small; or if there are felt to be wider CofE/Provincial considerations
General Synod considers the draft scheme. If approved, the Commission formally makes the scheme. [s.7(4)]	6 months	May depend on scheduling of Synod meetings
Scheme is submitted for approval to the Privy Council. [s.8]	3 months	Contingent on timing of the Privy Council

DIOCESE OF LEEDS: KEY STAGES

Jan 2009	Dioceses Commission announced review of the 5 Yorkshire dioceses – Bradford, Ripon & Leeds, Sheffield, Wakefield & York
2010	Consultation by Dio Comm Review team involving 80 meetings & >200 people
Oct 2010	Dio Comm Review Report published – proposed single W Yorks diocese with amalgamation of dioceses of Bradford, Ripon & Leeds & Wakefield (divided into episcopal areas) – consultation period to May 2011
Oct 2011	Dio Comm follow up report following 140 written responses, confirmed original thinking but with the See of Leeds (rather than Wakefield) also to be known as ‘the Diocese of West Yorkshire & the Dales’: formal consultation followed on this basis
Late 2011	Preparation Group consisting of reps of the 3 dioceses (and Dio Comm) set up to anticipate steps that might need to be taken if the proposals went ahead
2011	John Tuckett appointed as Programme Manager
Oct 2012	Dio Comm’s 3 rd Report published (eventually circulated to General Synod as GS Misc 1049A), following over 100 representations, with final version of the draft reorganisation scheme. By this stage the formal opposition of the diocese of Wakefield was known, as was the strong feeling of the other 2 dioceses that they only wanted to proceed with Wakefield. This Report included a financial estimate (GS Misc 1049C) drawn up in liaison with the 3 dioceses.
March 2013	Formal consideration of the proposal by the 3 diocesan synods – 96% support in Bradford; 78% in Ripon & Leeds; but only 33% in Wakefield (where it was opposed by +Stephen Platten – though supported by +Pontefract & the DBF Chair). The DBF Chairs circulated an assessment that ‘there is no financial reason that would lead us to recommend rejection of these proposals.’
May 2013	ABY announces that the Dioceses Commission’s Scheme would be referred to General Synod
July 2013	Bradford, Ripon & Leeds and Wakefield Reorganisation Scheme approved overwhelmingly by General Synod (on show of hands c.400-6)
Aug 2013	John Tuckett’s appointment as Acting Dio Sec announced
Oct 2013	Scheme approved by the Privy Council
12 Nov 2013	1 st meeting of Leeds CNC
9-10 Jan 2014	Last meeting of Leeds CNC
4 Feb 2014	+Nick Baines appointment as +Leeds announced
20 April 2014	3 former dioceses formally dissolved; and new Diocese of Leeds created
8 June 2014	Inauguration of the new diocese, and ministry of +Nick Baines as diocesan bishop at a special service in York Minster

- July 2014 Dioceses Commission publish initial Evaluation Report (drawn up by Prof Hilary Russell)
- Nov 2014 John Tuckett resigns as Dio Sec(Jt Secs Debbie Child & Ashley Ellis appointed to succeed him)
- 19 March 2015 Privy Council agrees to change the names of the suffragan sees of Pontefract and Knaresborough to Wakefield and Ripon respectively
- July 2015 Consecration of +Richmond (following Dio Comm agreement to the revival of the See)
- 14 July 2016 Date from which diocese only known as ‘the Diocese of Leeds’
- Nov 2016 New Diocesan Office opens in Central Leeds
- 1 Jan 2017 Formal delegation to the Area Bishops took effect
- 14 March 2018 Privy Council agrees to rename See of Richmond to Kirkstall (following agreement by the General Synod)