

Banbury and Warwick Deanery – Deanery Pastoral Council (DPC)

Bicester 8th May 2024

- 1) **Welcome and Prayers.** The Dean, Canon John, welcomed some 35 priests, representatives of parish laity and schools in the deanery.

Canon John led with prayers beginning with the Prayer for the Vision of the Archdiocese.

Apologies had been received from Fr Clive (Chipping Norton and Charlbury) and from three members of the laity. Only one parish in the deanery was not represented, St Marie's, Rugby.

- 2) **Appointment of Chair and Secretary.** Canon John nominated Peter Rand to serve as Chairman for an initial two years. This was passed without dissent. The position of Secretary had not yet been filled.

Peter Rand stated that he would support the Deanery Pastoral Council (DPC) to the best of his ability.

- 3) **Introduction.** Experience of representatives and what you can bring or contribute to the DPC. (Simon Hill, representative from Kenilworth, kindly recorded these on a flip chart....)

Fr Austin – Catechesis

Teresa – Hospitality

Peter -Life experience

Les- Conflict resolution (Justice)

Emma- English and literature

Fr Patrick – Pilgrimage

Bernard – Rotas and Management (Co-ordination)

Brian (St Joseph's) – SVP – Outreach

Stephen – Business

Fr Stephen – Priest and teacher

E ? – Choir, Catechesis and family life.

Sue – Catholic education and governance

Fr Kevin – PPC experience and pastoral experience

Kevin (Banbury) – Secondary teaching – 'Encourager'

Jim (Deacon) – Prison Chaplaincy and Outreach

Leslie – Outreach. Warwick U. Teaching and learning needs

Fr Damian (Wooton Wawen) – Pastoral experience. Economist.

Francis G – Counselling. Retired nurse and lay hospital chaplain

Mike – Retired architect. School governor. Church maintenance

David (Shipston) – Parish and previous Chief Operating Officer in AOB. Diocese Vision

John (Kineton)- Ex headteacher. Music

Ian (Balsall Common) – Child Protection (L.A)

Frank (St Francis) – Financial Services. Process. Teacher

Sue (Rugby)- Foreign Missions

Diane (Bilton) – Parish Secretary. Catechesis. Outreach.

Fr Gerry – Justice and Peace - Diocese and Parish

David (St Anne's) – Accountant. Team Leadership. Goals

Fr Teddy – Enrichment of marriage. Marriage encounter

Loretta – College Registrar. Secretary. Events and fundraising.

Ed Hester (Princethorpe) – Head of the Princethorpe Foundation. Strategy. Education

Daniel – Headteacher. MAC strategy and education.

Fraser (George Napier School) – Connections. 16-19. Education. Pilgrimage HCPT

Trevor -Special Needs. Supporting parents.

Canon John (Bicester) – Education. Pastoral ministry and meeting challenges

Simon – Internet, Design and Communication.

Peter (Chair) Ensuring the success of the DPC.

4) **Terms of Reference.**

Remind ourselves of progress to date. Who present has not attended any previous deanery meetings when Terms of Reference were discussed at the North/South clergy and laity meetings? 6 or so...

This is the first DPC meeting under the new format in the AOB. Banbury and Warwick are leading the way following the meetings between clergy and laity in October, November and April. There is a desire to achieve some consistency of Terms of Reference across the Archdiocese from one DPC to another. Canon lawyers are studying these Terms of Reference, and their recommendations will go to the Archbishop's Council. In due course our draft Terms of Reference will be refined, and a final version adopted.

Questions were invited.

Aims and objectives. All PPCs have a requirement to follow guidelines: H&S, Safeguarding and Financial Compliance.

It was suggested that this subject be revisited at a later date.

Peter Rand stated that the DPC was a 'consultation and discussion, not a decision-making group'.

The challenge is therefore to avoid it being simply a talking shop. Most important, it is to support PPs and provides a framework to ensure the laity have a voice to ensure the successful implementation of the changes that will be necessary over the next few years. It also provides a mechanism for the communication between parishes within the deanery to provide each other with support where needed. That was behind the original request for parishes to provide a SWOT analysis. The extent of the experience and support available is well illustrated from tonight's expressed contributions to the DPC from the laity and clergy, earlier.

The Terms of Reference were adopted as an interim draft to enable the work of the DPC to continue.

5) **Hubs and Clusters**

Peter Rand used 'slides' from Eric Kirwan as presented at the Deanery meeting on 13 October to remind ourselves what was meant by the terms 'Hubs and Clusters'

Canon John distributed a suggested list of Hubs and Clusters from the last meeting of the Deanery clergy for discussion.

Leamington Cluster

Leamington, Lillington, Whitnash, Warwick, Hampton-on-the-Hill

Rugby Cluster

Rugby, Bilton, Hillmorton, Southam, Wappenbury

Bicester and Banbury Cluster

Bicester, Hethe, Banbury, Chipping Norton, Charlbury

Stratford Cluster

Stratford, Wooton Wawen and Kineton, Shipston, Brailes

Kenilworth Cluster

Kenilworth, Balsall Common, Baddesley Clinton

In the past, decisions on such matters were made without lay consultation and involvement. It is important that the accumulated knowledge of all, clergy and laity, and factors relating to local knowledge, are acknowledged. It was fully anticipated that recommendations from the DPC on Hubs and Clusters would be accepted by the Archdiocese. From tonight's discussion, we will be issuing a message for inclusion in parish newsletters so all in the Deanery receive a consistent message on the announcement of Hubs and Clusters. This is intended to avoid parishioners misinterpreting the announcement.

The future decline in the number of priests is an inescapable factor. Engaging with neighbouring parish communities, sharing knowledge, skills and experience is essential as we look to the future. Hubs are not highly significant at the moment. The composition of clusters is a subject for further discussion and will be firmed up at the next meeting.

Peter Rand reaffirmed that there was no current discussion about the closure of churches or parishes. There will be an endeavour to retain the identity churches and parishes.

There is a need to coordinate various statistics and publish them, including:

- Number of Priests, their age and a 10-year prediction of available priests in the Deanery
- Number of weekend Masses and their times
- Attendance at weekend Masses and the capacity of churches

It is important that we look ahead to forestall crises arising from the decline in clergy numbers. We should look to be considering ideas from other areas/dioceses, even to looking at models from other countries.

Canon John. This (DPC) is new in the diocese. This is the first... evolving a 'roadmap' for the future. We can learn much from each other but other countries are different in many ways. We are not yet desperate.

Peter Rand. We believe we are setting some strong foundations with lay involvement. In another part of the diocese, there was no lay consultation when an announcement was made recently concerning 'clusters'. There was frustration and resentment.

Fr Kevin had a question suggesting that before requesting individual parishes to consult with clergy, the report from the Visitation in December should be available. It's now the beginning of May... Canon John responded...

Canon John. These are proposals discussed at the last priest's deanery meeting. They are open to discussion.

Fr O'Brien. Did not recognise the Rugby cluster.

Canon John. Process of moving to the right cluster is a subject for discussion at a DPC. Proposals and changes will be discussed. The debate can take place through PPCs, parish bulletins, parish website....

Stratford. Can they interact with parishes in another deanery which would make geographical sense? Canon John suggested that there is no problem with talking to other parishes but the deanery is as it is.

David. What is the definition of a cluster? Help to develop how it suits each one but there needs to be common ground. Some clusters are so widespread to co-operate easily. Rural parishes are always going to struggle with clustering.

Other points were made concerning population density, new towns and large developments. Peter Rand concurred that these trends would have to be recognised.

There was concern expressed about how remaining priests would be able to deal with 'sacramental overload'?

Canon John remarked that the Pope Francis Multi Academy Trust will evolve and is in process of changing.

Peter Rand. AS laity we should be privileged to have had this discussion. How we communicate to others is important to forestall rumour and speculation. Model to move forward – consistency in the message going forward. Discuss with parishioners.

Canon John. Important to go forward together. Involve your PP and repeat support for him. It as suggested that the two parish representatives in each cluster and the PP's should meet in the next few weeks to discuss any concerns and opportunities arising from the proposed Clusters and report back such that a final decision can be made at the September meeting.

The chair will facilitate these meetings taking place and coordinate the responses.

The meeting concluded with a prayer from Canon John.

The next meeting of the Diocesan Pastoral Council: Leamington 19th September at 7pm