

Banbury and Warwick Deanery

2nd Deanery Pastoral Council Meeting – 21 November 2024

St Joseph's, Whitnash

Draft Minutes

- 1) **Welcome & opening prayer** - Peter Rand and Fr David Hartley welcomed everybody and the meeting opened with a prayer. It was announced that Fr David Hartley had been appointed as the new Dean of the Banbury & Warwick Deanery following the move of Canon John Batthula to Worcester. 13 clergy and 28 lay members attended.

The Chair welcomed Fr Paul Haines from St Joseph's, Monks Kirby and the two lay representatives of the parish, as new members of the Banbury & Warwick Deanery Pastoral Council.

- 2) **Apologies** were received from Fr Philip Harrop, Fr Frank Smith, Bernard Baxter, Richard Deane, Frances Gillespie, Vicki Hobbs, Trevor Hodgkinson, Mary McGrath, David McLoughlin. In addition, there were three Parish Priests and five lay members who did not attend.
- 3) **Minutes of the last meeting** - the minutes were accepted as a true record of the previous meeting.

4) **Cluster Meetings - Verbal Reports**

Bicester, Hethe, Banbury, Chipping Norton, Charlbury

Bicester/Hethe reported that they used the original 2023 SWOT analysis to prepare for the meeting. They reported a seamless transition with their new PP. Strengths were many. Weaknesses such as having two separate parishes and financial burdens were noted. Threats such as apathy, cynicism, not proclaiming Jesus, financial burden from JP centre, and overloading core parishioners were noted.

Banbury had taken a different approach. The two Banbury churches are close enough for people to move between them and help where it is needed. They had committed to adapt to the needs of the representatives. Recognised the need to visit parishes to learn what was going on and what needs there are. They reported a need for help with catechesis - Bicester offered to help. They reported that laity were very enthusiastic about co-responsibility, but they were not confident that the clergy were of the same opinion.

Charlbury & Chipping Norton - reported that a proposal had been made to merge Chipping Norton and Charlbury parishes. There was concern that no consultation had taken place about the proposed merger. However despite this they were keen to move forward as a parish. More work to do to encourage cohesion between the two parishes. Would like to share ideas within the cluster especially on formation & catechesis.

Leamington, Lillington, Kenilworth, Whitnash, Warwick, Hampton on the Hill, Baddesley Clinton:

The cluster reported that they had started by noting existing areas of cooperation eg confessions at Leamington, the Warwick Martyrs prayer walk, hospital chaplaincy, catechesis across parishes. The young people groups across the parishes were looking for ways to work together. Some areas for future co-operation had also been identified eg to support clergy in different ways, eg H&S, to

explore lay celebrants for funerals, to look at bringing together people doing same roles across the parishes - this could be beyond deanery as well.

Questions around communication in cluster and deanery - how to connect better were discussed. Was there a role for a deanery publication? Deanery website can be made better use of as a means of communication. They had identified a need for organists and eucharistic ministers. Quite a lot of movement between parishes for laity - what does this mean?? Considered how to support students at uni - how to provide for their needs. Is there a need for a forum for talking about vocations? Opportunities for prayer in churches if Mass not available in longer term future. It was noted that some places invited other participants to the cluster meetings. It was confirmed that cluster meetings can include whoever people think they need.

Rugby, Bilton, Hillmorton, Southam, Wappenbury

The cluster reported they had taken a slightly different approach. The 5 clergy and 10 laity had met 3 times and start each meeting by sharing a meal/light supper as part of getting to know each other.

Their first meeting had looked at the purpose of DPC and what was expected of the cluster. They had noted that the parishes that form cluster were made without consultation but decided to agree to make it work. They agreed to share best practice, learn from each other, retain knowledge, have a culture of openness and sharing.

At their second meeting they took Pope Francis' statement that encouraged us to dream and considered what would be our ideal parish look like? Clergy and laity met separately to discuss this - 10 different elements were identified - the report from the cluster has all the details.

At their third meeting they looked at each heading within parish groups and allocated a RAG (red, amber, green) rating to determine priorities. It was reported that Monks Kirby joined the cluster. There was acknowledgement of financial and time constraints, but the meeting had discussed the potential for a jointly funded youth worker.

Stratford, Wootton Waven, Kineton, Shipston & Brailes

The cluster reported they had met for the first time. They had started off with getting to know each other's parishes as they are so geographically dispersed. The meeting had acknowledged the need to be open to change in the future but also noted that we need to be aware of not loading more work onto clergy as change occurs. There was plenty of sharing including how the two parishes (3 Mass centres) of Kineton, and Brailes & Shipston had evolved including the need to adjust Mass times and rationalise at key times of the liturgical year. This was still evolving even after 5 yrs.

The cluster had also discussed the issue of clergy cover and how this might need to change in the future as numbers change. The meeting had also used the Archbishop's four focus areas to structure their discussion on current and future activities eg opening up formation courses. A possible cross cluster course for Lent 2025 was also discussed. The challenge of outreach to ever changing congregations and beyond given the number of new housing developments was also discussed.

Approach to Cluster Reports

Following the verbal reports from the clusters the Dean noted that all parishes were approaching it differently and with the various new structures in existence we are all working out what happens at different levels as we go forward. It was accepted that the pace of change will vary.

The Chair noted that the link between the DPC and cluster meetings is evolving. He felt that the verbal report back from clusters had worked well and the meeting agreed that it had worked.

The following points were also noted on the way forward:

- perhaps we could use the Archbishop's four themes as a focus for future meetings.
- to take forward strands that had been noted including the need for Catechists and their training.
- note and welcome the different approaches but acknowledge the need for parish pastoral councils in every parish
- facilitate the needs for links between different roles in each parish including those linked to safeguarding.
- clusters would work together by sharing reports and then potentially trial ideas from other clusters.

5) Parish Questionnaire Responses

Fr Sean and Fr Stephen were thanked for their work in the design and compilation of the questionnaire. It was noted that the spreadsheet that was circulated didn't include all the answers to make it a little easier to use.

The Chair provided some high-level feedback on the responses.

Secretarial, administration and finance staff - paid and volunteers - what are the benefits of each approach? Something for discussion at cluster level.

Volunteers - 11 with enough, 4 without - opportunity for sharing of practice?

Eucharistic Ministers - 11 enough, 4 not.

Parish Pastoral Council - 10 with, 5 without

Parish halls - 5 profit, 7 b/even, 2 at a loss

Finances - again mixed picture - 14 healthy parishes, 6 only meeting running costs, 2 living hand to mouth, none running at a loss.

35000 new houses planned in the next 5 years - opportunity to reach out. A suggestion was made that we examine the environmental impact of new housing in our deanery.

Most recent Quinquennial Reports - high degree of variance - some did not know. Others in 2017, others this year.

Discussion on different ways to communicate outcome of survey and other information on DPC to parishioners.

6) Future meetings of Deanery Pastoral Council - different options were considered and meeting three times a year was proposed and generally accepted. Thursday at 7pm was accepted as preferred time for future meetings. Dates for 2025 will be circulated by the Chair and Dean.

7) AOB - parishes were asked to collect directories and Youth Sunday materials. Photo of all present was taken for the website.

Meeting closed at 9pm with a prayer.