

Church for a Different World Briefing June 2019

A 10-Year strategy for the diocese

Work is underway on a high level strategy for the diocese, bringing the key programmes together into one document and setting out a clear vision of what we are seeking to achieve over the next ten years. A first draft was shared at June Diocesan Synod where it was well received. Feedback from the discussions at Synod will be taken on board in the final version of the strategy which will be taken back to October Synod for sign off. The strategy will be widely communicated after that.

The new strategy document signals a shift of focus away from *Fit for Mission*, which is essentially about organisational changes, to *Church for a Different World* by setting out an inspiring and aspirational Christian vision for the Diocese. The three mission goals – *Growing, Nurturing and Serving* - which are already well-understood in the Diocese, continue to be at the heart of the diocese's strategy. The aim is to set out clear programmes of work and support for each of the mission goals and to create a culture of accountability in delivering them.

Structural changes in the diocese

Initial proposals for structural changes in the diocese were presented by Bishop David to June Synod. The changes recognise the tremendous challenges facing the diocese and are driven by the need to organise ourselves so we can lead and deliver the radical changes that are required and grow the church of the future.

In-depth work has been carried out in the first half of the year by a number of task and finish groups which have developed three core proposals, building on the learning from the pilot deaneries:

- moving from 20 to 7 deaneries
- creating a new full-time Area Dean role, providing leadership for change and development, as well as flexible parish cover
- developing a consistent approach to Mission Units across the Diocese, typically each with three stipendiary clergy.

The proposals were well received at June Synod, where there was the opportunity to discuss them in depth. The final set of proposals will be presented to October Synod after which there will be a formal consultation process. A series of archdeaconry roadshows is being held in September to enable discussions to take place at a more local level. Invitations to the roadshows will be sent out in July. The target date for the new deanery arrangements to be in place and the new Area Deans to be in post is 1st January 2021. Work on the implementation of Mission Units will take place after that.

Financial update

At June Synod, Phillip Blinkhorn, Chair of the DBF, reported a 2018 operating deficit of more than £600k. Latest forecasts show that this is likely to be repeated in the current financial year. The main cause of the deficit is a shortfall in parish share.

A restructuring exercise is currently underway at the DBF, which will contribute around £250k to reducing the deficit. The proposals include reducing the number of layers of management, and focusing on posts which have an impact for every parish, rather than posts which provide hands-on support for a few parishes. This has not been an easy decision. The very positive contribution over a number of years, of those staff who posts are being made redundant, is acknowledged and they are warmly thanked for all they have achieved.

Additional income is likely to be secured by freeing up space at Church House for commercial lettings. Numbers of stipendiary clergy will also be considered over the summer to ensure that we are able to achieve a balanced budget, prior to the Diocese's financial strategy and the 2020 budget being agreed by Bishop's Council in the autumn.

Mission Action Plans

A very small number of parishes have not yet submitted their MAPs. The MAP Officers will continue to provide support to parishes which are experiencing difficulties in completing their MAP.

A number of Deanery MAPs have also yet to be completed. Deanery MAPs will be reviewed and considered by the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee (DMPC) to identify key issues and emerging themes. Over the coming months, each deanery will be invited to present their MAP to a small sub-committee of DMPC. The focus will be on giving feedback and providing constructive challenge, as well as honouring the work that has gone into developing the MAP.

Strategic Development Funding

Positive progress is being made by the Children Changing Places Team, who came into post in January 2019. This includes engagement with existing church-based toddler groups that is already proving fruitful in supporting them towards becoming intentionally Christian in their focus.

With the Small to Small Community Church Plants project, three churches have been planted in Longsight, Cheetham Hill and Rusholme. Plans are well advanced for a further church plant in Gorton later in the year.

Work is underway on a new SDF bid to be submitted in October 2019. The confirmed scope of the bid is for new church growth projects in Manchester City Centre, Rochdale Town Centre, and a project in partnership with St-Martin-in-the-Fields in the Manchester Area.

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