CHELMSFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD

Title: **REVIEW OF PARISH SHARE SYSTEM – FINAL REPORT**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The current Share Scheme was adopted by Diocesan Synod in June 2001. Much has changed in our patterns of mission and ministry since then – the birth of Fresh Expressions and the advent of Bishop's Mission Orders; significant developments in lay ministry; growth in the number of self-supporting clergy, including those who are locally deployed or 'House for Duty'; and a national decline in the number of available stipendiary clergy arising from retirements outstripping ordinations.

This review coincides with a time of significant change in national church finances. The present formula for sharing national resources, and around which the current Share Scheme was devised, is due to end after 2016. From the beginning of 2017 national church support will be in the form of i) a fund to support parishes which are socio-economically deprived, and ii) invitations to bid for money to 'invest in growth'.

Reviewing the way in which a diocese apportions the funding of God's mission and ministry is a major piece of work. In keeping with our terms of reference, our approach has been to consider how two key elements of *Reimagining Ministry* - the formation of Mission and Ministry Units, and the development of lay ministry - can best be supported by our financial arrangements. We have therefore looked ahead to the time when Mission and Ministry Units are up and running, but recognised, especially in the light of the consultation responses, that transitional arrangements are vital. We have also been committed to ensure continued mutual dependence and transparency in the proposals.

2. THE STORY SO FAR

The Share Scheme Review group was established by Bishop's Council in October 2013 'to review the operation of the Deanery Share Scheme, and recommend an appropriate share scheme or equivalent to support and enable all the proposals in *Reimagining Ministry*.'

The group has met on 18 occasions, and in addition met with the Bishop's Staff in September 2014, and consulted Deanery Officers at the October Finance Forums in 2014 and 2015. Various members of the group have accepted invitations to PCC meetings and Deanery Synods and benefitted from the discussions there as well as conversations with individuals. Articles in *The Month* also invited responses.

In 2014, as part of the budget consultation process, many helpful responses were received, identifying attributes of the current share scheme that respondents liked and those which respondents wanted to see changed. This consultation highlighted a desire for simplicity.

Continuing members will recall that an Interim Report was presented to the Diocesan Synod in June 2015, and with the endorsement of Synod, a formal consultation arising from this was held from June – November 2015, eliciting 162 responses.

3. CHANGES TO OUR PROPOSALS FOLLOWING CONSULTATION

The group looked carefully at both the responses to individual questions and the broader themes which emerged from the consultation. Much of the response was positive, in particular welcoming the simplicity of the proposed share scheme. Some very helpful questions were raised and suggestions offered.

As might be expected, there was a clear desire for more clarity about the working of the Mutual Support Fund and some respondents offered suggestions on this point.

The consultation clearly showed some anxiety that the formation and early life of a Mission and Ministry Unit could be clouded and even distorted by financial discussions if the Share was tied to Mission and Ministry Units too early. We have reflected carefully on this point, and strengthened the transitional arrangements as follows:

i) 2017 becomes a transitional year where the deanery share scheme is suspended and shares set based on percentage agreed by Synod (see below)
ii) Those Mission & Ministry Units (or prospective Mission & Ministry Units) that are content to proceed as early adopters can shadow run the process in 2017 and participate fully in 2018.
iii) For those not ready to proceed as Mission & Ministry Units, the new share scheme principles would be adopted at **benefice** level until such time as benefices are ready to participate as Mission & Ministry Units.

This is described in more detail in the report.

We asked some specific questions in the consultation, and based on the answers received we decided that:

i) the proposed scheme should treat ordinand support and title posts (i.e. curates in training) as a shared cost benefitting the whole diocese, rather than a cost attributed to the particular Mission and Ministry Unit or benefice where a curate happens to be placed.

ii) some form of guidance on the mutual support fund is both necessary and desirable to help Mission and Ministry Units thinking about their response to the fund.

iii) the administration of the Mutual Support Fund is best operated as an integrated diocesan process informed by local advice from Area Mission & Pastoral Committees.

iv) there was no consensus on using a longer rolling average for attendance measures in share calculation, therefore the current three year rolling average should be retained

There was a comment in the Interim Report that the total contribution from a 'Unit' would never be more than twice its basic Share. Unfortunately this has been misunderstood and caused undue worry in some places. This proposal was actually to address a long-standing issue affecting a few parishes with exceptionally high church attendance. We are now suggesting a different way to ensure that such churches are not unfairly penalised.

4. NEXT STEPS

If these proposals are agreed by the Diocesan Synod, further detailed work will be required to communicate and implement them. The review group's prayer is that as God's people in this diocese continue to be formed as Christians, they will become still more generous, and thus the resources for mission and ministry will grow and develop.

5. MOTION

This Synod note the Final Report of the Parish Share Review Group and request the Bishop's Council implements the new scheme and transitional arrangements (including suspension of the current Deanery Share Scheme) from 1 January 2017.