

The Diocese of Chelmsford



Area Dean's Role Description and Handbook

Preface

The partnership of Area Dean and Lay Chair is invaluable to the health of every deanery within the diocese. It models and embodies an understanding of ministry as partnership that is central to our diocesan vision. This is vital if we are to develop the new forms of ministry and the new partnerships for mission that will enable us to become a transforming presence in every community we serve, and enable the church in each community to grow and flourish.

This is a time of great change. By defining these roles more clearly, and seeing where our different responsibilities lie, and how we can work together for the mission of God's church across the diocese, I also hope that we will enable Area Deans and Lay Chairs to work collaboratively and more purposefully with their Archdeacon and Area Bishop, and with all the churches of their deanery. I hope and pray that you will be richly blessed in this role and through this ministry.

The role of Area Dean is hugely important. Although there will be more changes ahead, and in time this will probably affect the shape and nature of the deanery itself, in the immediate future our deaneries will be the place where we will work out the shape and ministry of our church's mission for the next decade and beyond.

I thank you for your commitment to this ministry and commend this Handbook to you as a valuable resource. Thank you for all that you do in your role as Area Dean and for the hidden and public acts of service that you give in the diocese of Chelmsford.

+Stephen Chelmsford

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Stephen Chelmsford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

March 2014

Area Dean - Role Description and Handbook

Purpose Statement

To inspire, encourage and support the Deanery in the delivery of the mission strategy and priorities of the Diocese, these are expressed in Transforming Presence as

- Inhabiting the world distinctively
- Evangelising effectively
- Serving with accountability
- Re-imagining ministry.

An Area Dean ministering within this framework will also seek to faithfully represent the views, needs and hopes of the Deanery as this work progresses.

Values

The office of Rural Dean is a very ancient one and in 2000 it became possible in the Miscellaneous Provisions Measure to use the alternative title of Area Dean. The term 'Area Dean' is now used in the Diocese of Chelmsford to simplify communications and to acknowledge the varied contexts of ministry in our diocese. Although an ancient office this ministry is exercised in the diocese of Chelmsford as a part of our mission imperative and the Area Dean will seek to discern mission opportunities across the deanery.

Underpinning this ministry are our common values and Area Deans will seek to always be:

- Collaborative – we work together by nurturing partnerships locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- Creative – we are open to change and imaginative new ways of working.
- Contextual – we are committed to the transformation and well-being of each locality and ministry context.
- Contemplative – standing back, attentive stillness, prayer and theological reflection are the foundation for our action.
- Accountable – to God and each other. We do not go it alone.

Appointment

The Diocesan Bishop appoints an Area Dean. The appointment is usually made following consultation with the Deanery clergy and Lay officers of the Deanery Synod, the Archdeacon and Area Bishop. An appointment is usually for a period of five years but this can be renewed following further consultation.

The Area Dean is commissioned by the Archdeacon at a deanery service. The commissioning marks out the start of a close working relationship with the archdeacon.

Induction and training

A smooth and informative handover from a retiring Area Dean can make a huge difference and positive impact on the life of the deanery. Along with the Archdeacon introductions to key church and community leaders and the deanery standing/Mission and Pastoral Committee members should be seen as a minimum requirement.

A handover and explanation of all deanery files both electronic and paper is important. Gone are the days of passing on a plastic box of muddled notes. Special care is needed with the handover of concerns re safeguarding issues and other confidential issues.

The diocese of Chelmsford contributes to the eastern regional New Rural and Area Deans conference. Newly appointed Area Deans should register to attend this training opportunity as soon as possible after appointment.

Ongoing support and training

Discussion with the Archdeacon will consider further training and support including the possibility of a mentoring relationship with an experienced Area Dean.

As part of the leadership of the diocese Area Deans, in addition to their regular meetings should feel able to contact their Archdeacon at any time for support and guidance. Each Archdeacon will agree with their Area Dean colleagues the best and speediest method of contact.

As Transforming Presence inspires and guides change across the diocese specific training will be provided to develop the leadership capacity of Area Deans alongside new Unit leaders as appropriate.

Leadership

Working closely with the Archdeacon, Deanery Lay Chair and Deanery Officers to provide active leadership, encouragement and support across the churches and communities of the deanery.

With the agreement of the Bishop, an Assistant Area Dean may be appointed in some deaneries. (When more than one Assistant Area Dean is to be appointed, consultation with the Diocesan Chief Executive is essential to ensure appropriate budgetary provisions are made).

Area Dean and Lay Chair Shared Responsibilities

The quality of the leadership of the Area Dean and the Lay Chair, acting together, will have a direct bearing on the effectiveness and morale of the local church and on its influence in the community as a whole. They are also in a key position to develop collaborative working with Deanery Officers and to strengthen Mission and Ministry Units.

Together they will seek:

1. To lead and unite the deanery, foster the well-being of the deanery's clergy and people and develop the mission of the Church in the world, working across all traditions of the church.
2. To consult regularly together, to plan and consider jointly deanery matters, including mission and ministry, finance, administration and communication, involving the Standing Committee and its officers as necessary and enabling it to fulfil its responsibilities as the Deanery Mission & Pastoral Committee.
3. To encourage Christian stewardship and establish and keep under review a principled and transparent method for determining the fair allocation of the Deanery Share among the parishes in the deanery – to be approved by Deanery Synod – working closely with the Deanery Treasurer.
4. To participate in regular meetings with the Bishop, Archdeacons and Diocesan Chief Executive to explain and interpret diocesan policy in local terms and represent local needs in the diocesan planning processes.
5. To consider standing for election to Diocesan Synod, Bishop's Council and its committees and working groups and to ensure that their deanery is fully briefed at all times about the development of diocesan policy and practice and especially working with Transforming Presence and The Ministry Framework.
6. To assist the Archdeacon with the annual Visitation and Admission of Churchwardens if requested.
7. To assist the Archdeacon with the visitation of parishes under the Inspection of Churches Measure. On a joint or individual basis they will inspect the churches, chapels and churchyards within the deanery at such interval as instructed by the Archdeacon. On such inspections they are to examine the state of the terriers, inventories, log books, plate, altar linen, ornaments, registers, service books, electoral rolls, together with the security, safety and disabled accessibility of the buildings and their contents. Such visits should be conducted with the local churchwardens, providing a good opportunity for communication and mutual support, when sensitivity and confidentiality about local circumstances is important.
8. To encourage and facilitate ecumenical relationships and joint working within the deanery as most practicable, recognising formal ecumenical arrangements in Local Ecumenical Partnerships and Churches Together.

9. To encourage and facilitate local partnerships with civic authorities and community organisations.
10. The Area Dean and Lay Chair have particular responsibilities in supporting parishes during ministry vacancies.

Role specific responsibilities

The Deanery Synod

An Area Dean in the diocese of Chelmsford will:

- Share with the Lay Chair in the joint chairing of the Deanery Synod.
- Ensure Deanery Synod business is conducted in accordance with established protocols and that the agenda addresses urgent, mid-term and long-term planning issues. (The Church Representation Rules provide the regulatory framework for Deanery Synods).
- Work with the Lay Chair, Standing Committee and other colleagues, to bring forward deanery proposals as part of the diocesan strategy Transforming Presence. Ensure periodic reviews to keep these live and sustainable.
- Work with the Reimagining Ministry framework to bring into being Ministry Units and encourage lay and ordained ministries to flourish.
- Chair the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee and attend the Area Mission and Pastoral Committee.
- Work with the Deanery treasurer and Standing Committee to agree the annual apportionment of Parish Share.
- Act as the Returning Officer for Deanery Synod House of Laity in elections for the Deanery Lay Chair.

The Clergy Chapter

Encourage the clergy and licensed lay ministers in fellowship, mutual support, theological reflection, understanding and deepening prayer.

- Chair the Clergy Chapter and be responsible, along with the Chapter Clerk, for ensuring that its programme is established, communicated properly to members, that records are kept, and that the Chapter supports its members.
- Offer spiritual leadership and pastoral care. Represent the views of the clergy to the Bishop and Archdeacon and ensure good communication flows. The Area Dean is a vital conduit for conveying information from the staff team to the clergy of the deanery.
- Work with clergy colleagues to ensure that SSM's are able to be included in meeting of the Chapter, and that Readers and other licensed and authorised lay ministers are also invited to meet for mutual support.
- Convene and chair occasional meetings of the Deanery House of Clergy if required and where appropriate seek procedural guidance from the Chair of the Diocesan House of Clergy or the Chief Executive & Diocesan Secretary or Pastoral Secretary.

- Encourage members to co-operate for holiday cover.
- Encourage good relations between the different denominations and faiths within the Deanery building relationships with key leaders.

Wherever possible ensure that good relations are developed and maintained between the Anglican Churches and secular bodies such as the police, schools, social services, the medical profession and the local authority.

Confirmations

Parishes are encouraged to join together in holding Confirmation Services. The Area Dean is responsible for coordinating parishes and liaising with the Area Bishop's Office to ensure there are sufficient Confirmation Services in the deanery. Requests for additional Confirmation Services should also be made through the Area Dean.

Pastoral Care

The Area Dean has a ministry to offer encouragement, support, advice and oversight to the deanery's clergy and their families, and relate the life of the clergy and deanery back to the Archdeacon and Bishop.

Communications between Bishop, Archdeacon & Area Dean

The Area Dean plays a vital role in facilitating appropriate two-way communication between the Bishop and the deanery and ensures the Bishop and Archdeacon are aware of significant pastoral opportunities and issues as they arise, taking care that appropriate confidentiality is maintained at all times.

Clergy in difficulty or potential difficulty should be made aware of the status or limits of confidentiality in particular cases (helpful guidance about confidentiality and pastoral concerns can be found in the Diocesan Child Protection Policy, p34).

The priority of all good pastoral support, especially in safeguarding issues will seek to prevent clergy damaging themselves or other people.

The Bishop and Archdeacon should be also informed of happy events in the lives of clergy families, such as the birth of a baby.

Visits and entertainment

The Area Dean should ensure that clergy and other members of the deanery receive pastoral support and visits as appropriate. Clergy new to the deanery are a priority, and the Area Dean ensures they receive an appropriate welcome and orientation.

Area Deans are encouraged to entertain the clergy in their charge as part of this pastoral care.

Area Deans are asked to conduct formal Visitation Inspections from time to time on behalf of the Archdeacon.

Discipline and problems

The Area Dean responds immediately and appropriately on becoming aware of problems or potential problems in the life, family or ministry of someone in their deanery. They should seek advice from the Archdeacon or Bishop as necessary (given the constraints of confidentiality). In the case of assistant clergy or Team Vicars, the Area Dean will normally act in consultation with the Incumbent or Team Rector.

The Archdeacon should be alerted to cases of financial difficulty in order that the problem might be tackled early. Marriage and family difficulties should be alerted to the Archdeacon and Bishop at the earliest opportunity, and they will advise on the help and support the diocese can offer.

The Area Dean must report to the Archdeacon any significant irregularities in the life of a parish that are brought to their notice. These would include: the failure to prepare an Electoral Roll, or form a PCC or hold an Annual Parochial Church Meeting, or present audited accounts, or if they discover clergy or ministers who are conducting worship without a license or the bishop's Permission to Officiate.

They must also inform the Archdeacon of any neglect or irregularities in any church building, churchyard or its contents.

Supporting Retired Clergy (in conjunction with the retirement officers)

The Area Dean should ensure they know the retired clergy in their deanery and are aware of what ministry, if any, they offer to the Church. The Area Dean will offer encouragement and support to enable them to play as full a life in the deanery as possible.

Whilst welcoming the ministry of retired clergy, the Area Dean will seek to ensure that they are not over-used or misused.

Where the Area Dean becomes aware of retired clergy in financial difficulty, this should be communicated to the office or Archdeacon. There may be a charitable body willing to assist them.

Clergy spouses/partners and families

The Area Dean is responsible for ensuring appropriate support is offered to the families of clergy to enable them to be included in the life of the deanery, especially when they first arrive.

Communications

The Area Dean ensures effective communications exist between the deanery and the Archdeacon and Bishop. The Area Dean also maintains effective communication with the wider Area Team. Area Deans have a key responsibility in bringing to the bishop matters for praise and celebration as well as those matters that cause concern.

The Area Dean has a vital role in ensuring that the Bishop and parishes are connected in all aspects of mission and ministry. This will involve the communicating of diocesan strategy and policy and parochial responses to it.

The Area Dean promotes good communication within the deanery, built upon trust and confidentiality, clear and effective communication channels, effective meeting agendas and minutes, prompt response to questions, and the encouragement of open dialogue.

Area Deans' Meetings

Regular meetings of archdeaconry Area Deans will be convened by the Archdeacon and these should be a priority for the Area Dean for mutual support and joined up working.

Administration

The Area Dean enables efficient and appropriate administration to allow the churches of the deanery to play a full part in the life of the diocese.

Expenses and secretarial assistance

The Diocese holds a budget to cover Area Deans' expenses of office; stationery, postage, telephone, hospitality, travel, etc. and secretarial assistance. This also covers the expenses of Assistants where appointed. Large expenses should always be discussed with the Archdeacon before costs are incurred.

Across the diocese it has become custom to claim expenses for one large social gathering annually e.g. Christmas party.

Expenses relating to Deanery Synod should be claimed from the deanery treasurer. Diocesan expenses should be claimed on the appropriate form sent to the Archdeacon monthly for counter signature.

Please note that expenses for a given year should be submitted no later than the 15th January in the following year. The CDBF reserves the right not to pay expenses claims submitted after this date. Please refer to the CDBF Expenses Policy (available from the Finance Office) for further guidance on expenses.

Secretarial Assistance

Before engaging secretarial support an Area Dean should agree with their Archdeacon the number of hours and the rate of pay proposed.

For the avoidance of doubt, the reimbursement of expense related to secretarial assistance should not be construed to create an employment relationship between any individual and the CDBF.

Record-keeping

The Area Dean is advised to keep copies of any correspondence with and records of parishes that would help in the undertaking of their role. These may include the latest Quinquennial Inspection Reports, and Annual reports and accounts. This information is very helpful when planning the apportionment of Parish Share across the deanery.

Responsibilities in a Vacancy

The Vacancy Meeting and any Preliminary meetings.

The Area Dean should aim to attend the Vacancy Meeting along with the Deanery Lay Chair. This ensures a coordinated and agreed approach to the vacancy and highlights any local needs and plans for pastoral reorganisation. Ideally this meeting is a clear next step as the deanery plan for mission and ministry is developed and implemented. The Area Dean and Deanery Lay Chair will also normally contribute to the Profile outlining how this appointment links with the deanery plan for mission and ministry.

Cover for worship

The Area Dean should offer support to the Churchwardens as they plan for ministerial cover during the vacancy. The names and contact details of local clergy who are willing to assist should be shared. It is also important that funeral directors, schools etc. know who to contact at times of need.

The Churchyard

During a vacancy the Area Dean signs the CR1 forms to grant permission for the erection of a memorial stone. Care must be taken to ensure that the Chancellor's churchyard regulations are followed.

Clergy appointments

The responsibility for appointments is held by the Archdeacon and/or Area Bishop. Area Deans have a significant role in facilitating the informal part of the interview and selection process and may where appropriate be part of the interview panel.

Welcoming a new priest

The Area Dean offers practical assistance during the time of moving and transition, as well as simple factual matters such as the dates of Chapter and Synod meetings. When the new person moves into their home (if they are to live in the deanery) the Area Dean visits to extend a personal welcome.

Institutions, Collations and Licensings

The Area Dean works with the churchwardens to arrange all aspects of the Welcome Service for a new Incumbent or Priest-in-Charge in conjunction with the Bishop's office. The local parish/benefice should be advised about the details of the service e.g. invitation list, robing, seating, refreshments. A template for the service may be obtained electronically from the Bishop's office.

The Area Dean should ensure a thorough rehearsal before the day and it helps if the organist/lead musician is included in this. The bishop should be briefed on the day about special guests and dignitaries present.

Collections at such services at the Bishop of Chelmsford's request are customarily made for the benefit of the Essex Clergy Charity.

In the service the Area Dean leads the community and deanery welcomes to the new priest.

Legal matters - a brief summary

Canon Law relating to Rural/Area Deans is as follows (C23, F17 and F18):

Canon C23: Of Rural Deans

1. Every rural dean shall report to the bishop any matter in any parish within the deanery which it may be necessary or useful for the bishop to know, particularly any case of serious illness or other form of distress amongst the clergy, the vacancy of any cure of souls and the measures taken by the sequestrators to secure the ministrations of the word and sacraments and other rites of the Church during the said vacancy, and any case of a minister from another diocese officiating in any place otherwise than as provided in Canon C8.
2. In the case of any omission in any parish to prepare and maintain a church electoral roll or to form or maintain a parochial church council or to hold the annual parochial church meeting, the rural dean on such omission being brought to his notice shall ascertain and report to the bishop the cause thereof.
3. If at any time the rural dean has reason to believe that there is any serious defect in the fabric, ornaments, and furniture of any church or chapel, or that the buildings of any benefice are in a state of disrepair, he shall report the matter to the archdeacon.
4. The rural dean shall be a joint chairman (with a member of the House of Laity) of the deanery synod.

Canon F17: Of Keeping a Record of the Property of Churches

1. Every bishop within his diocese shall procure so far as he is able that a full note and terrier of all lands, goods, and other possessions of the parochial churches and chapels therein be compiled and kept by the minister and churchwardens in accordance with instructions and forms prescribed from time to time by the General Synod.
2. Every archdeacon shall at least once in three years, either in person or by the rural dean, satisfy himself that the directions of the preceding paragraph of this Canon have been carried out in all the parishes within his jurisdiction.

Canon F18: Of the Survey of Parish Churches

Every archdeacon shall survey the churches, chancels, and churchyards within his jurisdiction at least once in three years, either in person or by the rural dean, and shall give direction for the amendment of all defects in the fabric, ornaments, and furniture of the same. In particular he shall exercise the powers conferred upon him by the Inspection of Churches Measure 1955.

In various other canons of the Church (e.g. B2, B42, B43, B44, D1, E4, E5, E7) where a benefice is vacant the functions prescribed to the Minister of that parish in the canon are taken on by the Archdeacon.