



The Church of England
in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford

AREA DEANS: Role, responsibilities, and support

The role of the Area Dean is one of leadership, oversight and support within the Deanery. They have a two-fold ministry: in assisting the Diocesan and Area Bishops and Archdeacons in executing their roles; and in supporting both parish clergy and local mission. It is a valuable and significant ministry through which both the Area Dean and their parishes make an important contribution to our shared life across the Diocese.

Canon C23 sets out, from a legal perspective, the basic requirements of an area dean.¹ However, the way that each Area Dean fulfils their role will vary in practice, depending on the local context, local relationships, and the particular gifts and strengths of each Area Dean. In Chelmsford Diocese, how each Area Dean fulfils their role will also be informed by reflection on the Diocesan Values.

The role of Area Dean is intended to be collaborative, not isolated: the Lay Chair, and where appointed, Assistant Area Dean and Chapter Clerk, are key colleagues for the Area Dean who will work with them in fulfilling the responsibilities set out here.

While the level of work involved in the role will vary across the year, it is estimated that the time commitment will be on average one day per week. In discussion with their Archdeacon and Area Bishop, Area Deans are encouraged to reflect on how to reprioritise other areas of work to create the space for their role as Area Dean.

This leadership is also shared in collaboration with other Area Deans, Lay Chairs, Archdeacons, Area Bishops and the Diocesan Bishop in the following ways:

The Area Deans

Pastoral Care

- Provide appropriate pastoral care; to clergy, lay ministers and, where needed, parish officers. To respond, as may occasionally be necessary, to pastoral support needs of their spouses and families.
- Inform the Archdeacon and Bishop/s of particular pastoral needs as appropriate.
- Take a lead role in co-ordinating the arrangements for licensing services, liaising with the parish and Bishop's chaplain or the Area Bishop's Office as appropriate.

Mission and Ministry

- Be an enabler and encourager in mission, mindful of the Five Marks of Mission, and including ecumenical and interfaith relationships.
- Help clergy colleagues and churches in the Deanery engage with Diocesan values and priorities.

¹ For details of Canon C 23 see, <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-and-thinking/canons-church-england/section-c#b83>

- With the Archdeacon and Lay Chair, to shape and discern the development of the Deanery Plan for mission
- Hold a strategic role in discussions about the appointment and deployment of clergy, and assist in the appointment process of clergy
- Supporting parishes through vacancies and long-term absences due to illness
- Be a source of advice and support to deanery colleagues.
- Be a full member of the Area Mission and Pastoral Committee, informing decisions made in those meetings or making recommendations to the Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee, whilst managing any Conflicts of Interest arising from their membership of both, which they may, from time to time, have in accordance with the CDBF Conflicts of Interest policy.

Operational oversight

- Work collaboratively with the Lay Chair to Lead the Synodical governance of the Deanery.
- Lead and facilitate Deanery Chapter, including PTO clergy and LLMs where appropriate, assisted by the Chapter Clerk, if appointed.
- Facilitate discussions about Parish Share within the deanery, including confirming Parish Share amounts each year.
- Carry out Parish Inspections, and assist with Archdeacon's Visitations, together with the Lay Chair

Communication

- Be a conduit of two-way information flow between the Deanery and parishes, and members of the Bishop's Leadership Team and Diocesan Staff, as needed.
- Feed-back to Archdeacons and Bishops any issues of relevance or concern

Vocations, Training and Wellbeing

- To undertake appropriate training and Continuing Ministerial Development, in connection with ministry more broadly and the role of Area Dean in particular
- With the support of the Mission and Ministry department, to encourage all clergy and lay ministers to attend to their own wellbeing and continue developing as reflective ministers.
- Encourage provision and uptake of relevant diocesan training courses and events within the Deanery

These five areas of leadership are the responsibility of the Area Dean but, in many cases, they will be supported by the Lay Chair² and other Deanery, Area and Diocesan colleagues.

The Archdeacons

- Meet on a monthly basis with each Area Dean within their Archdeaconry, either one-to-one or as a group, to provide pastoral, leadership and well-being support
- Act as first point of contact for Area Deans in their role of deanery oversight

The Area Bishops

- Convene an agreed and regular pattern of meetings within the Episcopal Area, to include opportunities for Area Deans to meet with the Area Bishop, Archdeacons and Area Team staff
- Meet with each Area Dean annually 1-1

² Please see separate Handbook for Lay Chairs which describes their role more fully.

- Together with the Archdeacon, ensure that Area Deans are offered necessary pastoral care and support.

The Diocesan Bishop

- Ensure a framework of proper training, oversight and support is established and maintained for those undertaking the role of Area Dean
- Convene an annual 24 hour residential for all Area Deans to meet together with the bishops (and other members of BLT as appropriate) for prayer, fellowship and the sharing of information, which it is expected that Area Deans will prioritise.
- Ensure the provision of an annual Away Day for Area Deans, Lay Chairs and members of the Bishops Leadership Team, which it is expected that Area Deans will prioritise.
- Ensure that funding is made available for administrative support to the Area Dean function, for the claiming of related expenses, and for the Area Dean honorarium.

+Guli Chelmsford
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