

Bruton & Cary Deanery Synod

5th July 2023

Pastoral Reorganisation 2023

Motion for July Synod

Background

As previously noted, the difficult financial position of our Diocese means that the number of stipendiary clergy in the Diocese need to be reduced by 28 to 150. For our Deanery this means a reduction in the number of stipendiary clergy from the current 8½ to 7.

In February the Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group (DMPG) considered a wide variety of possible options for the pastoral reorganisation of the Deanery – eight different options each with several variations. DMPG selected the four options it considered most viable (each with one variation) for presentation to the March Deanery Synod and for consideration by the parishes in the Deanery.

The options considered by DMPG in February showed that there was no viable option that retained the half-time clergy post at Charlton Musgrove/Cucklington; and that the only viable option for removing a full-time post was to break up the Camelot Parishes. (This was a result of the geography of the Deanery and the central position of the Camelot Parishes – there being no way to reorganise the Deanery while leaving the Camelot Parishes untouched.)

The options presented to the March Synod for consultation were therefore concerned with where the parishes from the Camelot Parishes and Charlton Musgrove/Cucklington and Stoke Trister would find a new benefice. The options also considered the possible allocation of House for Duty (HfD) posts in the Deanery. The Diocese is able to provide houses for 18 HfD or half-time posts across the 18 deaneries in the Diocese. It was therefore felt likely that we would be able to count on one HfD post in our Deanery and possibly two – but not the three we currently have (one in the Six Pilgrims, one providing funding for our Schools' Chaplain and one at Batcombe).

Each option had been assessed with reference to the criteria considered at our November Synod. The criteria consist of values for the population, congregation size, number of churches and number of church schools in each parish. These values were then combined using a weighted formula to give a fraction of the seven clergy available in the Deanery for each parish. The fractions were then added together for each possible benefice to give a total score for that benefice. This gave an objective measure of the “size” of each proposed benefice.

The Desire for No Change

I doubt if any parish actually wants a reduction in clergy - but for some parishes their response to the options put forward for pastoral reorganisation has been a call for no change and maintenance of the status quo, or even the provision of additional clergy.

Unfortunately, the financial position of the Diocese means that this is not an option. A deficit of £2.1 million a year means that the Diocese has no alternative but to make savings across all areas. The reality is that we have a reduction of 1½ stipendiary clergy in our Deanery and we need to find the best option of doing that for the Deanery as a whole.

House for Duty Posts (HfD)

The Acting Archdeacon has stated that two House for Duty (HfD) posts will be available to the Bruton and Cary Deanery to help overcome some of the particular difficulties of pastoral reorganisation within the Deanery. This would provide support for the creation of slightly larger benefices where these are needed to make the plan for pastoral reorganisation work.

The Charlton Musgrove Variation

All the options considered viable had a variation depending on whether Charlton Musgrove joined the Bruton benefice while the new Cucklington and Stoke Trister parish joined the Wincanton benefice; or both parishes joined Wincanton with a HfD post at Cucklington to support the incumbent in Wincanton.

The parishes of the current half-time benefice would prefer to stay together and join the parishes of the current Wincanton and Pen Selwood benefices. Wincanton PCC has expressed reservations about Charlton Musgrove joining the new benefice as they did not feel confident that the House for Duty post would definitely be available.

Given the assurance from the Acting Archdeacon that a HfD post would be available to provide support for the larger Wincanton benefice including Charlton Musgrove, DMPG are recommending that Charlton Musgrove should remain with Cucklington/Stoke Trister and join Wincanton and Pen Selwood.

The advantages of this arrangement are that the parishes of the current half-time post are kept together and that support is provided for the smaller village churches that will be part of a benefice with a large and growing town. It also means that the Bruton benefice does not become too large. The HfD post is likely to be based at Cucklington in the current Rectory, which would ease the transition from the half-time post.

Option 1

Of the four options that parishes were asked to consider (see the Appendix for details of their responses), this was the closest it is possible to get to seven equally sized benefices (in terms of the criteria adopted). This would mean that there would be no need to make use of a House for Duty (HfD) post.

There is no great difference between Option 1 and Option 3 apart from the provision of an additional HfD post. In both options North and South Cadbury would join with the parishes of the current Cam Vale. In Option 3, Yarlinton would join them and a HfD post would be provided within the enlarged benefice.

Given the Acting Archdeacon's assurance of the provision of the HfD post, there would be no advantage in adopting Option 1 over Option 3, especially as the Acting Archdeacon

indicated that not using the HfD post in the Cam Vale/North Cadbury benefice would not make it available for use elsewhere.

In addition, the parishes most concerned with these two options, the Cam Vale parishes and North and South Cadbury have indicated a preference for Option 3. North Cadbury consider that the new Cam Vale/North Cadbury benefice would not be viable without a HfD post to support the incumbent.

Option 8

Option 8 considered the possibility of creating Group Ministries (of two or more single-clergy benefices where the clergy work across the group as a whole rather than just in their own benefice and resources can be shared across the Group).

Interest in this option has only been expressed by the parishes of Wincanton, Pen Selwood, Templecombe and Horsington. Therefore, this does not appear to be a serious possibility at this time – although there is no reason why resources (particularly of lay ministry) cannot be shared more informally across benefices and Group Ministries could be considered again in the future if particular benefices were interested in working together on a formal basis.

Options 3 & 4

This left Options 3 & 4 as the remaining options to be considered. In Option 3 the Six Pilgrims would join with Castle Cary and Ansford and the parishes of North Cadbury, South Cadbury and Yarlinton would create a new benefice with those current Cam Vale benefice - with the incumbent at North Cadbury and a HfD post in what is now Cam Vale. Under Option 4 North and South Cadbury would join with Castle Cary, leaving Cam Vale and the Six Pilgrims as they are currently. Both options would require a HfD post in either Cam Vale or the Six Pilgrims and the responses from the parishes most concerned with these two options were divided, with the parishes of Cam Vale and North and South Cadbury supporting Option 3 and the Six Pilgrims and Castle Cary favouring Option 4.

Option 4

Option 4 is strongly supported by The Six Pilgrims as this means that they would remain as they currently are as a separate benefice with a House for Duty incumbent. Castle Cary and Ansford also see this as the least-worst option available to them.

However, there are significant disadvantages to this arrangement. Cam Vale would remain as it is (a small benefice scoring only 0.674 under the criteria mentioned above where the aim is that every benefice should score close to 1). There is also a concern over whether it is appropriate for a House for Duty priest to have the responsibilities of an incumbent when major issues arise – and this was an issue raised by the last incumbent of the Six Pilgrims. There would also be concerns over the joining of Castle Cary with North Cadbury. This would mean the loss of the Rectory at North Cadbury with its purpose-built church office. And the Castle Cary incumbent would probably face a greater additional workload from taking on responsibility for North Cadbury with its wedding venue and church school than from having oversight of The Six Pilgrims who

work effectively together as a unit with long established patterns of ministry (especially if some transitional support was available).

Recommendation for Deanery Synod

In light of the above DMPG is recommending that Deanery Synod approves the adoption of Option 3a as the basis for the pastoral reorganisation of the Deanery. To be clear this Option 3 with Charlton Musgrove joining the new Wincanton benefice. The attached map shows the nature of the proposed new benefices under this option.

DMPG is aware that not all parishes will be happy with this recommendation, but we believe that it is the best option available for the Deanery as a whole.

The Deanery Synod Vote

Only members of Deanery Synod will be able to vote on the motion regarding pastoral reorganisation. For lay members this means those who were elected at this year's APCM and whose parish have informed the Deanery Secretary of their election before the meeting. Given that there may be a number of other interested people at Synod we will conduct the vote by a paper ballot, with the ballot papers being printed with the names of those entitled to vote.

What Happens if the Motion is Defeated

As noted above No Change is not an option. If the motion is defeated, we will have to find another option for the pastoral reorganisation of the Deanery. It should be noted that no clergy appointments can be made in the Deanery until the Archdeaconry Mission and Pastoral Group (AMPG) receive an approved plan from the DMPG (with support of the Deanery Synod) in the form of this (or another) motion.

After the Vote

It should be noted that the vote at Deanery Synod is not the end of the process. Once the DMPG makes a recommendation to the AMPG the formal consultation process begins when every parish (and other interested parties) will have an opportunity to make a representation.

At the same time, as a Deanery, we need to encourage potential new incumbents and parishes to get to know each other and explore how they might work together and to engage in the support the Diocese is offering to parishes and incumbents facing change.

As part of this process of incumbents and parishes getting to know each other there might some tweaks to the plan. For example, there has already been some discussion as to whether the parish of Maperton should join the Henstridge/Templecombe benefice or the Milborne Port benefice.

We also need to encourage the continuing development of Shared Local Ministry in our parishes and benefices.

Appendix

Parish Responses to the Options for Pastoral Reorganisation

Alham Vale

There was a limited response from the parishes of the Alham Vale benefice, possibly because none of the Options would add parishes to this benefice. The benefice will lose the HfD post at Batcombe (which we had hoped to make a Deanery post).

Upton Noble PCC expressed a preference for Option 1 with some members expressing an interest in Option 8. One of the churchwardens at Evercreech expressed a personal preference for Option 3 with an HfD post at Wincanton, although he was also happy with Options 1 and 8.

Bruton Benefice

Responses were received from Shepton Montague PCC and Bruton parish. Shepton Montague PCC indicated that they would welcome joining with Bratton St Maur PCC but did not feel it practical for their incumbent to take on three additional parishes. Bruton didn't indicate a preference for any one option but also expressed a concern about the additional workload for their incumbent. On this basis it is likely that the Bruton benefice would support Option 3 where Bratton St Maur joins the benefice rather than Option 4 where Bratton and Yarlington join Bruton. They are also likely to support Charlton Musgrove joining the Wincanton benefice. This leaves Bruton as a small benefice (0.769 of a clergyperson under the criteria), but this may not be a bad thing given the limited lay ministry resources within the benefice.

It is worth noted that of the parishes that could potentially join Bruton, Bratton St Maur would be happy with this, while Yarlington would prefer to remain with Camelot or at least with North Cadbury. Charlton Musgrove would like to retain their current half-time benefice but if this is not possible would prefer to remain with the parish of Cucklington and Stoke Trister and join Wincanton rather than Bruton.

Charlton Musgrove and Stoke Trister/Cucklington

Charlton Musgrove have indicated that would like to retain their current half-time benefice, but if this is not possible would prefer to remain with the parish of Cucklington and Stoke Trister and join Wincanton (with a HfD post at Cucklington). They feel we need more clergy not less, but that Option 1a is the least-worst of the options. Cucklington and Stoke Trister have indicated a similar position with regard to the reorganisation.

Wincanton and Pen Selwood

Pen Selwood PCC expressed a preference for Option 8a based on Option 1b. Wincanton PCC expressed a preference for Option 8a based on Option 1 without Charlton Musgrove. A note from the incumbent indicated that the preference not to be joined with Charlton Musgrove was based on a concern that the House for Duty post might not be certain and without it the benefice would be too large for a single clergyperson. Since then the Acting Archdeacon has confirmed that the HfD post would be available, and on this basis

the benefice would be better having two additional parishes with an HfD post rather than one additional parish without any additional support.

Henstridge, Templecombe and Horsington

Under Options 1, 3 and 4, the parishes of North Cheriton, Holton and possibly Maperton would join this benefice from the Camelot Parishes. Responses have been received from both of the Henstridge churchwardens – one indicating that the incumbent would not be able to cope with any additional parishes and the other indicating that there were concerns within North Cheriton about the churchmanship of the existing benefice. Templecombe PCC indicated support for Option 3 with a willingness to explore the possibility of Group Ministry (Option 8 based on Option 3) and to work with new parishes, which they felt would add to the life of their benefice. Horsington PCC stated that they had no objection to being amalgamated with three additional parishes and favoured Option 8. They also expressed strong objections to the Diocesan plan to reduce the number of clergy.

Of the parishes that would become part of this benefice North Cheriton is concerned that in the proposed benefice the life of the Church would be dominated by the “town” churches of Henstridge and Templecombe. They would also want to know what pattern of services would be on offer before committing to the new benefice. Their preference would be first for the Camelot Parishes to continue or for the option proposed by George Renwick (a new benefice consisting of Blackford, Compton Pauncefoot, Maperton, Holton, North Cheriton, Horsington and Charlton Horethorne – see below under the Camelot Parishes) which would be a benefice of rural parishes south of the A303. Holton would like the Camelot Parishes to continue and feels that much will be lost by being reorganised in this way. They are also concerned over whether the incumbent of the new benefice will be able to offer more traditional services to the new parishes. Maperton have expressed very similar views to those of North Cheriton: wanting the Camelot Parishes to continue; concerned about the provision of services in the new benefices; and supporting the proposal from George Renwick. They would also favour joining with Milborne Port and Charlton Horethorne rather than with Henstridge and Templecombe.

Milborne Port, Goathill, Charlton Horethorne & Stowell

Under Options 1, 3 & 4 the parishes of Blackford and Compton Pauncefoot and possibly Maperton would join the benefice. Milborne Port PCC didn't feel the need to express a preference with regard to the Options, but felt that those becoming part of the benefice should want to do so.

It has been suggested that Maperton would be a better fit with Milborne Port than Compton Pauncefoot – although that would mean adding Compton Pauncefoot to the enlarged Cam Vale benefice which might then be too large with ten parishes. If all three were to join Milborne Port the new benefice would be a slightly larger than 1.0 under the criteria.

Of the parishes that might be joining the benefice Compton Pauncefoot wants the Camelot Parishes to continue and feels that Milborne Port is too distant to provide pastoral care for their community. Maperton have expressed a preference for joining this benefice rather than Henstridge and Templecombe, although they too would prefer the Camelot Parishes to continue.

Cam Vale

The benefice of Cam Vale has unanimously indicated a preference for Option 3 with the parishes of North Cadbury, South Cadbury and Yarlington joining the existing Cam Vale benefice with the incumbent at North Cadbury and a HfD post in the current Cam Vale benefice. They are asking for the HfD post to be based in the existing Rectory at Queen Camel which may not be ideal given past pastoral difficulties. Revd Preb Rose Hoskins, former Rural Dean and a retired clergyperson in Cam Vale, also supports Option 3 and recommends Charlton Musgrove should join Wincanton.

Of the parishes that would join them, North Cadbury and South Cadbury have indicated a preference for Option 3. Yarlington would like the Camelot Parishes to continue but would prefer to remain with North Cadbury rather than join Bruton.

The Six Pilgrims

All the parishes in the Six Pilgrims have indicated their support for Option 4 (North and South Cadbury joining Castle Cary and the Six Pilgrims and Cam Vale remaining as they are currently). This would leave the Six Pilgrims with a HfD incumbent.

Castle Cary and Ansford

The PCC has agreed that Option 4 (joining with North and South Cadbury) would be the least-worst option for Castle Cary and Ansford. They have reservations about joining with the Six Pilgrims based on past experience. As noted above North and South Cadbury would prefer Option 3 (joining with Cam Vale). North Cadbury note that under Option 4 they would lose the Rectory and Church Office and wonder how much time the incumbent in Castle Cary would have for additional responsibilities in North Cadbury, where there is a wedding venue and a church school.

The Camelot Parishes

As noted previously North and South Cadbury have indicated a preference for Option 3 (joining with Cam Vale) and Bratton St Maur are happy to re-join Bruton. The other parishes would like the Camelot Parishes to continue and expressed concerns about being part of an alternative benefice.

The George Renwick Proposal

George Renwick, Reader in the Camelot Parishes, has suggested an alternative to the complete breakup of the Camelot Parishes - a new benefice consisting of Blackford, Compton Pauncefoot, Maperton, Holton, North Cheriton from the Camelot Parishes south of the A303 plus Horsington and Charlton Horethorne. This would create a benefice of similar rural parishes. This proposal has support from North Cheriton and Maperton.

Under the criteria this would be a small benefice scoring 0.73. It would also mean that Milborne Port would have to join Henstridge and Templecombe creating a large benefice, that would need a further HfD post to be viable. The imbalance between the two benefices created would suggest that this is not a viable solution. It would also mean selling a current clergy house and buying a new one in rural village. The addition of Templecombe to the proposed benefice would even out the imbalance between the two benefices south of the A303 but this was felt to add a "town" parish to a rural benefice.

Concerns Raised in the Responses

A number of general concerns were raised by parishes in their responses in addition to those mentioned above. These concerns are about the impact of pastoral reorganisation on:

- Current pattern of services
- Pastoral care over a wider geography
- Form of services and churchmanship (of Benefice and leadership)
- Availability of people (lay and ordained) to take services
- Incumbent workload
- Maintenance of Parish autonomy and integrity
- Positioning of Clergy housing
- Existing working relationships between Parishes and Benefices

These concerns will need to be addressed as part of the process of forming new benefices.