

Bruton & Cary Deanery

Options for Pastoral Reorganisation (v4)

Deanery Synod – 21st March 2023

Background

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.

This reduction means “losing” one full-time clergy post and one half-time post in the Deanery. We also need to consider the possible allocation of House for Duty (HfD) posts in the Deanery. Our Diocese is able to provide houses for 18 HfD or half-time posts across the 18 deaneries in the Diocese. It is therefore likely that we will 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).

The Deanery Mission and Pastoral Group (DMPG) have considered a wide variety of possible options for the pastoral reorganisation of the Deanery – eight different options each with several variations – a total of 21 possible plans for pastoral reorganisation. As it would be impractical to consider all 21 options at Deanery Synod, the DMPG has selected the four options it considers most viable, each with one variation. This paper considers each option in turn together with a note on why the other options were not considered viable. To avoid confusion the original option numbers have been retained so Synod will be asked to consider options 1, 3, 4 & 8.

Each option has 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 are then combined using a weighted formula to give a fraction of the seven clergy available in the Deanery for each parish. The fractions are then added together for each possible benefice to give a total score for that benefice – with the aim of creating seven benefices each with a score as close to 1 as possible. The attached spreadsheets show how the fractions are calculated for each parish and how they add up for each benefice in the different options.

Also attached are a series of maps showing what the Deanery would look like under each option for reorganisation. On the maps each benefice is given a different colour to distinguish between them. In the analysis below, those benefices that do not have a name are referred to by the name of the parish where the incumbent lives as their full title would be too cumbersome. For those not familiar with the names some of our benefices have adopted, looking at the map of Current Benefices: Alham Vale is the green benefice in the north of the Deanery; Six Pilgrims are the six parishes in the east of the Deanery (a different shade of green); Cam Vale is the yellow benefice south of the Six Pilgrims; and the Camelot Parishes is the orange benefice in the centre of the Deanery.

We ask Synod members to take these options back to their parishes for consideration. Comments, recommendations or alternative plans should be sent to the Area or Lay Dean two weeks before the next DMPG meeting on May 30th. The DMPG will then present a final recommendation to the Deanery Synod on July 5th for approval.

Option 1

This option is the closest it is possible to get to seven equal benefices (with the scores under the criteria ranging from 0.938 to 1.066 of a clergy person for each benefice). It also results in six out of seven benefices able to support the cost of a clergy person – with the seventh (Wincanton) only slightly below the cost of a clergy person in their total Parish Share. It also means that there is no need to make use of a House for Duty (HfD) post which means that the funding for the Schools' Chaplain can be retained.

This is likely to be an unpopular option for most of our current benefices. Six Pilgrims and Castle Cary are joined, which neither want. The Camelot Parishes are split up, which most don't want. North Cadbury is added to Cam Vale which is an option it has dismissed. Bruton becomes a large benefice with seven parishes and nine churches (although still only scoring 1.003 in the criteria). The Charlton Musgrove/Cucklington benefice is split up. Wincanton, Templecombe/Henstridge and Milborne Port all gain additional parishes. However, it should be noted that no option is going to be popular and this option does spread the pain evenly. As a result, the DMPG are recommending that Option 1 and Option 1a below be considered as a possible options for the pastoral reorganisation of the Deanery.

It is worth reflecting on the option of adding North Cadbury to Cam Vale. If the Rectory was retained at North Cadbury, it would mean keeping the purpose-built benefice office there. And there is an issue with what else to do with Cam Vale. On their own the Cam Vale parishes score 0.674 of a clergy person under the criteria – and the only other option would be to combine them with the Six Pilgrims making a twelve-parish benefice.

Option 1a

This is the same as Option 1 except that Charlton Musgrove is added to Wincanton rather than Bruton. This keeps the current Charlton Musgrove/Cucklington benefice together and means that Bruton only has six parishes. It does mean that Bruton is a smaller than average benefice (0.851) and Wincanton is larger than average (1.218). If this option were adopted we would need to request a HfD post at Cucklington to support the incumbent in Wincanton. One HfD post in the Deanery would still allow the possibility of retaining funding for the Schools' Chaplain.

Option 2

Option 2 looked at the possibility of retaining the half-time post at Cucklington, which would mean creating another half-time post from one of the current full-time posts. The DMPG did not consider this option to be viable because: i) you would need an additional house if you had two half-time posts (which comes out of the allocation of 18 houses across the Diocese); ii) you would need to add additional parishes to the Cucklington benefice to make it a viable half-time post; iii) wherever the other half-time post is created additional HfD posts will be needed (for the parishes left over from the half-time post); and iv) this leaves Wincanton and Pen Selwood as a small unit that would struggle to meet the cost of a full-time clergy person.

As this option is not considered viable, no map or spreadsheets have been provided. If however, any parish or benefice wishes to explore this option further – or any of the others not considered viable – the Lay Dean can provide the maps and spreadsheets for those options.

Option 3

Option 3 started as consideration of a request from North Cadbury for a HfD post based at North Cadbury with South Cadbury and Yarlington. The DMPG did not consider this a viable option because of i) concerns over a HfD post being an incumbency should serious pastoral issues arise; ii) the difficulty of justifying taking a HfD post from the Six Pilgrims and giving it to North Cadbury; and iii) the fact that Cam Vale would be left as a small benefice (0.674).

However, if the HfD post were part of a larger benefice, these concerns would largely be addressed, especially if that larger benefice included the current Cam Vale benefice. In fact it would make sense to have the incumbent based at North Cadbury, where there is a purpose built church office, a church school and a wedding venue generating a significant number of the church weddings. The HfD would then be based in the current Cam Vale to support the incumbent at North Cadbury. With one HfD post in the Deanery this option would still allow the possibility of retaining funding for the Schools' Chaplain.

The DMPG have recommend that Option 3 and Option 3a below also be considered as possible options for the pastoral reorganisation of the Deanery. As in Option 1, one consideration is the size of the Bruton benefice which in this option consists of six parishes and eight churches (although only scoring 0.921 in the criteria).

Option 3a

Option 3a is the same as Option 3 except that Charlton Musgrove is added to Wincanton rather than Bruton. This keeps the current Charlton Musgrove/Cucklington benefice together and means that Bruton only has five parishes and six churches. It does mean that Bruton is a smaller than average benefice (0.769) and Wincanton is larger than average (1.218). We would then want to request the appointment of a HfD post at Cucklington – as with Option 1a above. However, two HfD posts are not guaranteed to be available and would definitely mean losing the Schools' Chaplain.

Option 4

Option 4 is based on a request from North Cadbury that if they are unable to have their own half-time or HfD post that they be joined to Castle Cary. With the addition of South Cadbury this creates a full-time post (scoring 0.999). This would mean that the Six Pilgrims would need to remain a HfD incumbency post and Cam Vale would remain a small benefice (only scoring 0.674 in the criteria). The Six Pilgrims and Cam Vale could be joined together but this would create a benefice of twelve parishes which is not considered viable. As in Option 1, there is also concern with the size of the Bruton benefice, being seven parishes and nine churches in this option. However, the DMPG did feel that this option and Option 4a below were worth considering further.

Option 4a

This is the same as Option 4 except that as with Option 1a Charlton Musgrove is added to Wincanton rather than Bruton. This keeps the current Charlton Musgrove/Cucklington benefice together and means that Bruton only has six parishes. It does mean that Bruton is a smaller than average benefice (0.851) and Wincanton is larger than average (1.218). If this option were adopted we would need to request a HfD post at Cucklington to support the incumbent in Wincanton. This would mean two HfD posts in the Deanery,

which are not guaranteed to be available, and would definitely mean losing the Schools' Chaplain.

Options 5 & 6

Options 5 & 6 considered the request from the majority of the Camelot Parishes (apart from North Cadbury) to remain together. This means saving a full-time post either in the parishes to the north (Option 5) or in the parishes to the south (Option 6) of the Camelot Parishes. These options were not considered viable by the DMPG because they would mean that we either have large benefices to the north of the Camelot Parishes and small benefices to the south (or vice versa). The imbalance between benefices north and south of the Camelot Parishes could be addressed to a certain extent by taking parishes from one side of the Camelot Parishes and adding them to the other side, but this doesn't actually keep the Camelot Parishes together. As with Option 2, any parish wishing to explore this option further can obtain the maps and spreadsheets from the Lay Dean.

Option 7

All the previous options focussed on created creating new single-clergy benefices by adding extra parishes to existing benefices. Option 7 was a more radical proposal suggested by the Revd Tristram Rae Smith to create a rural team ministry where three clergy would look after the majority of our small village parishes taking on different roles across the whole team ministry rather than dividing up responsibilities geographically. The remaining clergy could then focus on ministry in the larger villages and towns of the deanery, possibly with some adjacent rural parishes.

The DMPG did not feel that this option was a viable one, partly because it would require the rural parishes to buy into a very different model of ministry based on shared local ministry, but mainly because of the difficulties in setting up such a different pattern of ministry (and of unpicking it if it didn't work).

Option 8

Option 8 is a slightly less radical proposal than Option 7 and is one that is being considered by several of the deaneries in our Diocese. This is the creation of group ministries rather than a team ministry. (A team ministry is a single benefice with multiple clergy, whereas a group ministry is a group of single-clergy benefices where the clergy work across the group as a whole rather than just in their own benefice. This allows the benefits of a team ministry within a structure that can return to single clergy benefices if the shared ministry does not work out.) Quantock deanery is proposing the creation of a group ministry for the whole deanery (they only have four clergy); Axbridge is proposing two group ministries covering their deanery; and Somerset South is proposing four group ministries – three town groups and one rural.

If we were to create group ministries, we would still need to reduce the number of stipendiary clergy posts to seven as in one of the previous options – and so the nature of the group ministries would depend on the option decided upon. For example, if we went with Option 1a then there is the potential of creating a group ministry in the south of the Deanery from the Wincanton, Henstridge and Milborne Port benefices with three clergy working together and in the north there could be two groups of two benefices (Alham

Vale with Bruton and Castle Cary with Cam Vale) or one group of four benefices. Other combinations are possible.

What is not so easy with group ministries is to group the rural parishes and town parishes together as in Option 7. However, forming group ministries could allow one of the clergy in the group to focus on rural/small parish ministry.

Option 8a

Option 8a uses the benefices from Option 1b to create three group ministries (Alham Vale with Bruton; Castle Cary with Cam Vale; and Wincanton, Henstridge and Milborne Port).

Option 8b

Option 8b uses the benefices from Option 1b to create two group ministries (Alham Vale; Bruton; Castle Cary and Cam Vale; and Wincanton, Henstridge and Milborne Port).

[Note: no separate spreadsheets have been provided for Options 8a and 8b as the benefices making up the different group ministries are those in Option 1a.]