

DIOCESE OF LONDON

REVIEW OF CLERGY TERMS OF SERVICE

Introduction

1. The Diocese of London has discussed the Consultation Document at a number of levels. It was sent to each deanery for review. A meeting of Area Deans considered it. There was also a meeting of the House of Clergy of the diocese. Area Councils reviewed it and it was discussed at the Diocesan Synod. No Diocesan Synod vote was taken on any of the questions. This summary represents a collation of the views from all these sources. Should you wish to see any of the detailed responses which form the basis of this summary we are happy to make these available to you.

General Comment

2. Whilst there is a degree of agreement that non-beneficed clergy should receive more rights, and a body of opinion which sees merit in bringing in some performance standards for clergy, there is also a sizeable element that wonder if all of these proposed measures are a step too far or as one contributor says 'a sledgehammer to crack a nut'. I now turn to the eight questions of the consultation paper.

Common Tenure

3. Most see the benefits of this concept in particular its universal application but there is a concern amongst some (mainly, but not wholly, clergy) that the loss of freehold will bring with it a loss of ethos of ministry, restricting the freedom of expression of clergy which is greatly valued. There were those who suggested an incremental approach – dealing with the non-beneficed clergy first. Some also thought that the application of common tenure to those currently on fixed-term contracts might give bishops less flexibility in relation, for example, to second curacy posts.
4. There were a number who thought that the paper paid insufficient attention to the consequences of these changes for patrons.
5. There were also a number of queries about the application of these proposals to those in sector ministry, chaplaincies for example – particularly where the post is paid in full or in part by a third party.

Clergy Terms of Service Regulations

6. These were very largely supported. Some thought the consequence is that ministerial reviews will become appraisals with Bishops' status changing to that of 'manager', with all that entails.

Capability Procedures

7. Again these were supported in principle, though they need to be thoroughly thought through. A 'job description' will be required along with an agreed set of minimum standards probably devised at national level. There was a plea from some to avoid

clergy having to be subject to secular employment tribunals by having a structure of our own although others recognised the cost of this suggestion. The faculty system was quoted as an equivalent arrangement.

Human Resource Function

8. Assuming this all goes ahead, the need for H.R. support is accepted. It would need to be independent in carrying out its duties. However, there are some concerns about the potential costs together with a fear that it might be a bureaucratic rather than helpful addition. Some secular experiences of H.R. departments have not been entirely beneficial for employee or employer.

Property Matters

9. Generally the comments reflect the reservations of the General Synod under this heading. Some favoured the transfer of the parsonage to the Diocesan Board of Finance. Others suggested a custodian trusteeship arrangement. An interesting idea was also put forward that the parsonage might be leased to the clergy.
10. We received few replies to the questions on sale of parsonages. One contributor said the process to be followed on sale might usefully be determined at the time of appointment.
11. Regarding Church and Churchyard ownership, there was little support for this transferring to the Diocesan Board of Finance. Several comments were made about the need to keep the ownership and those responsible for repair and maintenance together. It was suggested that local fund-raising for buildings work might be more difficult if the ownership were transferred to a central body.

Related Legislation

12. Finally, the point was made that the abolition of the freehold will require substantial legislative changes to repeal or amend many private Acts of Parliament relating to specific benefices which will consume time, energy, and money.

Keith Robinson
General Secretary

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