

# Review of CEO role in Winchester Diocese

March 2022

The Winchester Bishop's Council commissioned an external consultant, Andy Brookes, to review the Diocesan Secretary/CEO role ahead of any appointment. The focus was a series of interviews - 50 plus in all - with members of the Bishop's Senior Team and the main governance bodies, Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) staff, clergy and laity from the parishes, and a small number of individuals outside the Diocese.

This note summarises the findings, conclusions and recommendations. It was used by the Bishop's Council when deciding on appointment to the role.

## 1. Findings 1: what did interviewees say about the DS/CEO role?

### i. Scope and title

There was a tension in interviewee comments between: Be careful not to go backwards on the need for 'leadership' in response to the significant challenges faced by the diocese; and the reach of the role needs to be scaled back to underline its 'serving' nature. Strong, but not universal, support for changing the title from CEO, particularly 'CEO of the diocese' (c/f the DBF), in part as a signal.

### ii. The core of the role: responsibilities and objectives

Strong and universal agreement that the core of the role is: "join it all up" "align" "grip resources" "make it run well" "keep us legal/safe". Need for increased visibility across the church within the diocese emphasised by many.

### iii. Qualities, capabilities, skills and experience

Key themes: for this season, personal qualities are at least as important as skills and experience. Strong emotional intelligence and relational skills essential, linking to communication and stakeholder relationships. Allied to this, the person needs to be willing and able to speak up and constructively challenge, standing their ground when necessary. Vibrant personal faith is essential.

#### iv. Priorities once in role

Relationship building and communication; gripping finance; clarifying strategic direction (in a low key way); staff care and management. The golden thread is the nurturing and modelling of desired culture - outward, serving, human.

#### v. External? Interim? Reporting lines?

A good level of support for being open to an external appointment but the person would need to be Church of England literate and sensitive to the particularities of a diocese. Imposing a strong 'external' model from another sector would not be helpful at this point. Strong support for not appointing permanently ahead of the arrival of the new diocesan bishop. Differing views on reporting lines into the DS/CEO role.

### 2. Findings 2: what else were interviewees saying?

For many interviewees, there has been a sense of hurt and a perception of dysfunction in aspects of diocesan life. Themes included: a sense of crisis; a deficit of trust; the perception of many parishes feeling ignored in the diocesan strategy; governance bodies simply 'rubber stamping'; bruised DBF staff; one-way communication.

There were some emerging points of encouragement as these issues are now beginning to be addressed.

### 3. Reflections and conclusions beyond the DS/CEO role

The golden thread is the need to nurture a healthy culture. The priorities are to:

- attend to culture, nurture relationships, rebuild trust;
- consolidate the strategic priorities into something less complex in which all parishes can feel valued; but not go backwards on the importance of missional growth;
- grip the financial challenge;
- press on with incremental improvements to governance.

### 4. Recommendations for the DS/CEO role

- Hold off permanent appointment until the new diocesan bishop is settled in post.
- Advertise internally and externally for an interim to run 6-9 months after the new diocesan's arrival (date uncertain).
- Bishop's Council members actively use their networks to publicise the role to potential candidates.
- Be open to the role being done less than full-time to widen the range of candidates and to give greater flexibility in supporting roles (because less than full-time saves money).

- Title changed to Diocesan Secretary and Chief Operating Officer (COO) with a clear explanation of what this means: full membership of the Bishop's Staff Team; COO to the diocese, leading support functions; CEO of the DBF; responsibility for good functioning of the governance bodies (aka Secretary).
- Reporting to the Bishop; a dotted line to the DBF chair; accountable to Bishop's Council/Diocesan Board of Finance (BC/DBF); scrutiny/accountability at Synod
- In terms of the balance of work: reduce national and county roles; increase 'internal' (to churches) visibility across the diocese.
- On skills, qualities, experience and capabilities, a strong emphasis on: care for DBF staff in the face of low morale; relational ability; communication; high quality team and stakeholder management; a vibrant faith; and a strong 'get it done' attitude.