



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

# RESOURCING MISSION

## Diocese of Canterbury: New Approach to Providing Ministry Support to Parishes

### **Background**

The Diocese's current parish share system apportions by formula its expenditure budget, net of the ministry support it receives from the Church Commissioners' funds (£669,730 in 2008), between parishes according to their size and wealth. Although parishes knew the actual unit costs of the ministry they received (i.e. the cost of its clergy plus diocesan support), the share request made of them was the net cost calculated by this formula.

The system rightly aimed to channel money to the poorest but in reality support did not just go to the most deprived areas e.g. some went to churches which were in serious decline; others to parishes which were not paying their share even though their accounts showed they had very healthy reserves. The weakness of the system was the lack of transparency about actual costs being apportioned and the amount of subsidy being provided. There was also little accountability over the subsidies it provided. The impression had built up that financial support was 'as of right' which had created a dependency culture and stifled mission and innovation.

### **A New Approach**

The Diocesan strategy *Growing Forward Together Towards 2020* is the driving document for the new approach to funding. The strategy seeks to encourage varied forms of mission-led ministry in order to steer the Diocese towards growth rather than managing decline.

From the beginning of 2009, the expectation will be that each parish will pay their total clergy costs (with some mutual support within deaneries) plus a share of diocesan support costs calculated by a formula which takes into account parish membership and wealth, whilst making allowance for the number of church buildings within the parish.

The Diocese will no longer provide a mechanical subsidy of its parishes' ministry costs; instead it will invite applications for grants from deaneries to help fund the costs of those parishes unable to afford them.

The criteria for the Diocese awarding funding (using the support from the Commissioners) are as follows:

- 1) Genuine pastoral and social need, supported by Government statistics or other reliable means and evidence that pastoral opportunities would arise as a result of financial assistance.
- 2) Previous or current attempts to develop mission, including engagement with Diocesan Missioners or others.
- 3) Local situations, appropriately evidenced, of growth being prevented in the short-term.

Deaneries will make individual applications on behalf of their parishes. Decision-making about deployment and other resourcing matters had already been devolved to deaneries. If the deanery does not lend its support to a parish's request for funding it is highly unlikely that a grant will be made.

Applications will be accompanied by the relevant PCC's accounts for the preceding financial year, to check whether its reserves negate the requirement for a grant. Parishes seeking funds must also set out their strategic plans, including an assessment of their expected impact over the three years following the application. In this way, each application will need to show how the grant will sustain and develop ministry in the parish in order to extend its mission work (whether within existing church structures or fresh expressions of church).

Deaneries can apply for grants up to five years, which allows them to construct a quite lengthy mission and financial plan, but without receiving a permanent commitment. A request for further support after the period of the initial grant will require a fresh decision, following a review of the impact of the funding.

The decision as to whether to award the grant will be taken by the Mission Initiatives Committee, a body of three years' standing that has been involved in allocating the diocese's mission development funding and will bring its experience in mission work support and evaluation to the assessment of parishes' ministry development.

### ***Following Decisions Through***

Those awarded grants to help pay their ministry costs will be required to account for their spending at the end of each year of the grant term, using feedback forms.

Where a request for a grant was refused, this would in most circumstances be because a parish had not made a good enough case for its mission prospects. The next step would be for the diocese (through the relevant archdeacon and others) to try and work with the parish to look again at their plans and make them more viable. If there appeared to be very little hope for the future of the parish then the next stage might be to draw up plans for some sort of pastoral reorganisation.

### ***Anticipated Outcomes***

The new approach aims to achieve a more targeted and accountable use of resources. Ending automatic subsidies would help them to switch from a strategy of propping up decline to pro-active investment in mission. It would also release money currently sitting in parish reserves for ministry and mission support. Financial support would in future be focused on the poorest, but in a way which encouraged them not merely to maintain the status quo but plan the development of their mission and finances. Subsidy would be maintained within a mission planning framework.

The new approach would encourage strategic thought across the diocese about mission development. It would also re-inforce the role of deaneries as key decision-makers in the diocese since the new approach required a robust deanery framework to determine at local level what parishes require and what action they need to take, in order to justify the receipt of additional funds.

The enhanced transparency of the new approach would allow parishes to see the true costs of ministry and enable them (and the Archbishops' Council/ Commissioners as national funders) to see where subsidy was being targeted.

### ***Implementation***

Having gone through a period of consultation before the decision was taken to create the new system, the DBF started in June 2008 to explaining the workings of the new funding arrangements to the deaneries. This will allow them five months to assess their parishes' requirements and begin work on the applications, which the Committee hopes to consider in November with the grants due to be paid in January 2009.

**This material was prepared in light of conversations between staff of the Church Commissioners' Policy Unit and Mr Julian Hills, Secretary to the Canterbury Diocesan Board of Finance.**

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