

After General Synod February 2011: reporting back

The papers debated at the February Synod are available here:

<http://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/general-synod/agendas-and-papers/february-2011-group-of-sessions.aspx>

The Business Committee Report (GS 1817)

Paragraph 2 of the Report invited Synod members to write to the Clerk to the Synod with comments to the Elections Review Group on matters associated with the General Synod elections. I have written to the Group.

A copy of my letter is attached.

Paragraph 4 of the Report invited Synod members to write to the Clerk to the Synod with comments on the electronic distribution of Synod papers. I have written accordingly.

A copy of my letter is attached.

The Dioceses Commission

In the House of Laity meeting prior to General Synod I voted in favour of co-opting Dr Priscilla Chadwick to the House of Laity, so that she could continue her work as Chair of the Dioceses Commission. The motion was lost.

The Anglican Covenant: Requirement for Special Majorities on Final Approval

This was a motion that would have required the General Synod to pass the Anglican Communion Covenant with a two-thirds majority, rather than a simple majority, if it is passed by Diocesan Synods. I made my maiden speech on this subject.

The text of my speech is attached.

I voted against the motion. The motion was lost.

The Draft Clergy Discipline (Amendment) Measure (GS 1814)

I was happy with all of the proposed amendments, except the amendment to clause 1 on the "Membership of certain organisations". The Explanatory Memorandum GS 1814X explains the purpose of the clause:

12. At the 2009 February group of sessions the General Synod resolved: *'That this Synod, noting that in 2004 the Association of Chief Police Officers adopted a policy whereby "no member of the Police Service, whether police officer or police staff, may be a member of an organisation whose constitution, aims, objectives or pronouncements contradict the general duty to promote race equality" and "this specifically includes the British National Party", request the House of Bishops to formulate and implement a comparable policy for the Church of England, to apply to clergy, ordinands, and such employed lay persons as have duties that require them to represent or speak on behalf of the Church.'*

13. Section 8(3) of the 2003 Measure currently provides that no proceedings in respect of unbecoming conduct shall be taken in respect of the lawful political opinions or activities of any bishop, priest or deacon. Parties such as the BNP are not illegal organisations, so it is not misconduct for the purposes of the 2003 Measure for a member of the clergy to join the BNP or to solicit support for it. In order to give effect to the Synod's resolution of February 2009, clause 1(4) of the Amendment Measure will change this position by making it unbecoming or inappropriate conduct for the purposes of the 2003 Measure for clergy to be members of, or to express or solicit support for, a political party or other organisation whose constitution, policies, objectives, activities or public statements are declared in writing to be incompatible with the teaching of the Church of England in relation to race equality. The House of Bishops will be required to publish any such declaration."

I voted in favour of the motion to approve the Measure for its next stage, which is consideration by a Revision Committee. However, I have reservations about the proposal and have therefore written to the Revision Committee setting them out.

A copy of my letter is attached.

[Amending Code of Practice under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 \(GS 1808\)](#)

This was a Measure of several minor improvements to the Code of Practice. I was satisfied that the amendments were all an improvement and I voted in favour.

[Challenges for the New Quinquennium: Report from the Archbishops' Council \(GS 1815\)](#)

I never get very excited about this sort of document, which doesn't tell you anything you don't already know. I voted in favour of noting the Report.

[Appointment of the Chair of the Business Committee \(GS 1821\)](#)

Many members of General Synod were concerned about the nomination of a bishop to chair the Synod's Business Committee. They felt that the House of Bishops already has a heavy control of the papers that go to the Synod, and they therefore wanted someone on the Business Committee who was more independent. A motion was put to adjourn the debate, so that the Archbishops' could propose someone else, without it being a snub to the bishop nominated. I voted against the adjournment motion, because I did not think the bishop would be biased and I wasn't particularly concerned about the symbolism.

[The House of Bishops' Statement on Marriage After Divorce and the Ordained Ministry \(GS Misc 960\)](#)

The report explained that a similar procedure would be introduced for bishops, than is already in place for priests, of making enquiries of the circumstances of

their previous marriage breakup to see whether this affects their suitability for appointment. I spoke in this debate.

The text of my speech is attached.

In my speech, I refer to an article that I wrote. It was entitled "Vocations and Changes to the Priesthood" and was published in the journal *Churchman* (Volume 112, Issue 1, 1998)

<http://www.churchsociety.org/churchman/articles.asp?issue=112/1> If you would like a copy it can be ordered from the publisher, or contact me as I have some copies left.

I voted in favour of the motion taking note of the House of Bishops' statement. The motion was passed.

I voted against a following motion which was calling for additional legislation to be produced, which I thought was unnecessary and over-the-top. The motion was lost.

Common Worship Baptism Provision (GS 1816A and GS 1816B)

This motion called for "...material to supplement the Common Worship Initiation provision... expressed in accessible language." It had come from the Diocese of Liverpool who said that some of the terms in the baptism service were difficult for Church visitors to understand.

I was torn on which way to vote. Speakers were divided as to whether the current choice of words was suitable or not. In the end I voted against. I had read the text of the service and it did not seem over-complex, and it is not to be expected that a visitor will know the meaning of every reference. I thought that the time of Church House's worship officer, which is only a half-time post, would be better spent in training people to use the liturgy, than in writing more new liturgy resulting in churches having to spend more money buying revised service books. The Bishop of Wakefield had said that this matter would be better dealt with in the next big revision, and I agreed with him. I therefore voted against the motion. However, the motion was passed.

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission Report: Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ (GS 1818)

See below for my comments on this report that I put on my website prior to Synod.

When the Report of Proceedings of this debate is published, it will be interesting to read again the speech of the Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe, Geoffrey Rowell, who said that the Pope had said to the Orthodox Church that for the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches to unite, the Roman Catholic Church wouldn't require them to believe any teaching additional to when the two churches separated in the eleventh century. Bishop Geoffrey therefore hoped that the same would be said to the Anglican Church. That is an interesting point, because, whilst the ARCIC report is helpful in arguing that the Roman Catholic dogmas on the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary are

consonant with scripture. We could argue that they should not be a requirement of belief for union with Rome, because those dogmas were only declared in 1854 and 1950 respectively.

I voted in favour of the amendment to "welcome" the Report - fresh theological thinking is always to be welcomed. However, the amendment was lost.

I then voted in favour of the motion to "note" the Report and encourage it for study. The motion was passed.

Before General Synod February 2011: inviting your views

ARCIC Report on Mary

A major debate will be on the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) report "Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ".

The report seeks to bridge the gap between Anglicans and Roman Catholics on Mary.

The text of the report is here:

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/catholic/arcic/index.cfm>

It can also be bought as a book with supporting essays: ISBN: 0826481558

There is an 8 page briefing paper from the Council of Christian Unity here:

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1165099/gs%201818.pdf>

There is a 94 page collection of essays from the Church of England's Faith and Order Advisory Group here:

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1166644/gs%20misc%20872.pdf>

A book of background papers used by the Commission is also available:

"Studying Mary: The Virgin Mary in Anglican and Catholic Theology and Devotion" Nicholas Sagovsky & Adelbert Denaux (eds.), ISBN No:

9780567032317

I haven't yet read all the commentaries on the Report, but I have read the Report itself. My initial reaction is that the Report, in seeking common ground on the theology of Mary, has failed to give space to an alternative view that some protestants may have. Nevertheless, the work they have done has the potential of a theological breakthrough, and I intend to vote for the motion at General Synod to "...encourage Anglicans to study the report with ecumenical colleagues and in particular, wherever possible, with their Roman Catholic neighbours."

Dioceses Commission Report

The Dioceses Commission have reported on their review of the Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon & Leeds, Wakefield and Sheffield. It recommends that the first three of these dioceses should be combined to form a single diocese.

The full report is 129 pages long and is available here:

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1122107/report.pdf>

The Report does not have a debating slot on the Agenda, but people are invited to send their views to the Commission.

To quote David Hebblethwaite, Secretary of the Dioceses Commission, 1984-2002: "One thing is certain: any change in diocesan structures will be mired in controversy." (quote from page 80 of a background paper:

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/40665/full.pdf>)

I support the proposals and have written to the Dioceses Commission with my comments.

A copy of my letter is attached.

Central Stipends Authority

Also circulated is the 2011 report of the Church of England's Central Stipends Authority:

<http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1173183/gs%20misc%20977.pdf>

Page 9 of the Report recommends that Dioceses should pay stipends at "not less than 1.5% below or more than 2.5% above" the figure they recommend for each diocese.

Page 10 of the Report states that the Diocese of Guildford is paying a stipend 5.9% above the recommended figure.

I intend to raise this matter at the Guildford Diocesan Synod. Either the Guildford Diocese should abide by national recommendations, or they should seek to get the recommendations changed. What they should not do is just ignore them.

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15 March 2011

To: The Clerk to the Synod

Comments to the Elections Review Group from Adrian Vincent (Guildford: 320)

Paragraph 2 of the Business Committee report GS 1817 invited comments on matters associated with the 2010 General Synod elections to be sent to the Clerk to the Synod.

I stood for General Synod for the first time in 2010. My election address <http://www.adrianvincent.org.uk/electionaddress.html> included the statement:

“2.) Increasing openness and participation

Before each Synod meeting I will list on my website the items coming up for debate at General Synod and invite you to send me your views. (I will have a mailing list for those without access to the internet). After each meeting I will publish on the website the decisions that were taken, how I voted and why. If I ever claim any expenses I will publish them on my website.

I will work for change to ensure that everyone on an electoral roll will have the right to vote for their General Synod representative.”

It is nearly a hundred years since universal suffrage was introduced in secular elections in the United Kingdom and I think it is wrong to deny the direct vote to Church members of their General Synod members.

I, and three of my fellow candidates in the House of Laity elections in the Guildford Diocese, were in the bizarre situation that we were entitled to stand for election - being on an electoral roll - but could not vote in our own election because we were not Deanery Synod members.

The current synodical structure can be retained, with Deanery and Diocesan Synods and with General Synod members reporting back through those bodies, and motions coming up and down the system. The only change I suggest is to widen the electorate for the General Synod representation.

I have looked at the report “Synodical Government in the Church of England: A Review” GS 1252, and paragraph 10.4 set out the good reasons in favour of universal suffrage. In subsequent paragraphs they stepped back from the idea on the grounds of: cost; difficulty for candidates to be known; and lack of interest. (They therefore proposed an establishment of synodical electors, which I feel was the wrong way forward, it would have set up sort of rotten boroughs and would have undermined the role of Deanery Synods, creating a parallel layer or representation).

The report was published in 1997. We are now in an age of the internet where the first two objections (cost and candidates difficulty in becoming known) can be more easily overcome. The Guildford Diocese paid to circulate one copy of every candidate's election address to Deanery Synod members. It is likely to be prohibitively expensive to do the same for all those on the electoral rolls. However, the Diocese of Bristol has already shown the way in having all election addresses and video presentations from each candidate on their website, and on-line hustings in addition to real hustings.

The third objection, that not many people would be interested in voting. I would argue that it is wrong to refuse to grant rights to people on the grounds that not many people will choose to exercise their rights. Most electoral roll members are unlikely to take much interest in General Synod elections, but it will mean Church members who do take an interest will be able to directly have their say.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Vincent

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15 March 2011

To: The Clerk to the Synod,

**Comments on electronic circulation of some Synod papers from Adrian Vincent
(Guildford: 320)**

Paragraph 4 of the Business Committee report GS 1817 invited comments on the experiment of electronic circulation of some Synod papers.

In my own case, the electronic circulation of some papers has resulted in a greater amount of printing. My lifestyle means that I often read papers on the train to and from work and I do not take a laptop with me when commuting. Similarly I don't take a laptop with me into the Synod chamber. This means that I need to have a printed copy of the reports, and I need all the reports because I want to be a good Synod member who has read all the papers.

The result is that documents that are only circulated electronically, I print out, but then receive also the paper summary, which results in more paper than if I had had the full document sent to me on paper in the first place. For example, I had printed out the 129 page Dioceses Commission report and therefore did not need the 16 page Guide to the Report that was posted to me.

I suggest that either:

a.) All General Synod members are sent full copies of all reports.

or:

b.) For very large reports that are to note, and are not to be debated at the Synod, then these could be emailed to General Synod members, with a note saying that anyone who would like a printed copy, should let the Secretariat know, who will send one out.

This will remove the requirement to write, print and circulate short versions or summaries, which only duplicates work and printing.

One small area where there might be some paper savings, is rather than have individual A5 election results slips - I received ten of these all on different coloured paper in my February mailing – a single A4 sheet could be sent out with a collation of the results.

Finally, I would like to make a suggestion as regards the publication of the General Synod Report of Proceedings. These used to be published in book form, but are now only available electronically. I have started printing these out, hole punching them and putting them in ring binders so as to be able to refer to them in future. The result is that it is taking up lots more space on my bookshelf, and using much more paper than the published copies. I assume that it was for financial reasons that the publishing of the Report of Proceedings in book form was ceased. I would therefore like to suggest that a cost-neutral option for the Archbishops'

Council is explored. Websites such as www.lulu.com allow a report to be uploaded to their site and anyone who wants to buy a copy in book form can do so on-line. The website prints it in book form and delivers it. This would be a marvellous solution for me who wants printed copies of the Report of Proceedings, and it would not cost the Church of England anything.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Vincent

Adrian Vincent's speech on the General Synod motion: "That this Synod resolve that final approval of the Act of Synod adopting the Anglican Communion Covenant shall require the assent of two-thirds of the members of each House present and voting" 7 February 2011.

"Adrian Vincent, Guildford 320.

In Oscar Wilde's, *The Importance of Being Ernest*, Jack says:

"The Army Lists of the last forty years are here. These delightful records should have been my constant study."

Well, at home, I have the General Synod *Reports of Proceedings* of the last 40 years! And, whilst they haven't been my constant study, they did help when considering Mr Ward's motion.

The provision within Article 8 of the General Synod Constitution, on which Mr Ward relies, was introduced by the *Synodical Government (Special Majorities) Measure 1971*.

The July 1970 *Report of Proceedings* records the Synod debate. Dr Ellison, the then Bishop of Chester, when proposing the Measure, said that its purpose was to allow the possibility for a special majority for a unity scheme between Anglicans and Methodists.

This is what was meant by the words in 8(1) of the Constitution which says that special majorities are allowed for, quote, "a scheme for...union...between the Church of England and another Christian body".

The phrase "another Christian body" in Article 8 meant another denomination; there was no intention for special majorities to be required on how we govern relationships within the Anglican Communion.

This is one reason why I suggest Synod vote against Mr Ward's motion."

To:
The Revision Committee on the Draft Clergy Discipline (Amendment) Measure GS1814

From:
Adrian Vincent (General Synod, 320) 16 Faris Barn Drive, Woodham, Surrey, KT15 3DZ.

28 February 2011

Suggestion for amendments to Clause 1(4) of the Amendment Measure (GS 1814), re. clause 8(3) of the Measure (GS Misc 976) - membership of certain organisations.

1.) Background to my mixed feelings

a.) Questioning the need for this additional provision

In 2004 the General Synod passed a motion that “voting for and/or supporting a political party that offers racist policies is incompatible with Christian discipleship” (para 3 of GS Misc 903A).

In 2007 the General Synod passed a motion that “support for political organisations whose policies engender racism is inconsistent with Christian discipleship” (para 1 of GS Misc 903B).

The February 2009 Synod debate said that additional provision was needed in order to “send a clear message”, but to my mind the Synod could not have been clearer, and in terms of any disciplinary need, if a priest preaches racism they can already be prosecuted for inciting racial hatred under the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006, which in turn would trigger discipline under the Clergy Discipline Measure.

b.) Unease at the route proposed

Today we look back on the McCarthyism of the 1950s - where people were called before the House Committee on Un-American Activities and asked “are you, or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?” - as a mistaken approach. This is even though we know more today about the horrors of the millions murdered in Stalin’s Russia, than Senator McCarthy knew at the time. We feel sympathy for those who were called before the Committee and, when asked if they were Communist Party members, they refused to answer the question on principle - even though they were not in fact Communist Party members - and they had their careers destroyed for refusing to answer.

Racism is a greater evil than communism, but the idea of calling a priest before a disciplinary hearing and asking them “are you, or have you ever been a member of the British National Party?” has an uncomfortable reminder of the McCarthy approach.

c.) Unease that it might prove counter productive

I went to a Billy Bragg concert recently at which he spoke about his campaigning against the BNP in Barking at the last election. He said that in the election before last, the BNP had made gains in Barking because many who felt ignored by the mainstream parties and had voted BNP out of protest. The previous response from the mainstream parties had simply been vilification of those who had voted BNP. This had not worked and the BNP vote had gone

up. He said that it was only at the last election when the mainstream political parties, anti-racist groups and the local churches all got together, went out to these people, listened to their concerns, and shared with them how the BNP was not the answer, did the BNP vote in Barking fall dramatically.

I am therefore concerned that this step by the Church of England will be by the BNP for propaganda purposes, who like to promote themselves as a party persecuted by the establishment and thereby able to relate to those who feel socially excluded.

On the other hand, I know that if a priest became an atheist and joined the National Secular Society, I would like the Church to be able to discipline the priest. It should therefore have a similar sanction to a priest who had rejected the Gospel by supporting a racist group. I therefore voted in favour of the motion to approve the Measure for its next stage, consideration by a Revision Committee.

d.) Concern about the financial cost and administrative burden

The draft legislation would require the House of Bishops to publish a declaration as to the list of “political party or other organisation” had policies opposed to “the equality of persons or groups of different races.”

Paragraph 5 of the Financial Statement (*February Group of Sessions 2011: Seventh Notice Paper*) failed to acknowledge that there would be a financial cost to the research and decision making required to keeping the banned list continually up-to-date.

New organisations are constantly springing up and old ones are often changing. Would Church House have to employ people to continually monitor the internet searching for new organisations or Facebook groups that consist of people with racist views? Or is there already an organisation that does this whereby the Church of England can just use their list?

There might also have to be judgment calls made. Some racist groups seek to mask the full extent of their racism in their publicity and hide behind euphemisms. For the more extreme organisations, like the BNP the decision to go on the list would presumably be a simple one. But even in that case, care might need to be taken. For example, the BNP website says “We demand British jobs go to British workers”. I would imagine this would be grounds for putting the BNP on the banned list, but then Gordon Brown in a speech announced "British jobs for British workers", so such a phrase from the BNP would not be enough to put it on the banned list, without the Labour Party having to go on as well.

Some groups might be caught that the legislation never intended to be caught. There may be non-racist groups who do not teach “the equality of persons”. I cannot give a real example, but to make up a silly example to illustrate the point, I do not consider myself to be equal to the Queen. If I set up an organisation in praise of the Queen, which saw her as not equal with her subjects, presumably my organisation should go on the banned list for failing to teach “the equality of persons”.

e.) Concern about unworkability and possible unfairness

I went on the BNP’s website and looked at their 2010 Manifesto. It is riddled with racism, but has some policies that are not racist. For example,

“ The BNP will seek to retain the traditional high-street shopping environment over the out-of-town shopping centre.”

“The BNP will increase spending on front line staff while cutting back bureaucracy in the NHS.”

“The BNP rejects the “climate change” theory...”

What if a priest said that he was a member of the BNP because of their policy on climate change? He might argue that all the other political parties supported the theory of climate change except the BNP. He had therefore joined because of that and was working on the BNP from the inside to lobby to change their racist policies. Would the Church have to engage in expensive disciplinary action to seek to prove that this was not the priest's real motive? Or, might the Church accept what he said was true, that he was not racist, but he was guilty anyway by the fact of membership?

f.) Concern that the text of the draft goes further than Synod speeches claimed.

I do not have the transcript of the February debate from which to quote, but my memory is that it was stated by more than one speaker, that membership of one of these groups did not necessarily mean that the priest would be sanctioned, it simply opened the possibility for proceedings to be brought.

However, this is not what the draft Amendment actually says. It says, “...it shall be unbecoming or inappropriate conduct...to be a member...”

It does not say, ‘it may be unbecoming conduct’, or ‘it shall be grounds for proceedings to be brought’. It simply says it is unbecoming conduct.

I therefore do not see how this squares with what was said in the Synod debate.

2.) Suggestions to the Revision Committee

a.) In subsection 4, delete the words “to be a member of or”

(This would mean that priests who express or promote racist views and policies would be guilty of unbecoming conduct; but a priest who was a member of an organisation that currently did not promote the equality of persons - and the priest was working inside to change those policies - would not be guilty).

b.) In subsection 4, after “solicit support for” add the words “any racist policies of...”

(This would mean that a priest who, for example, said that he supported the BNP's policy to increase spending on the NHS, would not be guilty, but a priest who said he supported the BNP's race related policies would be guilty).

c.) Delete subsection 5

(This would save the administrative research costs of keeping a House of Bishops' list continually up-to-date, and would mean that if a priest was promoting the racist views of a group that was not on the list, he could still be disciplined).

kind regards,

Adrian Vincent

Speech on Agenda Item 15, Feb 2011: “The House of Bishops’ Statement on Marriage After Divorce and the Ordained Ministry (GS Misc 960)”

“Adrian Vincent, Guildford 320

I am speaking to welcome the House of Bishops’ Statement GS Misc 960.

In 1997 I was a member of Church House staff, working in the Grants Office of the Ministry Division. In my free time I became interested in the published vocations statistics from 1945 onwards. [That’s why I’m on General Synod – I’m a boring person!].

It struck me that the changes we had introduced over the period:

- 1969 non-stipendiary ministry;
- 1984 local non-stipendiary ministry;
- 1987 ordination of women to the diaconate;
- 1991 ordination of the remarried after divorce;
- 1992 ordination of women to the priesthood;

had been accompanied by a decline in the number of candidates for the stipendiary priesthood.

I wrote an article suggesting that the changes might actually have contributed to the decline in the number of stipendiary candidates.

The most controversial passage in my article was where I quoted a survey of Roman Catholic seminarians which had found that 70% of vocations had come about principally because they had been [quote] ‘impressed by the life of priests whom they knew’.

In the article I wrote, “It may be argued that a priest who has remarried is a less effective role model for vocations.”

My views have not radically changed since I wrote the article. I am therefore pleased to read paragraph 18 of the House of Bishops’ statement which says that bishops do need to be effective role models; and I welcome the undertaking in paragraph 16 for a procedure to properly take this into account.”

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19 December 2010

Adrian Vincent's comments on "The Dioceses Commission: Review Report No.2: Dioceses of Bradford, Ripon & Leeds, Sheffield and Wakefield. November 2010"

I am a member of the General Synod, from the Guildford Diocese. I have little first-hand experience of the dioceses mentioned in the review. My comments are only based on reading the Report itself, and therefore should be given less weight than comments from local parishioners. Nevertheless, I hope that they are of some assistance to the Commission, by commenting both on the report itself and offering suggestions for the next stage of the process.

My major comment is that I was very impressed with the level of research and the wise judgments of the Report. **I support all the major recommendations in the Report.**

I have suggestions on the following smaller points.

1.) Lighten the committee burden further

Paragraph 2.4.6 (page 14) of the Report states "The burden imposed on bishops and indeed archdeacons by the Church's national structures and church legislation continues to be a relevant factor in determining the number of bishops, archdeacons and dioceses." I would therefore like to suggest two further ways where the Dioceses Commission may wish to recommend lifting more of this burden:

a.) Have a single Bishops' Council, rather than Area Councils

Paragraph 6.6.3 states:

"We do not envisage the creation of area synods... However, we do envisage the creation of formally constituted area councils. These would consist of the Area Bishop, Archdeacon, rural deans, deanery lay chairs and elected representatives of the clergy and laity and would need to be small enough to function effectively. The detailed membership would be determined by the new diocese, but there might be an advantage if the clergy and lay members of the diocesan synod from the area formed the core of the Area Council."

The new diocese will have PCCs, Deanery Synods, Diocesan Synod, Diocesan Board of Finance and a Diocesan Bishop's Council. With everyone's busy lives, is it essential to have area councils as well? Although an area council might be imagined to be helpful in terms of

addressing the particular needs of the area, the reality might be inefficiency and conflict. For example, if the diocesan bishop's council recommends a particular course of action for the diocese, but then some of the area councils discuss it and say it is not suitable for their area, there would have to be messages passed between meetings of the different councils to address the problem and seek to reach agreement. It would be more efficient to have a single bishops' council for the diocese, on which the diocesan bishop and area bishops sit together. Policies can be discussed with area bishops and local representatives at the point at which they are made, with those from different areas saying the needs of their area, and a sufficiently flexible policy can be decided upon. Having a single bishops' council should also help with diocesan unity.

b.) Do not insist that the chair of the implementation group be a bishop

The Report makes the point that bishops are heavily burdened by legislation and administration and do not have enough time for their clergy and parishes. Why then does the Report say in paragraph 10.4 (page 111): "...We envisage the establishment, by the three bishops' councils, of an implementation group under the chairmanship of a bishop...", which would result in a bishop spending many more hours in committee meetings?

The Dioceses Commission which produced the recommendations for change was not chaired by a bishop. The implementation group that implements the changes should not *have* to be chaired by a bishop. The Archbishop of York should have the freedom to appoint the most suitable person for the job and not have the pool of candidates limited in that way.

2.) Examine the financial options for the location of the Diocesan Office

If the Diocesan Bishop is to be the Bishop of Wakefield, and if the Dean of Wakefield is to be the dean of the college of canons, it is counter intuitive for the diocesan office to be in Leeds. The Report gives the reason on 7.12.1 (page 83) that Leeds is the best place in terms of transport links for the rest of the Diocese. However, this reason was not decisive in determining the location of the diocesan bishop, so it should not necessarily be decisive in determining the location of the diocesan office.

I suggest that, for the next stage, which will in any case require the production of a financial assessment (paragraph 1.5.1, page 9), the Commission should undertake a financial examination of the relative financial costs of locating the diocesan office in Wakefield or Leeds. Leeds will have cheaper travel costs for diocesan staff visiting the rest of the diocese and for others visiting the office. Wakefield will have cheaper travel costs in terms of the diocesan staff visiting the diocesan bishop and the bishop visiting the office. Also, there may also be increased administrative costs if the diocesan office were in Leeds, because that might lead to the Bishop of Wakefield requiring more personal administrative support, than would be the case if the diocesan office was very close to him.

3. Phrase to avoid in future reports

Paragraph 6.1.1 (page 52) uses the phrase, "the status quo is therefore not an option."

In my job I have to respond to Government consultation documents which propose cuts to legal aid. These consultation documents always include the phrase "the status quo is not an option" and then present consultees with options for cutting legal aid. Respondents want to be

able to argue that the status quo *is* an option, but the consultation questions are so framed as to not permit such a response.

Fortunately this Report is different from the Government consultations that I read. This Report begins with an open mind and presents its recommendations based on the evidence. Indeed, paragraph 6.1.7 (page 53) says "...the argument for change is, we believe, stronger than any argument for retaining the status quo." I suggest that this phrase is used in future, and that the phrase in 6.1.1 is not repeated.

Yours faithfully,

Adrian Vincent