

Diocesan peer review report

Diocese	ELY
Date of peer review meeting	19 th October 2017
Date of peer review report	25 th October 2017
Date of diocesan response to report	
Diocesan representatives	Bishop Stephen Conway, Bishop David Thomson, Brian Atling (Finance Committee Chair), Alex Hughes (Archdeacon of Cambridge), Vicky Johnson (Residentiary Canon), Janet Perrett (Lay Chair),
Peer review panel members	Jamie Harrison (Chair), Mandy Ford and Imogen Taylor, supported by Alan Cruickshank
Is the self-evaluation included in this document?	Yes / No

Diocesan strengths

I. The peer review panel greatly appreciated the discussion with the diocesan senior team. While there will be other aspects of the diocese's work which are praiseworthy and might be mentioned in this section of the report, we consider the following additional diocesan strengths to be of particular note:

- a. The process used to develop the 'People Fully Alive - eLy2025' strategy for growth, including the consultation and engagement process and the effective way the strategic direction has been captured in the summary document;
- b. The clearly-stated and ambitious goal of a 50/50% mixed economy, implying around 350 fresh expressions of church; and the growth of fresh expressions across the diocese with a breadth of examples in rural situations, many led by lay people;
- c. The alignment of other parts of the diocese's work with eLy2025, such as the Ministerial Development Review process and the diocesan board of education's work;
- d. The use of zero-based budgeting together with the scrutiny provided by the Budget Review Group chaired by the suffragan bishop;
- e. The approach taken to developing discipleship and the training programme offered widely to both lay people and clergy;
- f. The diocese's strong financial position, described as being the result of prudence with strong investment performance from historic assets, and benefitting from the proceeds of the sale of strategic land holdings;
- g. The positive response to the opportunity provided by areas of new housing leading to the growth of new churches in those areas;
- h. The decision to focus the diocese's application for Strategic Development Funding on market towns with their challenging mission context;

- i. The recognition that an increasing amount of local ministry might be undertaken by licenced lay workers funded through the stipend fund.

Peer review self-assessment

2. The panel found the diocesan team's self-assessment to be a very helpful introduction to the diocese and its challenges, and the discussion at the meeting confirmed the strengths and weaknesses it described. The diocese had clearly prepared for the meeting well and thoughtfully. We appreciated the open and constructive discussion which allowed us to gain a fuller understanding of the key issues.

We were pleased to note that the diocese had also already acted on the learning they had gained from the self-assessment. Being concerned that they had perhaps lost momentum in pursuing ely2025, they were now arranging to visit all clergy chapters.

Peer review panel's conclusions

3. We encourage the senior diocesan team to continue to pursue the excellent work they are doing towards their 'People Fully Alive - ely2025' strategy for growth. The implementation of this is undoubtedly the most important priority for the team and the following suggestions are offered not to cut across that work, but rather to complement and strengthen it:

- a. In the light of the diocesan senior team's recognition that implementation of ely2025 was patchy, use every opportunity to inject a fresh sense of urgency to this work, in part by giving a greater focus to a relatively small set of priorities for the year ahead;
- b. Improve the way in which progress toward the ely2025 strategic vision is monitored and reported to Bishop's Council (and possibly more widely), including quantitative metrics and other ways to show clearly whether work was on track or not;
- c. Find further ways to capture and share effectively – both inside and outside the diocese - the stories of new and/or growing fresh expressions of Church
- d. Reflect on how best to encourage growth in Cambridge's churches and/or whether the larger churches there might provide further assistance in revitalising churches elsewhere in the diocese (building on the example of the Huntingdon church plant);
- e. Learn from the examples that exist of a strong partnership between Church schools and local churches who are jointly engaged in mission, and encourage headteachers and local church leaders to develop and deliver similar approaches;
- f. Develop a plan, or at least identify the initial steps which should be taken, to encourage greater inclusion in churches and organisational structures across the diocese, engaging better with BAME groups and disabled people for example;
- g. Be more ready to increase the central resources when priority areas for action are identified: this should help in improving the sustainability of staff workload, not only in diocesan office but also for the bishops and their staff;
- h. Update the three-year budget in the light of your current thinking on the sustainability of investment returns and other income sources (e.g. Mission Development Funding);
- i. Continue to focus on stewardship including ways to encourage generous giving in fresh expressions of Church;

j. Without reducing the focus on the current Strategic Development Funding programme, begin to consider the scope of a second application, e.g. building on the market town work to support growth in rural churches.

4. At the time of the meeting the diocese had just submitted its Stage I application for Strategic Development Funding and expected a decision in December. The panel felt that the SDF application was clearly aligned with the Ely2025 strategic vision and that it rightly focused on a challenging area for mission. (Jamie Harrison noted for transparency that he was a member of the Strategic Investment Board which would be considering the application).

5. We recommend that the next peer review takes place in around two years' time in line with the expected cycle.

Key areas of learning for the wider Church

6. The peer review panel recommends that the following features of the diocese's work are captured and shared more widely across the Church: the ambitious and clearly expressed goal of a 50/50% mixed economy, the steps the diocese had taken to encourage fresh expressions of Church, and examples of the breadth of the fresh expressions which had resulted.

Actions for the peer reviewer panel and the central support team

7. As agreed at the meeting, the peer review panel and SDU representative will look to provide 'signposts' to people and/or further information in the following area:

- a. Provide a copy of the slides in the 'Learning from other dioceses' presentation given at the meeting (Action: Alan Cruickshank).
- b. Provide information on approaches dioceses have taken to progress reporting and measurement (Action: Alan Cruickshank).
- c. Provide information on the outcomes of Liverpool Diocese's 'zero-based governance' review (Action: Alan Cruickshank).

Diocesan Response¹

8. In response to the peer review panel's findings we plan to:

¹ The diocese is invited to provide a response to the peer reviewer's report and this should be sent to the Strategy & Development Unit ideally within a month of receipt of the peer review team's report; the Unit will then forward the response onto the peer review panel.

