A LOOK AT RURAL DEANS & DEANERIES

Bob Britton

Resources Evangelism Pastoral reorganisation Social responsibility - 2 Finance Youth work Worship workshops

Ten years:

Pastoral strategy including provision of clergy Pastoral re-organisation Appointments

Other Remarks:

I believe the most urgent need is for the central authorities to devolve financial responsibility (including housing and pensions) to the benefice (I have in mind the practice of the Episcopal Church, Scotland) but not to the deaneries.

Cannot Bishops mandate their authority to lesser mortals (i.e. RDs) now, if they wish? The danger of impending revised legislation is that it erodes the present and traditional rights of individual parishes.

There need to be safeguards against diocesan bullying.

The next five years are crucial for trust to grow between deanery and diocese. I do not expect it to become established practice in under 10 years.

The danger of devolving from diocese to deanery is that the deanery is in a weak position and will only have devolved to it what the diocese cannot manage. Parishes and dioceses hold the power in the C of E. Deaneries are fundamentally weak. The question is: are parishes willing to give deaneries more clout?

A LOOK AT RURAL DEANS and DEANERIES

THE PRESENT (= 1995)

The figure of the Rural Dean in the mind's eye has blurred. To try to grasp it tightly and firmly in one's mind can be likened to a common bathroom experience with a bar of soap. Just when you think you have got it safely in your wet hands and are gripping it tightly - whoosh, splash - it's gone, and the need to fish around in the depths of the not too clear water begins again.

Maybe we know in pretty precise terms in our own mind what the Deanery is, what the Rural Dean is, maybe we can even give our theological reasons for their existence; but does the thought, picture, image we have tally with the next person's. I would more than suspect that the answer to this is "No". I am also led to a much firmer conviction that this is so amongst Rural Deans themselves, as is the elusiveness and haziness which surrounds both their role and that of the deanery.

A SURVEY

This conviction and conclusion comes from the responses received to a survey I have carried out with Rural Deans throughout the dioceses. The survey, in questionnaire form, was sent to 2 12 Rural Deans. Although the selection of these was done at random, the number for each diocese was governed by the number of deaneries within it, and a target of 30% of Rural Deans was aimed for. This was slightly adjusted to take into account the number of Archdeaconries into which the Rural Deaneries in a Diocese fell in order to give a reasonable 'spread'. The 212 Rural Deans approached thus represents 32% of Rural Deans.

133 responses were received, which is some 62.7%, and which I feel was an extremely good response and one from which reasonably accurate information and a consensus of opinion and thought can be obtained. The questionnaire was divided into three main sections - Personal and Deanery and Broad Questions - each section seeking both factual information and individual thinking and opinion.

Only those responses which are relevant to this current purpose will be given and commented on here, although other responses appear in the Appendices for any who are interested.

The first rather unsettling series of responses came in Question 5 (Personal) which relates to training for the role of Rural Dean. Only 74 Rural Deans admitted to having had any kind of training at all and for 57 of these this came some time after they had taken up their duties; the length of training varying from two hours to two weeks, with more than half falling into the '3 day' range. It seems to me that it is a sad comment that 44% of Rural Deans were not provided with training of any kind. It may be, of course, that it was offered and not taken up, but this I doubt. I suspect the 'offer' was not there and if this is so, does this make some kind of statement about how the office of Rural Dean, and by implication the role of the Deanery, is seen in some quarters? On the other hand, maybe it doesn't. Do Archdeacons receive training; do Bishops receive training for their roles?

I think I can understand the reasons why so much of the training comes only after duties have been taken up and if it is as I imagine solely a practical matter it is acceptable. From the responses a fair amount of training is done on an inter-diocesan basis and this seems sensible because 'new' Rural

¹ The Questionnaire along with the main responses can he seen at Appendices A. B & C

Deans can be gathered together in sufficient numbers as to make expenditure on resources and the training justifiable. To train individual Rural Deans would neither he economically viable nor a practice of sound stewardship.

Regarding the training, its content and form, that given was felt to be adequate by 73% of those receiving it, but there was a substantial minority of them (44%) who expressed the need for more specific items to be included in the training course, and these are given here.

<u>'Item'</u>	No. of RD:		
Clear description of job/responsibilities	8		
Theology of the deanery	1		
Who the RD represents	1		
Ecclesiastical law	1		
Practical advice	4		
Leadership/management	3		
Larger strategic issues	1		
Input from a Rural Dean	2		
Input from Bishop re. his objectives	2		

It is hard to understand a course of training for any particular role which does not encompass somewhere along the line, a clear description of the job and the responsibilities of the job-holder, yet it appears that this is so in a number of courses for Rural Deans.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

It is here that we find ourselves back again with the already often mentioned lack of clarity and the elusiveness and mistiness which surrounds the Rural Dean and Deanery. A plea for some clear definition of their role and function comes from those who did not receive training but would have appreciated some (42) and who were specific about what that should contain. 29 (69%) were crystal clear in their expression of their felt need for an adequate description of the job and responsibilities of the Rural Dean; with others obliquely referring to this.

It could be argued, of course, that descriptions of the job and the responsibilities attached to it need not form part of any training scheme as these things would surely be obvious from a diocesan Job Description for Rural Deans. That would be a sound argument if one assumed that Job Descriptions were issued as a matter of course by Dioceses to Rural Deans, and if it were not for the responses which are given to Questions 6, 7, & 8 about Job Descriptions and about main responsibilities.

I have, to hand, Job Descriptions of some form from 35 Dioceses, yet the Rural Deans (11 in total) who responded from five of these Dioceses claimed they had no Job Description. Because I cannot believe they had all forgotten they had been given them - many of them being not only in their first term of office but relatively 'new' - leads me to the sad conclusion that they have, in fact, never received one.

Amongst the Rural Deans from a further 25 Dioceses, 33 Rural Deans claimed they had no Job Description, yet 48 from those same Dioceses said they had. What is to be made of this is anyone's guess, from them not receiving them to losing them or forgetting they had been given them. Again I feel bound to come down on the side of the Rural Deans with the conclusion that the 33 had never

Third: Education and training - 1 Evangelism Appointments - 1 Parish grouping CME events Sector ministries Allocation of resources - 3 Standards of conditions for clergy (expenses, housing etc.) Appraisal Finance - 2 Building/re-siting of parsonages Stewardship Strategy for mission Youth work Fourth: Finance Staffing Boundaries Secular ministries Worship workshops Fifth: **Boundaries**

Education

Sixth:

Viability of parishes

Seventh:

Redundancies

4. Bearing in mind any need for revised legislation, which of these areas do you consider could be devolved in 5 yrs/10 yrs/beyond that time?

Five years:

Involvement in deployment of clergy - 3

Mission - 4

Education and training - 2

Ouota - 3

Staffing needs - 5

Local training centre (clergy and lay) - 5

Establishment of NSM

Local decision making

Finance - 2

Appointments

Lay ministry

Budgeting

Deployment of readers

CME events

Sector ministry

Ministerial review

Oversight of RD

Need good leadership

Parishes and clergy relate better to deanery than diocese - 3

At present Deanery synods seem irrelevant

Diocesan Bishop too occupied with administrative/functional demands

Need for real support, training and affirmation of clergy

Deanery closer to grass roots

Training would be locally based, devised and related

Greater sense of belonging - 2

Enable ministry by 'member of college' rather than vicar, but parishes to retain identity

Collaboration encouraged and enabled

Deanery more co-terminous with real communities than parishes

Mission and outreach best resourced at a local level

'Own' the clergy and pay the 'going rate'

3. List your areas (in 1 above) in order of priority as you see them.

34 responses

First:

Deployment of clergy - 6

Ordained sector ministries attached to deanery

Youth work

Local teaching centre - 2

Local decision making

Shared resources for mission

RD to be full time post

Parish Quota - 2

Vision and strategy

Partnership - parish/deanery/diocese

Pastoral strategy

Lay training - 2

Ministerial review

Pastoral re-organisation - 2

Mission through development/pastoral care - 5

Evangelism

Budget - 3

Social responsibility

Second:

Parish quota

Mission - 3

Community development

Establishment of LNSM

Finance - 4

Lay ministry - 1

Clergy deployment - 4

Deployment of Readers

Youth work

RD to take more oversight of lay training

Sharing specialist ministries

Pastoral reorganisation - 3

Deployment of NSMs

Training - 1

received them, because although I can well imagine a Job Description being lost I cannot imagine anyone forgetting they had been given one initially.

Turning to the Job Descriptions themselves, the main items or areas of responsibility which they contain varies in number from 4 to 10 and below is a summary of these together with the number of Diocesan Job Descriptions in which they appear.

"Items".	No. of R.D.s
Synod matters	32
Chapter matters	28
Interregna matters	28
Pastoral care & support of clergy & families	20
(incl. NSM, retired clergy, licensed lay worker	rs etc) 25
Link between Bishop (and/or Archdeacon)	200, 20
and parishes and vice versa	17
Leadership of clergy/laity/deanery	12
Bishop's (& Archdeacon's) staff meeting with RDs	12
Informing Bishop (Archdeacon, staff) re clergy 'matte	rs' 10
Support & foster good relationshipswith church ward	ens
& leading laity	9
Ecumenical links/work	7
Bishop's Officer	6
Advise, encourage, befriend clergy	6
Shared episcope	5
Relationship with civic/local authorities	5
Informing Bishop (Archdeacon) re parish 'matters'	5
Assist/advise in appointments process	5
In Service Training/clergy study	4
Visits to parishes	2
Spiritual/corporate life in deanery	2
Assist/advise on clergy moves	1
Initiator/enabler in whole life of church	1
Church schools	1

It is a fairly comprehensive list overall, I think we would agree, though, of course, not all 'items' are contained in every Job Description as indicated earlier. A point, and one of some significance I think, needs mention here and that is that in the Job Descriptions of 7 Dioceses (23%) no mention is made of 'pastoral care' - another cause, I would have thought, for sadness and concern.

RESPONSIBILITIES

In comparison with this list there are given below the main responsibilities of their office which Rural Deans themselves consider are theirs. It will be seen that these are divided into two separate sections, being the responses of those who have Job Descriptions and those who have not.

Main Responsibilities	RDs with Job Description	RDs without Job Description
Pastoral care/support of clergy (& families)	47	35
Synod & Chapter matters	34	31
Link with Bishop & Archdeacon	32	15
Interregna responsibilities	16	15
Pastoral oversight of clergy & parishes	15	14
Pastoral re-organisation	8	2
Advice/available to clergy & churchwardens	7	9
Furthering of mission	7	4
Extended episcope	4	1
Administrative	4	3
Encouraging collaborative ministry	3	1
Leadership	3	1
Bishop's monitor	3	2
Visitations (Archdeacon's & own)	3	5
Trouble-shooter	1	1
Continuing Ministerial Education	1	3
Encouragement of lay ministry	1	1
Main Responsibilities (not common to both)		
Bridge building	4	
Shop steward for clergy	4	
Knowing key lay people	2	
To see that clergy & parishes are happy	2	
Bishop's spy	2	
Bishop's (& Archdeacon's) representative	1	
Form filler	1	
Part of 'planning, for diocese	1	
Supervising church buildings	1	
Appraisal	1	
Pro-active initiator at strategic level	1	
Building up sense of Christian family	1	
Deanery working socially	1	
Co-ordinating deanery Encouraging clergy relations Bishop's officer Communications/messenger Personnel management/discipline Deployment issues		7 5 4 2 2 1
Reviewing resources		1

It will be noticed that there is a remarkable similarity and degree of correspondence between those who have Job Descriptions and those who have not. Despite this it would be foolish to argue that Job Descriptions are not needed even though 22 Rural Deans (16%) who did not get a Job Description say they would not have valued one.

Communication role

Lay ministry

Overall vision and strategy - 5

Budgeting and staffing

Training of lay people - 5

Deployment of Readers

CMI events

Youth work - 3

Ministerial review - 2

RD to have oversight during lay training

Episcopal oversight of clergy

Pastoral care and support of clergy and families

Everything - except housing

2. Do you feel this would be beneficial to the church & its mission? How and why?

No: (8 responses to this)

Deaneries too small, too random, too varied.

Further delegation would take more local people into deanery business.

Deaneries are artificial districts.

Would like to see deaneries wither away; synods abolished.

(Alternative is cooperation ecumenically, respecting individual church autonomy.)

Would have effect of setting up another layer of government/ administration.

Deanery not relevant unit of ministry and mission.

Severely detrimental to church's mission by diverting parish resources

- personnel to non 'gospel sharing' activities.

Could become too parochial (like parishes).

Support needs to be 2 way - deanery to diocese and vice versa.

Hesitant: (1 response)

Depends. Our diocese has well developed scheme (and bishops).

In some deaneries close cooperation in mission is appropriate - in others less so.

Yes: (38 responses)

Would give Bishop & Archdeacon knowledge & insight into needs of deanery & parish.

Use of local talents/resources - 3

People 'owning' decisions - 8

Church would become leaner and fitter

United Christian witness is imperative (in city)

Local knowledge/views - 7

Deanery likely to know more about deployment (NSM, sector, laity) - 4

Need a clear local unit beyond parish (but not as remote as diocese)

Local encouragement and support of LNSM and lay ministry - 2

Can empower local community to be the church

More immediate reaction and response to changing situations - 2

Local church greater sense of responsibility - 3

Essential that narrow parochialism is broken down

- deanery is only unit able to do this - 2

Sharing of gifts and burdens

Mutual support - diocese too remote - 2

Deployment/streamlining of clergy numbers - 2

APPENDIX C

BROAD OUESTIONS

1. What areas of responsibility do you feel could be devolved to the Deanery by the Dioceses?

None:

Categorical

No more than at present 8

None: Reason

Reasons why: (8 responded in this way)

More work for RD

Cost of office/staff

Deanery should be 'low key'

Deanery too 'scattered'

Placing an extra tier between parishes and diocese

Concern re eroding of parish autonomy

Adding to existing bureaucracy - 2

Deaneries are already good units of fellowship, support and education

As units of mission & government deaneries have no effective place

Hesitant Re Areas: (20 responded in this way)

None but maybe appointments, finance, local decision making

Not unless accompanied by financial resources - 2

Rural Dean's job becomes even more impossible - 2

Cuts at diocesan level needed

Some things best done (and available) centrally (diocese)

Deanery has enough power to do things it should be doing e.g. evangelism

Deanery should not replace parish: but certain decisions should involve deaneries - 2

Need to make hard decisions about usefulness of deaneries - not convinced about devolution

Devolution would be difficult

Could lead to fragmentation

Need role of deanery to be clearly defined before it can achieve more

Not devolution, but better communication and consultation

Could be devolution, but not sure what

Deanery is an administrative area - not a unit for mission

Need for combination of diocesan and deanery input.

Areas which could be devolved: (60 responded in this way)

Consultation over creation & appointment of non-parochial & sector ministries- 10

Appraisal of present & future needs re church buildings - 2

Training - 6

Finance - 4

Management tasks at present carried out by diocese with diocese becoming a specialist agency

Allocation of Quota - 10

Witness & mission of church in education, fellowship, ecumenical activity - 2

Placing/deployment of clergy - 15

Ecumenical - 2

Diversion of money from diocesan & board officers to deanery mission accounts

Responsibility in appointment

Education (LNSM & lav) - 3

Diocesan resources in local centres

Greater say in policy decisions

Planning and sharing of resources - 4

It is good to see emerging from the above such a measure of common agreement about the role of the Rural Dean It is also interesting to see those areas of the role which Rural Deans see as theirs which are outside' the limits of the Job Descriptions. Are there here the beginnings of the shape of things to come for Deaneries and Rural Deans? Maybe, but for the present these serve to add further to that lack of clarity about role and purpose.

DIVERSITY

This is again reinforced by the great diversity in the amount of time which it is expected the Rural Dean will give to his involvement in deanery matters. For those who were given some indication as to how much time it was expected they would require for this purpose, for not all by any means were, this ranges from a few hours to 3 days in a working week. Of the 42 who responded in this way, 18 are expected to spend less than one day per week on deanery matters; 18 from 1 - 2 days; and 6 from 2 - 3 days. I hesitate to say this but such great variation can be seen as a measure of how important or otherwise the deanery is viewed, the conclusion being that it is not seen, on the whole, as being of much significance. This is buttressed by the fact that 89 Rural Deans were not given any indication whatsoever as to the amount of time they were expected to devote to deanery affairs.

It may be in the cases where a time allocation was not specified or one of only a few hours that this is so because the great majority of Rural Deans are incumbents (121 in the survey) and have parochial duties which must take priority. But of these 121, 65 have assistants who are, in the main, ordained and full time stipendiary, and one would have thought that, generally speaking, this would have allowed the Rural Dean to have more time for deanery work unless, as is suspected and feared, not too great a significance is attached to the deanery

When we turn to the Deanery and consider some aspects of what it is at present, given or allowed to do there is again great diversity from diocese to diocese, and also in how these matters are viewed by Rural Deans.

That there is much divided opinion about financial matters there can be little doubt, particularly in the 'Quota" area. On the question of allocation of Diocesan Quota, 74 deaneries have the responsibility for this and all, apart from 8, see some advantages in this which are mostly to do with local responsibility and involvement.

These considered advantages, however, are seen as distinct disadvantages which would bring problems to the deanery, by a good number of the 44 who are neither involved in such a process at the moment, nor would wish to be in the future.

25 deaneries have the responsibility of actually collecting the Quota from their parishes, with 108 not having this responsibility, 96 of. whom would not wish it to be their lot.

A surprising response came in reply to the question concerning financial help for the Deanery from the Diocese. Only 48 responded positively to this; 5 6 maintaining they would not welcome such a move. The priorities of use to which such finance as would be forthcoming would be put was also not what one might think. 38 gave as one of their priorities 'office provision & secretarial/administrative help' only 17 placing 'mission & training' in their priority category. Maybe there is fuel here for a radical rethink about the purpose of deaneries

There is an obvious greater desire for some say in the allocation of clergy to parishes within the deanery than for the allocation etc. of Quota. From the survey, 32 Deaneries (some 24%) have some responsibility in this direction. Just over half of the 89 who do not at present have such a responsibility would welcome some in this area, giving 'local' knowledge as their main reason for this. The 23 who stated categorically that they would not welcome such a move pointed to staffing as being an episcopal 'right' and also, again (as with Quota) to 'local' matters and the problems that would be likely to arise.

On the question of Deanery Pastoral Committees - their existence, usefulness etc. - there was quite a fair measure of agreement. In 99 Deaneries (74% of the sample) a Pastoral Committee was functioning, its main purpose being to act in an advisory capacity re pastoral re-organisation (review & planning) to the Archdeaconry and Diocesan Pastoral Committees, with a very strong emphasis centred on pastoral care coming to the fore. 87 Deaneries felt it was a useful committee and 76 that its advice was listened to and taken seriously by the Archdiaconal and Diocesan Pastoral Committees. There was a very small minority (3%) who felt this was not the case.

It is good to see something a little more positive and a more universally acceptable aspect of the deanery. Perhaps this is a pointer towards the possible future clarification of the role of the Deanery and the Rural Dean - that of pastoral care and provision being at the centre, the hub, around which other aspects could be attached or arranged.

4.		s your deanery any responsibility for telergy to parishes within it?	the allocation	Yes	32	No	89
	a)	If 'No' would you welcome such a resp	onsibility	Yes	45	No	23
	b)	If 'Yes' why? Local knowledge Should be deanery's responsibilit Would give deanery a sense of p Pastoral plans/organisation Overall consultation Collaborative mission & ministry Cut down unnecessary staffing Greater flexibility	urpose		28 8 2 5 1 4 1		
	c)	If 'No' why? Bishop's/diocesan strategy/overv Saves arguments Present system satisfactory Bishop's/diocesan responsibility Avoids domination by 'powerful' Usurps Bishop's authority It is an episcopal matter	iew		7 5 4 2 1 1		
	d)	If your deanery has this responsibility number of stipendiary posts stipulated		Yes	22	No	2
	e)	If 'No' how is the number arrived at? Deanery forms pastoral plan, diocese	nay take note		1		
5.	Ha	ve you a deanery pastoral committee?		Yes	99	No	34
	If	Yes' what is its purpose? Pastoral care Advise Archdeaconry & Dio. pastoral Advise/consider pastoral reorganisation Review and planning Boundary review and change Consultation re appointments/ suspense Encourage groupings/collaboration Encourage mission and ministry Statutory Grant (e.g. CUF) considerations To respond to diocesan initiatives Purpose not known - not consulted or	n ion		44 36 28 28 12 11 9 5 2 3 1		
	e)	Is it a useful Committee? Yes	87	No	2	SoSo	3
	f)	Is it 'listened to' by the Archdiaconal a Yes	nd/or Dio. Pas 76	toral Comm No	ittee?	Sometimes	11

THE FUTURE

There was one element in the 'Deanery' section of the questionnaire specifically devoted to 'Broad Questions' concerning the future of the deanery in which respondents could, if they wished, express their fears, doubts, hopes, dreams, Visions.

Not all took advantage of this - maybe because this element required some deeper thought and would, therefore, be more time consuming to complete than that which had gone before. In the event 105 Rural Deans made response to some, if not all, of the questions.

Because of the wide-ranging nature of this section it is practically impossible for me to give more than a brief indication of the kind of thinking that came forward about the future of the deanery.

There was a mixed response to the question regarding areas of responsibility which it was felt could be devolved to the deanery. Nine gave the reply "None" (without explanation); eight felt nothing other than was devolved to the deanery at present; a further eight also gave the reply "None" but gave their reasons for this feeling, amongst them being: "more work for the Rural Dean", "adding to existing bureaucracy and eroding parish autonomy", and deaneries being "good units for fellowship, support and education but having no effective place as units of mission and government".

Twenty Rural Deans were hesitant in their response; 'sitting on the fence' is not the right expression to use, but several of them intimated that devolution would not be possible unless other things happened in tandem e.g. it should be accompanied by financial resources; the need for the role of the deanery to be clearly defined.

DEVOLUTION

The majority - 60 (57%) - were pretty positive about the feasibility of greater devolution, again for a variety of reasons. 28 felt that deployment and appointment of ministers (parochial, sector, stipendiary, clerical, lay) could be done at deanery level. Some form of financial management was seen as a possibility by 16 Rural Deans. Other areas were to do with Lay Ministry, Resources and Policy/Strategy for the Deanery. It was heartening to see that matters which had to do with ministry and mission were given 45 times; whilst those of finance were given only 16 times

The second question in this section read: "Do you feel this (some further devolution of responsibility to the deanery) would be beneficial to the church and its mission? How and why?" 47 Rural Deans were able to offer something here, again presenting a wide range of views. 8 felt that devolution of more responsibilities to the deanery would not only not be beneficial to the ministry of the church, but detrimental in some way. Amongst their reasons were to be found "the creation of another layer of government", "the diversion of parish resources and personnel to non gospel sharing activities", deaneries being "artificial districts". Only one Rural Dean was unsure about it being beneficial or otherwise - close co-operation in mission being appropriate to some deaneries and not to others

38 (80%) were positive in their view that greater responsibility at deanery level would be beneficial to the Church's mission. 50% of these gave as one of their reasons various matters which had at their root the word "local". e.g. local knowledge and views of needs which could be shared with the Bishop re deployment of clergy etc.; need of a local unit beyond the parish but not as remote as the diocese; local training, encouragement, support of and for LNSMs and lay ministry etc. Finance was mentioned once only and that with a clear reference to payment of clergy.

e)	If 'Yes' what advantages do you see in this?	
	Local knowledge acted upon	4
	Local responsibility/ownership, therefore	
	better able to raise quota	3
	Greater sense of collaboration, mutual support	
	awareness of total needs	2
	Gives deanery more relevance	1
	Spreading of financial burden perceived to be fairer	1
f)	If 'No' what disadvantages do you see in allocating the Quota?	
	Lead to squabbles, arguments (one unholy fight),	
	problems, division etc.	15
	Diocesan scheme works well has resources and expertise	13
	More work/administration	7
	Need of a Diocesan policy	4
	It is the diocesan common fund - deanery is not	
	a mini-diocese	3
	Too close to home	3
	RD becomes local tax gatherer: financial agent of	
	diocese, rather than pastoral carer	2
	Unpalatable	1
	Danger of moving towards parishes being financially	
	self-supportive	i
	No value to deanery - for no real responsibility given to it	1
ъ.		ln towo

Does your deanery receive from the Diocese any direct financial help towards:

a)	Secretarial costs of the deanery	Yes	1	No	126
b)	Provision of a deanery office	Yes	2	No	128
c)	Training or Mission incentives	Yes	30	No	98
d)	Other	Yes	1	No	101

e) If your response to 'Other' is 'Yes' state what these are:

Prayer Workshop

Deanery Missions

Training

Chapter Day Grant

Social Responsibility Help

f) If the Deanery does not receive financial help would you welcome such financial aid? Yes 48 No 56

g) If 'Yes' in what area(s) would your priority for its use lie?

* / * *	
Administration & Secretarial help/Deanery office equipment	38
Training & mission/Lay training	17
Stewardship	2
Youth	2
Support for aided schools	1
Bereavement support scheme	1
Deanery projects	1
Annual deanery conference	1
Assistant Rural Dean	1
Deanery sets budget in consultation with Diocese,	
so that it could decide its own style of ministry etc.	1

The third question asked Rural Deans to list their suggested areas of devolution in priority order, as they saw them. 34 Rural Deans did so. Of these, 17 gave as their first priority matters to do with ministry and mission; 5 named financial areas; 4 had to do with education and training of laity. These aspects also appeared in the second priority area - ministry and mission (12), finance (5), education and training (2). All were contained to a lesser degree as third priorities. Other areas which appeared amongst the first three priorities were such things as youth work, pastoral strategy/re-organisation; resources.

The final item of the questionnaire allowed for an even far wider range of responses than the foregoing, but still concerned with fears doubts, hopes, dreams, visions re. the future of the deanery. 65 Rural Deans gave a response to this.

Eleven saw either no future whatsoever for the deanery, or that they couldn't take on board any further responsibilities speaking in such terms as "abolition of the deanery", "not much point in a deanery" "real work is done by parishes", "too much expected of deaneries" "with pressure on clergy time, nothing further (devolution) is possible", "efforts should be made to reduce bureaucracy", "deanery synod is a superfluous layer of administration".

The remaining 54 Rural Deans were somewhat more positive about the deanery's future. There was substantial emphasis in the responses on the initiation, encouragement and development of cooperation between parishes in various fields of ministry and mission, resources, training, ecumenism, caring, involvement in local issues and social issues.

There was caution expressed and an awareness of potential problems if more responsibility was devolved to deaneries, e.g. "size and character means that opportunities will differ radically from deanery to deanery", care needs to be taken "to prevent deaneries becoming swamped in too much administration coming down from the diocese", "the need for necessary administrative and competent management resources".

HINDRANCES

Likely hindrances to the development of the deanery we see in responses like "parishes and bishops still living in the past" and being "unable to cope with change - neither can clergy" parishes being "too parochially minded", plans being "limited by freehold and the obstinacy that can go with it in resisting all change", the need for parishes "to take the deanery seriously".

Many of those who were very positive about the deanery's future role also made the point that before any changes or additions to their current responsibilities could be brought about, other things needed to happen alongside them, or before them. Not least among these was a plea for recognisable clarity of purpose and role. The need for them to be given "a real clear purpose" occurred, as did "clear demarcation of duties", "clear cut policy/role", "the deanery needs to have a real role if it is to be effective", "the deanery needs to be perceived as the primary unit of church organisation, supporting and servicing parishes and local churches"".

Accompanying the above there was the obvious felt need for a change of thinking - a change of thinking at various levels - but it was "hierarchical attitudes" that were mostly targeted. Amongst the comments made were: "the real matter of importance is the attitude of the Bishop and, to a lesser extent, the Archdeacon to the Deaneries", "the Bishop and diocese need to allow them (deaneries) greater responsibilities", "unless episcopal/senior staff authority is devolved, then responsibility will not/cannot be exercised locally".

11.		you conduct any form of ministerial appraisal the clergy of your deanery?	Yes	17	No	110
	c)	If 'Yes' is it 'Job' centred or 'Person' centred?	Job	3	Person	14
	d)	Is the outcome shared with anyone?	Yes	13	No	4
	g)	Did you receive any particular training for this specific task?	Yes	12	No	5
		APPENDIX B	_			
		THE DEANER	Y			
1.		s your Deanery have the responsibility for cating the Diocesan Quota to parishes?	Yes	74	No	57
	a)	If 'Yes' what advantages do you see in this? Flexibility - make allowance for local variation Parish involvement seen as a fairer way: mutual More local control Dealing with less remote authority Diocesan recommendation - able to adjust Gives deanery a corporate responsibility Gives deanery a responsibility Combined effort Ability to support poorer parishes Each parish pays for what it gets		22 12 7 7 6 6 1 3 3		
		None		8		
	b)	If 'Yes' have you evolved your own formula?	Yes	48	No	19
	c)	If 'Yes' what considerations are taken into account' Various combinations of: size of cong: av. inc Socio-economic status: av. Sun. attendance: process of clergy: potential to pay: fabric repairs: maintenance: mission costs etc. Diocesan scheme amended Ability to pay (support less well off) Based on last 3-4 years accounts (averaged of Charge per ER member Diocesan criteria applied to deanery Based on 'what the market will bear' % increase per an. in accordance with diocesa No more than 25% increase in any one year Had to abandon subsidising	come: parish s copulation: rate of growt amended)			
	d)	If your deanery is not responsible for allocating the Quota to parishes, would you welcome such a responsibility?	Yes	13	No	44

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE - PERSONAL

(Note: Only the main questions to which there are quantifiable answers are given here. Where the 'total' numbers do not make 133 this is because of questions that were not answered.)

1.	Are	you an incumbent?	Yes	121	No	9	
2.	How long have you been Rural/Area Dean?		Range of from 1 to 22 years				
3.	Hov	v long is your term of office?	Range of from 1 - 11 yrs unspecified				
4.	Is th	nis your first term of office?	Yes	87	No	45	
5.		you receive any training relating to your cific role as Rural/Area Dean?	Yes	74	No	58	
	a)	if Yes was this prior to taking up the post or later?	Prior	7	Later	57	
	c)	How long was the training for?	Range of fr	om 2 hou	rs to 2 weeks		
	d)	did you feel it was adequate?	Yes	52	No	13	
	f)	If you haven't had any training, would you have appreciated some?	Yes	42	No	17	
6.	•	you have a written 'job Description' (other n that found in Canon C23)?	Yes	71	No	57	
	a)	If 'No' would you value a written Job Description?	Yes	29	No	22	
	b)	If you have no written Job Description, was any verbal communication made with you about the role and your responsibilities?	Yes	42	No	12	
7.	Wh	at do you consider your main responsibilities to be?	See pages 3	3 and 4			
8.	What proportion of your time is expected to be devoted to your job as Rural/Area Dean? Range from 5 - 50% unspecified						
9.	•	you have an 'assistant' so that you can be assed from parochial or other duties?	Yes	64	No	62	
	a)	If 'Yes' is he/she Ordained or Lay?	Ordained	62	Lay	5	
	b)	Is he/she a 'Full Time' or 'Part Time' Assistant?	Full Time	50	Part Time	12	
	c)	If 'Ordained' is he/she Stipendiary 45	NSM	9	Retired	3	
	d)	Is housing for your assistant provided by your parish? (Diocese 15)	Yes	45	No	20	
10.		If 'Yes' is this a financial burden to the parish? you receive any form of financial assistance n the diocese to help you fund your duties as	Yes	23	No	21	
		ral/Area Dean?	Yes	127	No	5	
	a)	If 'Yes' is this in the form of:	An Allowa Grant towa Other		ases	26 65 17	

Several Rural Deans expressed their recognition that any change in the role and responsibility of the deanery would mean some change in the role and responsibilities of the Rural Dean, for which, said one, there would be need for "better training/support and selection of Rural Deans". Rural Deans to be seen in advance and prepared for the post (i.e. are in the right sort of parish with adequate support to enable them to be an effective Rural Dean)". Other remarks were "they (deaneries) could become 'super parishes' with the Rural Dean being a kind of Team Rector", "the major question revolves around clarity of authority. If one wants to make Rural Deans mini-bishops (and deaneries mini-dioceses) then one needs to be clear about this", "perhaps Rural Deans could be given a bit more "clout", "the deanery is more than the synod. The Rural Dean should be seen to have a leadership role within the deanery", "Rural Deans to be made 2/3 appointments with reduced parochial responsibility, with office, administrative assistance and a real ear to a real Bishop", "the role of the Rural Dean would change dramatically - possibly occupying an independent (non parochial) post across the deanery i.e. mini-bishop ministering more accountably to all parishes and clergy across the deanery and "managing' the mission and ministry from the local perspective".

These are some of the cries, the heartfelt and passionate feelings of Rural Deans who are, despite their hesitancies and longings working faithfully and diligently within the confines of the present system, in the furtherance of the gospel.

THE FUTURE FUTURE

So what are we to make of the foregoing, or rather where do we start, for a lot can be made of it. I'm sure it would be agreed that there is a very high degree of dissatisfaction with the deanery as it stands at the moment, it being seen as a unit which does not and cannot be a centre of support for the parishes within it to the degree which many would wish for it to be, and feel it could be. We have seen it as being variously described as having little authority, no teeth, being the 'weakest link in the synodical chain" etc. and something that should be abolished. It is, or so the feeling seems to be, being 'held back', restrained, hindered, hampered by a lack of any accepted and acknowledged and clearly recognised purpose; it is not being supplied with the necessary support, be that finance, resources or whatever. All this - accompanied by a cry for greater freedom in some way to allow it to be what it was intended to be.

I go back practically to where I began - and to something which has been often repeated here - to this matter of confusion, lack of clarity which surrounds the role of both the Rural Dean and the Deanery. In what I say now, I accept that there will be many gaps in many areas, much room for fine tuning and greater detail. I also anticipate that in response there will be many pointings to ecclesiastical law, statutes and the like; many accusations of ignoring, and even of wanting to dispense with, much that is traditional in our Church of England and thus part of it'. many warnings of pitfalls and disasters. It will also, almost certainly evoke cries of a complete lack (or mention) of theological reasoning. All these I accept.

DREAMS

Having stated these things at this point I ask you to put all such thoughts temporarily on one side and share the dream - I daren't say vision - from beginning to end - and then dream some more.

All that follows will be based on a correlation of the essence of what has gone before - history and questionnaire - and what I consider to be the three fundamentals which form the basis of the deanery: our Lord's great commission; the second function of the Deanery Synod as given in the Synodical Government Measure; and part of the Declaration in the Service of Ordination of a Bishop (ASB). They are:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:19,20).

"To bring together the views of the parishes of the Deanery on common problems and discuss and formulate policies on those problems, to foster a sense of community and interdependence among those parishes, and generally to promote in the Deanery the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical," (Synodical Government Measure)

"He (the Bishop) shares a special responsibility to maintain and further the unity of the Church, to uphold its discipline, and to guard its faith. He is to promote its mission throughout the world He is to know his people and he known by them. He is to baptise and confirm, to preside at the Eucharist, and to lead the offering of prayer and praise." (ASB Pg.388).

church now stands and walks has as its bed-rock the clear clarion call of a truly spiritual Father in God speaking prophetically.

This is not to say that there will be no discussion whatever. The way in which the vision for the diocese at any particular time is to he put into effect and accomplished is what is discussed at the Diocesan Synod and, at future and subsequent Synods progress is reported upon and discussed again.

The Deanery Bishop and the Deanery Synod translate this into terms applicable and suitable for the local level, feeding on their intimate knowledge of the local situation.

In conclusion, here is a 'togetherness', and a visual 'togetherness', previously unknown in the deanery, which has an impact on the wider community, bearing as it does, its witness to the unity of the church as it progresses its mission and as it cuts away at the wall of alienation at the coal-face; as it brings and proclaims the gospel of Christ to a people amongst whom He is unknown.

* * *

for sector ministers, 'buying in' specialised training, financing projects, payment of expenses of voluntary staff, NSM's, LNSM's etc, as well as the day to day running costs of the deanery office. All deanery financial matters are dealt with by a committee of seven people - 5 Treasurers from the clusters, the Deacon and a professionally qualified volunteer.

THE DIOCESE

The oversight of all buildings - churches and parsonages - continues to be handled at diocesan level via inspection by a professional, it not having been seen to be viable for each deanery to employ its own architect/surveyor. Payment for repairs to church buildings is met by the cluster to which the particular church belongs, supported, where necessary, by finance from the deanery. Repairs etc. to parsonage houses are financed by the diocese, decisions on priorities and schedules of repairs etc. being made by a committee for that purpose composed of one representative from each deanery, the 'professional', the Diocesan Secretary and Director of Finance.

The major relationships between the deanery and the diocese are not, however, those of finance. As the deanery exists to serve and support the parishes in their worship and mission, so the diocese is to serve and support the deanery. This is now clearly seen to be the case. Formerly the opposite was, unfortunately and incorrectly, seen by many to pertain, giving rise to the 'them and 'us' ethos. But not so any longer.

The main discussion forum for the diocese is its Synod. Each deanery is represented here by five lay members of its own Synod (1 from each cluster of parishes) plus its Deanery Bishop and one other ordained person. In a diocese of I6 deaneries this makes a total of 112. These are joined by the Diocesan Secretary and Director of Finance, and also, of course and importantly by the Diocesan Bishops, some four in number.

The chief of the latter (the Archbishop?) is the one who holds the public and national role mentioned earlier. Because of the nature and emphasis of this role, he is assisted by three Bishops whose responsibilities are more local. Two of the Bishops were formerly Archdeacons and the focus of their work is the pastoral oversight of the two archdeaconries in the diocese. Because they have been relieved of that aspect of the former Archdeacon's role which had to do with buildings etc., this having been placed in the hands of capable and well qualified retired lay persons, they are now free to have and to enjoy much more contact, through working with the deaneries and within them, with the 'grass roots'. The third Bishop has a general oversight or over-view of the Diocese, attending to pastoral matters which need handling at this level.

MISSION

It is these four who are the key to the mission and spiritual life of the church over the whole diocesan area. Bringing together their varied experiences from the wider world, the diocese, and the deaneries, they are in a position to have the vision for the overall strategy of the church in that particular place. They, particularly the Archbishop need to speak with authority; they, particularly the Archbishop, need to lead; they, particularly the Archbishop, need to energise the church; they, particularly the Archbishop, need to be seen and recognised by church members as deeply spiritual men

It is they, particularly the Archbishop, who bring to Synod their vision for the church in the diocese and this not open for discussion amendment, rejection. If this seems to be a far cry from and at variance with the democratic decision making process of the past, so it is. It was realised that the morass of muddle into which the church foundered and then in which it floundered, was a self imposed quagmire caused by a desire for over democratisation. The solid ground on which the

THE BISHOP

One of the main and major criticisms which is levied at our Diocesan Bishops (and some Suffragans and Assistants to a lesser degree) by clergy and by congregations in local parishes is that "they" are too remote; they have little or no contact with people at parish level and in parish matters, apart from times of Confirmation or 'official visits' or perhaps occasionally during more unhappy moments. This is I believe a criticism which is justified. There are valid, very valid, reasons why this situation pertains in our day - 'the nature of the Bishop's job today, etc; the sheer physical impossibility of knowing really well 200 - 300 diocesan clergy let alone the people whom they serve - all this is understood and to a large extent accepted by the clergy and laity. It is, too, acknowledged by the Bishops - and sometimes apologised for - and in that acknowledgement and in a desire as chief pastor, to somehow 'draw closer' in pastoral matters many Bishops now firmly express the hope that their Rural/Area Deans will, and will be seen to, share their episcope.

But the fact remains that the criticism is justified. The remoteness, accidental, imposed, or possessed, of our Diocesan Bishops does not tie in with the words of the Archbishop in his declaration to the people at the Ordination of a Bishop. "He is to know his people and be known by them" surely speaks of a closeness and a familiarity and a relationship which does not exist at the present time. And when the Archbishop speaks in terms of "baptising, confirming, presiding and leading the offering of praise and prayer" it is, is it not, meant to refer to the people whom the bishop knows and by whom he is known?

In case this should be thought to be any kind of attack on, or golden opportunity to criticise, our Diocesan Bishops, this is not the case. I would argue that their 'Job Description' is an impossible one, and the foregoing is in fact a plea to ease and relieve and release them. No man, however Godly and upheld in prayer he may be, can fulfil what a Bishop is, at the moment, called upon to do. I would see, if you like, two "kinds" of Bishops, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, Bishops with different areas of leadership, service and responsibility. I envisage there being at least

Bishops with different areas of leadership, service and responsibility. I envisage there being at least two of these areas, firstly that majoring on the special responsibility mentioned which concerns unity, discipline, guarding the faith, promoting mission in the world etc. In other words having a kind of public and national role (and a political one?). Secondly, that majoring on the more pastoral elements - that of knowing people. baptising, confirming etc. in other words dealing with people at parish level. More of this later.

THE PARISH

I use the term parish level rather than local level because of my firm belief in the parochial system of the Church of England. This is the "coal face" of ministry and mission. This is the unit which needs servicing support, resourcing and pastoring as it seeks to live out the gospel in what is becoming a very alien atmosphere and, through its living, to draw others to the saving grace of God in Christ. This is the unit of worship and work.

It is with this in mind and a desire for the strengthening and undergirding of this system that I see the future shape and role of the Deanery and the Rural Dean. That the deanery has a place in the mission of the church is my belief not the deanery as we know it now, but one which is in existence because it is seen to he necessary to a group of parishes by that group of parishes. The shape of such a deanery (shape not in the physical sense but in all things that it encompasses), the purpose and the function of such a deanery will not come about or into being by merely tampering with the existing structure, of taking 'this' away and adding 'that' on; by titivating; by moving the furniture around. More radical steps are needed; a demolishing and rebuilding programme is what is required if we are

to have something which is useful and beneficial and effective in any true and real sense and is the 'servant' of the parishes, the supporter, the resourcer, the pastor.

DEANERIES AND CLUSTERS

The deanery of the future then will look something like this.

It will be a deanery comprising, say, 15 parishes or thereabouts, 15 being neither too large nor too small a number. The parishes, we find, are clustered or grouped in threes, each cluster being served by three or more ordained ministers, only one of whom is stipendiary; the others being NSM, LNSM, retired clergy. In addition there are Readers and other Lay Ministers. The clustering, and the willingness to do this, has come about after much encouragement, teaching and practical experience of working together and occasionally worshipping together. Much energy has been expounded in this, for the breaking down of parochial barriers and the lowering of drawbridges has not been easy, even in and amongst those parishes which for many years past have seen the need for, and been open to working with and alongside fellow Christians of other denominations.

Each parish in the cluster retains its own church buildings and historic tradition, but accepts that these are of secondary importance to that of bearing a united Christian witness. Movement of both clergy and people between the three churches of each cluster is encouraged, is found helpful and there is a mutual concern for each other with a measure of shared responsibility.

Each cluster of churches in the deanery (five in all) is served in a similar way; the ordained ministers (stipendiary and non stipendiary) and Readers being licensed to the deanery and not to a particular parish or cluster, although it is expected that the clergy will be attached to a particular cluster. Although the number of stipendiary clergy is in accordance with the target figure for the Diocese, the deployment of these was the responsibility of the deanery.

In addition to the five stipendiary clergy who directly serve the parishes there are two others who are attached to a central church in one of the clusters in the deanery. One is that person who will have the responsibility of oversight and leadership, service and spiritual welfare of both clergy and people - the one who "knows his people" and is "known by them". He is the Deanery Bishop or the Bishop with particular responsibility for the deanery.

It is his task to draw together in mutual support and co-operation the five clusters, to give recognition or authority to the activities of mission and to take his part in them, to initiate work by the church in the secular field through his contacts with various bodies in the community and their leaders, to worship on a regular basis in the churches of the deanery and with his people of any particular place on some five or six Sundays in the year - sometimes leading worship, sometimes celebrating the Holy Communion, sometimes preaching and sometimes being himself ministered to by others. He meets with his ministers weekly for prayer and study and fellowship. He ensures that adequate preparation is given for Baptism and Confirmation and preparation for the latter being done at deanery level he does from time to time take part in this preparation. He is to his people their recognised and known leader and spiritual father, and to those in the wider community a focal figure of the living Christian community.

As much of the church's activity is carried out on a deanery basis, although not necessarily deanerywide, but supported by the prayer of all the churches and resourced by them in terms of material and manpower etc. the need to meet together in some way for discussion and planning is obvious. Each cluster of churches has its Council, its nine lay representatives being drawn in equal numbers from each church plus its stipendiary minister. At the Council, local affairs are discussed, as are the affairs of the deanery; avenues of future ministry pin-pointed; financial matters shared. This Council meets at least monthly.

THE DEANERY SYNOD

The Deanery has its Synod which meets each two months but occasionally more often. The representatives from the clusters number 50 and they are joined by the Deanery Bishop. It is here that decisions about the deanery are made; proposals brought by the clusters on various matters are discussed and prioritised; avenues of ministry or projects resourced and supported by all; the Deanery Bishop is heard, his word carrying great weight for, knowing his people and parishes, his vision is both heaven and earth bound.

Because there is a high degree of interdependence and sharing and common life with common purpose in the deanery, communication is of vital importance - in clarity, quality and quantity. This gave rise to the need for some kind of premises which would allow for this and these are located. alongside the church to which the Deanery Bishop is attached. Besides being simply a meeting area there is also office provision for the necessary administrative tasks involved in the smooth running and efficiency of the Deanery together with a series of small rooms for counselling etc.

Here the Deanery Bishop also has a room for his own use in which takes place discussion and dialogue, for it is known that he is available for such to individuals, representatives, and small groups from both the church community and the wider community.

THE DEACON

The running, organisation and care of the administration centre is the responsibility of the second additional stipendiary clergyman - the Deacon, which now (or again) is a permanent order in the church. The Deacon also works alongside the Deanery Bishop as his secretary. He, the Deacon, takes on his shoulders much of that tedious and often trivial and seemingly unnecessary but very time consuming administration which had been the lot of the parish priest for far too long, thus leaving the latter that amount of time which he claims he has longed for, for duties of a pastoral nature. The Deacon is assisted by a team of volunteers chosen for their skill and expertise in various fields by him from his knowledge of the parishes and people, and to these is be delegated the greater amount of the administrative work. The majority of such volunteers are drawn from the ranks of those who have retired early, for whatever reason, from their occupations.

MONEY

4

When we look at the financial aspect of this deanery we find that the mere provision of more money to the old deanery to do what it wished with, was not the expected and anticipated panacea for the ills of the deanery as formerly thought by many. In fact, many financial matters are still in the care and trust of the Diocesan Office where the real expertise, already paid for, resides, and the Board of Finance is still in existence although its membership has been considerably reduced. Quota, or 'parish share', formulated on an accepted potential basis and worked out or calculated in conjunction with representatives from the deaneries, is still collected by the diocese and includes amounts for parsonage repairs and stipends.

The overall amount collected from the parishes has not decreased despite there being fewer stipendiary clergy in the diocese; in the case of this deanery some nine fewer - formerly there were 16, 1 for each parish (including the Rural Dean) and the Rural Dean's assistant. This 'saving' is reallocated to the deanery and the amount being considerable, can be used for such things as payment