

## E4 PASTORAL RE - ORGANISATION

The legal process for re-organising parishes and arrangements for staffing them is provided by the Pastoral Measure 1983 and is known as “pastoral re-organisation”. The Measure also provides the system for settling the future of churches which are no longer required for worship. This process is necessary because the way in which clergy are deployed and churches are distributed, does not always reflect movements of population that have taken place or changes in churchgoing habits. Also, it is important that the Church’s limited resources are deployed as effectively as possible.

The work of keeping the arrangements for pastoral care of the parishes in the diocese under review is done by the archdeaconry pastoral committees and reported to the Bishop’s Council, which has absorbed the functions of the Diocesan Pastoral Committee. Suggestions for change may come from a variety of sources; the parishes themselves, the bishop, the deanery or the committee itself. When an Archdeaconry Pastoral Committee favours a change it makes recommendations to the Bishop. The full membership of the Archdeaconry Sub Committees which are normally chaired by the Bishop of Dunwich, can be found in the Diocesan Directory. The Bishop’s Council reports annually to the Diocesan Synod on its activities.

Before any recommendations are made the views of specified interested parties must be formally obtained and considered. However, before this stage is reached there will often have been informal discussions between the archdeacon and the parishes concerned. The “interested parties” include the parish clergy, parochial church councils, patrons, rural deans, lay chairs of deanery synods, archdeacons and local planning authorities. If they do not agree with the proposals, they should inform the Archdeaconry Pastoral Committee in writing.

Once the Pastoral Committee has made recommendations to the bishop the following happens:

- If the bishop approves the recommendations, he sends them to the Church Commissioners in the form of proposals.
- The Diocesan Pastoral Committee sends copies of the proposals to the interested parties, so that they know this stage has been reached.
- The Commissioners do not themselves, at this stage, take a view on the merits of the proposals, but they have a duty to put them into legal form as either a draft Pastoral Scheme or, where the proposals are less far-reaching, a draft Pastoral Order. The Commissioners send copies of the draft to the interested parties with a notice telling them the date by which any representations may be sent to the Commissioners.

Anyone may make representations within the period prescribed (not less than 28 days), about any draft Scheme or Order.

If a representation seems to be based on a misunderstanding, the Commissioners’ Office tries to resolve this by correspondence. If, however, any representations remain outstanding the Commissioners consult the bishop and take steps to obtain such additional information as they need in order to make an impartial decision on whether to uphold or overrule the representations. If the Commissioners decide to overrule, they send those concerned a full statement of their reasons for doing so.

A Pastoral Order is “made” by the bishop; but a Pastoral Scheme has to be confirmed by order of Her Majesty in Council. In these ways they finally become law.

Schemes and Orders authorise many matters affecting a “benefice” or “parish”. The main changes which the Pastoral Measure authorises are:

- the union of two or more benefices to form a new benefice
- the union of two or more parishes to form a new parish; the formation of an additional benefice and/or parish
- the formation of, or changes to, team or group ministries
- the designation of the clergy who are to serve in any reorganised benefice
- changes in the status of parish churches or consecrated chapels of ease
- the disposal of a rectory or vicarage (“a parsonage house”)
- changes in the patronage of benefices (a “right of patronage” is the right to present a rector or vicar to a benefice)
- the declaration of redundancy of a consecrated church which is no longer required for public worship
- the use of disused churchyards and burial grounds (or, more usually, parts of them) for other purposes, including the erection of buildings on them
- the alteration of parish, deanery and archdeaconry boundaries; the alteration of benefice, parish, deanery or archdeaconry names

### **Teams and Groups**

Teams and groups have in recent years played a significant part in pastoral reorganisation. A team ministry can normally only be established for a single benefice. It consists of a team rector and one or more team vicars, all of whom have the status of incumbent and share the cure of souls. A group ministry, on the other hand, covers two or more separate benefices, each retaining its separate identity, where the incumbents of these benefices work together within the area as a whole.

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