

# Revitalising Redditch

## Next Steps for the Redditch Mission Area

### Background

You will remember a while back we held a series of consultations with PCCs and in open meetings to consider how we might best work together across Redditch and the surrounding areas for mission. Since then a small core group has been taking this forward, and we now have some emerging plans to discuss more widely.

### St Stephen's Renewal Project

The big and exciting development since our earlier rounds of conversations is of course the designation of St Stephen's as one of the diocesan renewal churches. Significant funding has been awarded by the Church Commissioners' Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board, to enable both some re-ordering and additional staffing, with the aim that St Stephen's will grow to have an average weekly attendance of over 150 and eventually be a significant resourcing hub in the town centre. The Rev'd Fraser Oates will be leading this project from summer 2024, once his curacy at All Saints Worcester comes to an end.

### How to structure the Mission Area for health and sustainability

We are almost ready to begin formal consultation with the potential Redditch Mission Area parishes about a scheme for re-organisation, timed such that the way forward is clear when the St Stephen's renewal project begins. This will allow appropriate governance for St Stephen's from the outset, and will also enable all the churches to flourish in their missional identity by working effectively together on 'back-room functions' to increase capacity for mission and more. It is anticipated that we may be able to fund some central support for the Mission Area from our Diocesan Healthier Churches Fund, once the Mission Area is in place.

### The Proposed Scheme in Outline

Our aim is for **simple and effective governance** ..... but this is the Church of England so simplicity is a relative term! More widely across the diocese, to reflect changes in the way most churches and their ministers function, we are moving towards a model of one PCC or Joint Council per incumbent, a way forward which seems to have both integrity and manageability.

We have drawn up in draft a potential scheme for consultation which honours this direction, mainly separating out the current team ministry parishes into individual parishes, but drawing all those parishes together into a team together which will be the new Mission Area. Where teams have previously existed but not always been functioning well, these would be separated out to enable each church to flourish, so some new parishes would be formed, for example the proposed parish of Greenlands.

This **values the local** – each parish would have wardens, and its own set of accounts. In some cases, for example the proposed new parish of Alvechurch and Beoley under the leadership of Rev'd Gail Rogers, the two churches would have their own budget lines and could keep designated funds appropriately, but most other governance functions would be shared.

Paul Lawlor would become rector of the new team and Mission Area Leader, with six team vicars. Some administrative functions would happen at a team level, supported by an operations manager role, and missional initiatives will be planned in this context. It is hoped that a Children and Families Worker or Community Missioner might also be funded to support all the churches across the area. Good examples of how this is already emerging are the *Make Christmas Special Toy Appeal* and the cross-church floristry course.

### **An Alternative Option**

The core group were keen that we put two options before the wider community. Option two proposes a Mission Area comprised of just two PCCs, one for St Stephen's, and one for the other eleven churches. In some ways this might seem a simpler and more radical option. It would simplify shared operational issues but it brings its own complexities with regards to forming local policies and ensuring a thriving local identity for the churches.

In the Redditch context this would require a high degree of trust and creativity to prevent the team governance from becoming unwieldy or overly controlling of the local churches. This option would require very clear schemes of delegation to allow individual churches to hold different theological perspectives on some key issues and ensure good local missional identity, but could still hamper diversity.

It would be a large entity, with five team vicars and a team rector. The council would need representatives from each church to be present for key decisions. However, having a more structured central legal entity could reduce administrative overheads and simplify the provision of centralised support.

*A draft version of both schemes is available to discuss, prior to sending one out to existing PCCs for consultation.*

## **What happens now?**

After an initial discussion with clergy, wardens and lay chairs from the churches involved, we will make any changes to the consultation papers deemed necessary, and begin the process of formal consultation on the preferred paper, which should be broad and offers a great opportunity to involve many stakeholders in engaging with these plans. Some discussions are needed first with some of the external patrons, but we will ensure these happen soon. The formal process within the diocese takes several months, and then, even if everyone is in agreement, the draft scheme has to go to the Church Commissioners for the next part of the process. For expectation management, there is a significant delay at this stage as most dioceses are in the process of similar re-organisations, and there is a huge backlog. A group of diocesan officers is working with our diocesan legal advisers to ascertain how we might proceed with some interim arrangements for governance in the meantime, particularly to enable St Stephen's to operate separately as the renewal funding is released.

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