

DIOCESAN LAY CHAIRS
Lay Leaders in the
Church of England

Guidance
and
Recommended Good Practice
2016

DIOCESAN LAY CHAIRS – GUIDANCE NOTES

1. Introduction

These notes are to offer guidance and encouragement for this important role of lay leadership within the life of the Diocese. The amount of time and expertise that different Diocesan Lay Chairs can offer will vary greatly. Also how they work with their appropriate Bishops, Senior Clergy and Diocesan Officers will differ. It is important that Diocesan Lay Chairs remember that they are representatives of the laity of the diocese within a Church, which is seeking to grow.

2. Overview

Diocesan Lay Chairs bring expertise, wisdom, and knowledge about local parishes and deaneries in their dioceses. They should have the skills and experience to organise good meetings and chair effectively for positive outcomes.

Diocesan Lay Chairs are officers of the Diocesan Synod, elected on a triennial cycle by members of the House of Laity. They are representatives of and key spokespersons for the laity of the Diocese. With the Diocesan Bishops, Senior Clergy and Chair of the House of Clergy they have an important leadership role to help further mission and ministry in the Diocese and to engage with the wider church.

The Diocesan Lay Chairs should conduct their leadership role prayerfully and carefully being mindful of the guidance of the Bishop and the Mission of the Diocese.

The Diocesan Lay Chairs should be on the distribution list for regular Diocesan Communications and be aware of important matters that relate to church life at a national, diocesan, deanery and parish level.

The relationship between the Diocesan Lay Chair, the Bishops, Senior Clergy and Diocesan Officers, especially the Diocesan Secretary, is crucial to the successful leadership of the Diocese.

3. Normal duties

The Diocesan Lay Chair with the Diocesan Clergy Chair will act as joint Vice Chairs of the Diocesan Synod under the Diocesan Bishop as the President or Chair and together ensure the smooth running of the Diocesan Synod.

The Diocesan Lay Chair is ex-officio a member of the Bishop's Council, and Vacancy in See Committee. which only meets when there is vacancy for a Diocesan Bishop.

The Diocesan Lay Chair will chair any meetings of the House of Laity.

The Diocesan Lay Chair should bring to the attention of the Bishops or Archdeacons any pastoral or other concerns they have in relation to the Diocese.

4. **The following suggestions are intended as guidance to illustrate the range of activities that a Diocesan Lay Chair may use to develop their role within their Diocese.**

The Diocesan Lay Chair should be fully conversant with and participate in how the Diocese seeks to further Ministry and Mission; to achieve spiritual and numerical growth, contribute to the Common Good and develop ministry in a changing world.

The Diocesan Lay Chair should attend meetings with the Bishop and Archdeacons as and when invited. The Diocesan Lay Chair is not normally a member of the Bishop's Staff but should be involved in discussions about strategic changes within the Diocese.

The Diocesan Lay Chair should seek to foster good relationships with the Bishops, Senior Clergy and Diocesan Officers. A good relationship with The Chair of the House of Clergy is important and worth spending time to develop.

The Diocesan Lay Chair may be part of a Business (Agenda) Setting Committee, which plans the Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod meetings.

The Diocesan Lay Chair may be a member of different committees including the Diocesan Board of Finance, Mission Committee, Cathedral Council, Selection panels for the appointment of senior staff (e.g. Archdeacons) and Appeal panels to offer an independent lay view.

The Diocesan Lay Chair as Lay Representative should develop and maintain good links with the lay people within the Diocese through regular meetings with Deanery Lay Chairs and Area (Rural) Deans. It is important to have good communications with the Diocesan members of General Synod, especially the lay representatives.

The Diocesan Lay Chair should encourage people to fully engage in the synodical structures of church government.

The Diocesan Lay Chair should support and encourage Lay Leadership at all levels within the Diocese.

A Diocesan Lay Chair may take the opportunity to visit other parishes for Sunday worship in order to familiarise themselves with the congregations of the Diocese.

The Diocesan Lay Chair should be invited to attend Institutions and Licensings, and may welcome new clergy on behalf of the lay people of the Diocese.

The Diocesan Lay Chair can be asked to act as a Lay representative of the Diocese at ecumenical and other events.

If the Diocese has a Diocesan Service after the elections of its officers, it is good practice for the Diocesan Lay Chair and other officers to be commissioned as part of the worship.

The Diocesan Lay Chair is automatically a member of the Diocesan Lay Chair Forum, which offers support and encouragement from fellow Diocesan Lay Chairs.

The Diocesan Lay Chairs often offers their time and expertise as part of their own stewardship. Different dioceses have different arrangements for the reimbursement of reasonable expenses; these should be accessible and used.

It is considered good practice that Diocesan Lay Chairs with other lay officers should review their position after two - three terms. There may be special reasons why an additional term might be justified. Diocesan Lay Chairs should be actively involved in succession planning and hand-over to assist the smooth running of the Diocese.

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