



john truscott

church consultant and trainer

69 Sandridge Road, St. Albans, Herts AL1 4AG

Tel: 01727 832176

Email: john@john-truscott.co.uk

Web: www.john-truscott.co.uk

CONFIDENTIAL TO THE BISHOP OF ELY AND CMT PROJECT BOARD

Changing Market Towns

A Mid-term Review of an innovative project in the Diocese of Ely

November 2021

The shape of this report

- 1: Introduction
- 2: The setting
- 3: Achievements to date
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The shape of this report

After the Part 1 introduction I divide this report of my Mid-term Review of the Changing Market Towns project into four.

Part 2: The setting

Part 2 outlines the project itself and provides background for what follows. I outline how the project was set up and what it aimed to achieve before noting the considerable impact that the lockdowns caused by the Covid pandemic have had for a majority of its life. I also note the McKinsey Influence Model as I understand this was the basis for some initial thinking.

Part 3: Achievements to date

The main part of this report lists a number of weaknesses which need to be addressed in whatever way is possible at this stage. But first I show that in spite of Covid and strategically questionable features of structure and relationship, the project has already had a significant impact, even if not always in the ways expected. Just the concept itself has to be commended for its 'out-of-the-box' thinking, the staff that have been appointed have proved to be dedicated, skilled and sensing a call from God, and there have been obvious benefits in a range of town projects.

Part 4: Fundamental weaknesses

But the project has met a range of difficulties and these cannot be ignored. Here I have sought to engage with what I see as the real issues, not just the visible ones. For example, some staff were not offered equipment to support their work. That may be easy, once identified, to put right, but what was the underlying issue that caused this? Why did it happen?

I list eight problems to solve, six of which concern the way the project was set up (hindsight is a wonderful thing!) and two outcomes from these relate to local ownership of the project and strained relationships. It may be painful to discuss such things but we have to identify exactly what needs putting right before we can take corrective action.

I am aware that some of these are controversial but I met requests from several people for me to be honest and open, not to hide issues away. I was even asked if the project had a future at all.

Part 5: Solutions to explore

My recommendations for action have to be somewhat restrained because they need to be actioned very quickly and without massive disruption for time is running out. I express these under four broad headings with a number of recommendations under each. The four are concerned with fundamentals:

- Centre v local balance
- Leadership of the project
- Mission in towns
- A spiritual heart

I am so grateful to those who have been praying for this exercise and trust that this report will give the Bishop of Ely and Project Board the information and direction they need to take necessary action.

5th November 2021

1: Introduction

In Part 1 I explain the background to this assignment, the brief I am working to, and the programme of work I have carried out.

1.1 Background to this assignment

I was first approached by The Ven Hugh McCurdy, Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech, on 30th April 2021 to ask if I would prepare various written policies in an effort to overcome problems being experienced in the Diocese of Ely's Changing Market Towns (CMT) project.

I had a Zoom call with the Archdeacon and Canon Paul Evans, Diocesan Secretary, on 4th May 2021 and was then sent a draft brief on 24th May. This led to an exchange of correspondence and a broadening of the project to include various meetings and training events, agreed in a further Zoom call on 27th May. I then prepared a detailed Proposal on 28th May and this was agreed. There was a further Zoom call on 15th June, a helpful call with Mike Booker (Bishop's Change Office for Market Towns) on 17th June and we then arranged a meeting in Ely with Mike, who was about to retire, and his successor, followed immediately with a further session with other members of the central project team too. These took place on 20th July 2021.

We agreed that my clients for this investigation and output would be The Ven Hugh McCurdy and Canon Paul Evans, acting on behalf of the Bishop of Ely.

1.2 Original brief

I summarised the brief given to me by my clients in my original May Proposal as follows.

"You have asked me to consider a possible assignment for your Changing Market Towns (CMT) project in the form of working with central and local staff, lead clergy and PCCs to understand the issues, clarify good practice, set up necessary policies and enable the CMT project to flourish rather than struggle.

The reasons for setting up this assignment can be summarised as:

- The apparent lack of local ownership for their own project by each CMT PCC;
- the awkward position that lead clergy then find themselves in, having to defend their CMT workers to PCC and others;
- the lack of experience and training for lead clergy in defining lay roles, managing lay staff and handling conflict, which has sometimes led to difficulties.

The objective of the assignment is as follows:

- cultural change in the way the CMT project is managed at a local level by PCCs, incumbents and other staff;
- the production of a suite of documents designed to underpin better practice in the areas of HR and management;
- clarity of roles within each CMT team and in particular for the clergy team leader and the Operations Manager;
- an audit of church policies in each MT.

The outcomes over which the success or otherwise of this assignment can be assessed will be:

- Clarity of roles in each MT setting, based on local implementation of policies that have been set up.
- Each PCC understanding their role of oversight and staff selection and employment.
- The production of diocesan documentation covering:
 - management responsibilities for an MT PCC;
 - clarity of line management and oversight by the lead clergy person;
 - clear policies on harassment, bullying, courtesy in church, PCC code of conduct and others as identified in the audit;
 - complaints procedures and appeals.”

1.3 Amended brief

But once I had started to meet those involved in the project it became clear that there were different expectations on what was required at this point. I therefore drafted an amendment to the original proposal on 4th August 2021 which changed nothing that was already listed but added the following:

“Also to offer a mid-term review of the CMT project by end October 2021 at a point where:

- its funding deadlines have to be taken into account as time has advanced;
- the brake of the Covid pandemic appears at last to be coming off;
- there is new leadership for the project, but with a limited weekly time involvement, which is certain to offer fresh ideas and challenges.”

In addition I suggested some retiming of events. In my original proposal I assumed that there would be a celebratory event during the autumn (delayed from the previous year but now closely tied in to my work for the project) and a training day on employment, management and the role of Operations Managers. But once I was meeting people involved in the project I came to see that such events in the autumn would be premature. First, a new Bishop’s Change Officer needed time to establish himself in role, and secondly there was no common view on issues of employment by PCCs and a training day would be wasted at this point.

I explained all this in my amendment to the original proposal paper on 4th August. In this I also stated:

“I am also not at this point certain as to what form of output I need to advise to ensure better working practices in the market towns. Some form of training may be helpful, but only if there is buy-in to it from everyone. A necessary first approach may be to rethink structures for line management with some creative ideas put forward.”

This document was quickly affirmed by my clients. This report is the Mid-term Review. I now expect to carry on with work on policies but will come back to other aspects of the original brief when I can see how these may be impacted by reactions to this report.

1.4 Work carried out

Here is a summary of the work I have carried out in the production of this Mid-term Review, following the initial discussions with my clients as described above.

- 1 I met with central project staff in Ely on 20th July 2021. I then had a Zoom call with one member unable to be present on that day.
- 2 I read up of a large body of printed material, sent to me at my request. This included Board and Delivery Group minutes and papers, contact details for all those employed within the CMT project, job descriptions and person profiles for employed posts, various reports and leaflets, and documents hosted on the Diocese of Ely website where I studied all references I could find to the CMT project.
- 3 I visited the six market towns I had been asked to report on. These visits are listed in more detail in section 1.5 below. I visited Huntingdon and St Neots on different days but was able to minimise time and travel costs by visiting Ramsey and Chatteris on a single day, and March and Wisbech on another single day.
- 4 I wrote a short progress report for my clients on 10th September.
- 5 I designed a simple, descriptive questionnaire which the Projects and Development Officer distributed to the Board, all CMT staff, clergy in the six towns and the Church Wardens. This went out in mid-September for return by early October and I then analysed all the responses.
- 6 I had analysed my meeting with staff, Town Leaders and others by town (issues arising in St Neots, March, etc.). I analysed the questionnaires by type of respondents (Town Leaders together, Operations Managers together, and so on). This gave me helpfully different perspectives on people's views.
- 7 During this time I met (in person and by Zoom) with the new Bishop's Change Officer for Market Towns, and was in regular contact with the Projects and Development Officer who answered many of my questions and provided me with extra documentation that I requested.
- 8 I prepared a draft of this report for my clients, discussed it with them, then prepared this final version.
- 9 I now need, with my clients, to rethink future work under the terms of my brief once I have ascertained reaction to this review report.

1.5 Those I interviewed

I was asked to investigate six of the market towns (omitting Downham Market and Littleport). I have had no contact with Christ Church, Huntingdon, now seen to be rather outside the project. I had a total of 27 personal interviews, most lasting about one hour in length. Those I met with were as follows. * indicates Town Leader

- **St Neots with Eynesbury on 23rd July** (6 interviews)
Team Rector*, Love's Farm Pioneer, Youth Pioneer, Operations Manager, SSM Curate, Church Wardens
- **Huntingdon on 28th July** (4)
Vicar*, Children's and Families' Missioner, Youth Missioner, Operations Manager
- **Ramsey on 23rd August** (3)
Rector*, Church Wardens, Community Mission Worker (Zoom on 2nd August)
- **Chatteris on 23rd August** (2)
Vicar*, Operations Manager (Church Wardens cancelled their meeting with me)

- **March on 9th September** (4)
Team Rector*, Community Mission Worker, Children and Family Worker, Operations Manager
- **Wisbech on 9th September** (4)
Incumbent*, Walsoken Rector, Youth Worker and Family Worker, Church Family Worker

Meetings with central staff and clients

- **Ely on 20th July** (2)
Bishop’s Change Officer (retiring) + Bishop’s Change Officer (taking over), later joined by Strategic Programme Manager + Projects and Development Officer
- **Zoom on 28th July** (1)
Evangelism Coach
- **Huntingdon on 28th July** (1)
Bishop’s Change Officer (taking over) – and then several other dates by Zoom

1.6 Questionnaire responses

The September questionnaire was deliberately set in an informal way, asking people to respond in their own words to ten questions. The idea was to keep it away from the idea of a product assessment and more into a conversation with me. The questions are listed in Appendix App1 on page 25.

Here are the response details:

<i>Sent to:</i>	<i>Sent out</i>	<i>Replies</i>
Town Leaders (key project clergyperson in each of six market towns)	6	6
Other clergy in those market towns	8	5
CMT workers in those market towns	9*	7
Operations Managers in those market towns	4	4
Church Wardens in those market towns	21	6
Central staff and Project Board members	9	5
TOTALS	57	33

*One of these was on maternity leave

The low level of response from Church Wardens was no surprise, bearing in mind the lack of ownership of the project by PCCs and congregations.

Responses from Church Wardens were, on the whole, quite short. Replies from clergy were, in general, much more detailed. Where I have quoted, anonymously, from respondents in this report it is always to underline a point of view held by others too, not to highlight someone’s personal feelings that are not shared by others.

1.7 **My thanks**

It is never easy putting yourselves under external observation and analysis but from CMT staff and Town Leaders I have met a real desire to find a way ahead that will enable God to bless this project and lead to growth for the Kingdom. I am so grateful to everyone who has given me honest views and taken the time and trouble to do this, especially as some have done so in detail and with considerable feeling.

I am particularly grateful to Mike Booker for enabling this review to be set up before he retired and for his initial advice and support for me, providing a range of documentation at my request.. Many have spoken warmly of his management of the project. Also to his successor, Jon Randall, who has worked with me both as Town Leader for Huntingdon and as the new Manager of the CMT project.

I would like to express particular thanks to Martin Kenward whose efficiency and reliability have been a wonderful role model of what any administrator should display, and who has answered my questions with unfailing courtesy. We have had several Zoom and telephone calls and his helpfulness has been a joy to see. I was not surprised that other staff told me similar stories of how he works with them.

In a brief exposure to the CMT project I cannot pretend to have understood every aspect of your ministry nor of its brief history. I am only too conscious of everything I have had to leave out of this report to make it manageable in scope and length. I received comments on more issues than I cover here. But I have tried to focus on the more significant matters of the brief you gave me within the scope you set for me.

It is my belief that when you place together the snapshot taken from outside, which comes as far as possible without hidden bias, with the views of those who live within the culture of the CMT project and know it intimately, we can determine God's way ahead. That is what we seek and pray for – not a neat management solution.

Here now follows my report of findings and recommendations for action in this Mid-term Review.

2: The setting

2.1 The origins of the CMT project

The Changing Market Towns project came about through a successful bid by the Diocese of Ely for a grant from the Church of England's Strategic Development Fund (SDF). The diocese submitted the bid in June 2018 and they were awarded a total of £2.13 million which they matched from reserves and sales of land to give a total investment over a five-year period of £4.36 million.

The idea for such a project is unique to the Diocese of Ely. Other dioceses have used grants from the SDF in other ways, such as to set up and staff 'resource churches' with the idea that, given appropriate clergy and lay staffing, such churches will then plant new congregations and so enable growth.

But the Ely concept, of 'targeting resources to key areas' as part of their 2025 growth strategy was different. The diocese includes one, relatively wealthy, city (Cambridge) plus its satellite areas all of which have seen significant investment through the university and scientific research centres. But much of the rest of the diocese, to the north of Cambridge and including Peterborough, has seen disinvestment by national bodies. It is an area much of which is distant from the UK motorway and main line railway networks, where indices of deprivation are among the highest in the country, and where local retail and other industries are struggling.

Yet apart from Cambridge one third of the diocesan population is based in towns of over 7,000 people. The diocese has used the title 'market towns' since most of these have hosted a market at some point in their history.

How counter-cultural and, it might be argued, how like the origins of the Christian gospel, to give special attention to areas which other agencies are ignoring. The Bible frequently indicates that God seeks to bless the poor and needy.

The idea is to invest in various market towns spread throughout the Fens. The initial focus was on eight: Chatteris, Downham Market, Huntingdon, Littleport, March, Ramsey, Whittlesey and Wisbech. Later on in a Phase 2, St Neots was added. Huntingdon straddles both Phase 1 and Phase 2.

The Bishop's Change Officer started work in 2018 and a celebration for members of all the participating churches at the time was held in the town of March in October that year. The first staff appointed to the towns started work that autumn. If there can be in any sense an official start date it might be seen as August 2018.

A second bid for SDF money was not successful so Phase 2 of the project has more limited funding from the diocese alone.

2.2 The aims of the project

A mid-term review needs criteria by which to assess success or failure. Here the diocesan website explains the original aims.

"The aim is to enable and sustain church growth in small and medium-sized towns as part of the diocese's commitment to;

- engage fully and courageously with the needs of our communities;
- grow God's church by finding disciples and nurturing leaders;
- deepen our commitment to God through word, worship and prayer."

The project works across the whole of each town and so in some cases may work in one parish but in others there may be separate parishes or a team ministry.

The project aimed to launch new congregations, to set up fresh expressions of church and to expect organisational change to enable church leaders to focus on mission. The diocesan website states that an aim is “to see a significant number of Fresh Expressions of church appearing as new parts of the community are reached.”

Major elements of the project, against which its success or failure should be measured, are stated to include:

- “support and training for clergy and congregations;
- the development of a learning centre at Wisbech;
- co-ordinated town-wide approaches for community action and church growth
- seeking to bring in several waves of major new investment
- looking to appoint a growing number of highly motivated community workers working for social transformation;
- churches and schools working closely together to support children and families;
- revitalising existing churches and multiplying fresh expressions of church;
- planning to plant new congregations, drawing on the strengths of larger churches.”

These are very ambitious statements which still exist on the diocesan website (last accessed 25th October 2021) and although there have been some wonderful examples of success within some of the points, it has to be said that the results fall short of the feel of what is being described. However, Covid could never have been anticipated.

There is also a stated target that the project results in 800 people encountering faith. This is a firm figure but a vague concept. It does not mean people in Sunday services, but how do you define it?

Initial results seemed to be positive. By October 2019, less than one year from the appointment of most initial staff, there was growth of over 50% in the number of people exploring discipleship – but this was from a low base. The Covid pandemic then of course delayed progress and placed struggling churches in financial and attendance trouble. It is therefore very difficult to assess progress just at the moment.

One feature of this project is the lack of tidy start and end dates. The five years of funding applies to staff appointments from the moment they are made, but start dates have varied widely as some posts have proved difficult to fill, some workers have moved on leaving vacancies, and finding a Town Leader in one case has provide elusive even at this point. Most of the towns have seen new lead clergy appointments since the project’s launch.

2.3 The impact of Covid

As already noted it is only fair to point out that the Covid lockdowns have had a considerable impact on the project. While the clocks for the five years of funding continued to tick, many of the CMT workers found themselves with limited actions they could take while working from home and some were furloughed for short periods of time.

Meanwhile Operations Managers found themselves with a much increased workload as they sought to enable churches to switch to recorded or live streamed services while preparing risk analyses and editing recordings.

But the impact has not only been in staff work but also in church incomes which have received a hit, first from lack of room hire income and secondly from a downturn in congregational giving.

It is therefore difficult to interpret what the project has achieved with such a major, and totally unexpected, discontinuity. Even if everything were to recover, and that is far from certain, initiatives have stuttered, new contacts have been lost, and CMT workers are having to build again from a lower base than they had in early 2020.

2.4 **Change and the McKinsey Influence Model**

The methodology of the project with a single Town Leader clergy appointment (so the project could cross parish boundaries when these are unhelpful), with different types of MT worker in each town (so the posts can be tailored to local needs), with the appointment of Operations Managers to perform a range of senior staff tasks, and with the pursuing of sustainability through church growth came out of initial thinking, some of which was based on the McKinsey Influence Model.

This states that “I will change my mindset and behaviour if...”

- 1 **Role modelling**
 ...I see my leaders, colleagues and staff behaving differently.
- 2 **Fostering understanding and commitment**
 ...I understand what is being asked of me and it makes sense.
- 3 **Developing talent and skills**
 ...I have the skills and the opportunities to behave in the new way.
- 4 **Reinforcing with formal mechanisms**
 ...I see that our structures, processes, and systems support the changes I am being asked to make.

The project calls for a significant culture change in the churches being supported. Such a change would not be anything like so obvious in a larger Cambridge church where the idea of employing staff and having an Operations Manager in a leadership role might be well embedded. But in small and medium market towns these have been sudden transformations which most were unready for, as reactions from PCCs and congregations have demonstrated.

On top of these changes has come the idea of fresh expressions, a rude shock to many congregations that will be unaware of changes to church thinking taking place throughout the Church of England. This no doubt explains why congregations hope to see growing Sunday attendance without any change to their traditional, liturgical Eucharist. They are then disappointed and see the CMT project as failing.

Perhaps everyone was simply unprepared for the innovative nature of the CMT project and had underestimated its impact on traditional congregations in small and medium local communities, away from the bright lights of wealthy cities and suburbia.

Some told me that the McKinsey model had been cited but there was little that had been put into practice from it. It certainly feels to this reviewer that its four points have not been put into practice in much of the project.

3: Achievements to date

There is much to celebrate over what has been achieved in the past three years. Here is a summary of what is particularly striking.

3.1 The concept

To this reviewer the concept of investing in market towns in a diocese with two very distinct areas (Cambridge and its hinterland plus Peterborough, and the fenland towns and villages) is both prophetic and bold. Prophetic because it relates to a priority close to the heart of God and as such speaks volumes to a secular world which has, in large measure, taken an opposite action. Bold because it comes with a considerable level of risk when an easier option would have been to invest in large Cambridge area churches that are already well resourced. It is of note that no other diocese has taken this line as such. This does not point to foolhardy action on Ely's part. To seek to grow disciples and enable community transformation are worthy aims and, from all I have seen, ones that show leadership and courage.

As one questionnaire respondent stated, "I admire the Church of England for wanting to invest into an area that has often been overlooked." I would encourage the Board to see this as the first achievement of many.

3.2 The quality of staff

I am aware that the overall picture, over the short history of the project, may not be seen as wholly positive when it comes to both clergy and lay staff. I am also aware that there continue to be frustrating difficulties in finding suitable staff for some vacancies (such as in St Neots for a CMT worker and in March for a Team Vicar in Mission), but I have met some very impressive people in the course of my investigations, people well worth managing well (but sadly, as I will show below, the quality of management has often been lamentable).

You have a team worth celebrating. I was impressed by many with a sense of call, sometimes telling me that nothing would keep them here if it was not for a call from God. You have people who have joined the project staff fully aware that this is time limited and, in many cases, there is little plan for future sustainability and hence the threat of redundancy hangs over them. You have had a dedicated Bishop's Change Officer who has with gentleness managed the project until now. You have skilled and qualified staff in fields such as fresh expressions, communications and operations.

You have made some very good appointments, many of whom need encouragement by being told this. I trust that this message will be clearly communicated to them. You have also been able to appoint new clergy who have arrived already signed up to the overall aims of the project for their town.

3.3 Visible progress

There have been clear advances along the lines of your original aims such as:

- impressive schools work that has given the Church a local profile;
- operations work that has freed up clergy and improved systems, IT, etc.;
- food banks and similar provisions meeting local needs in an age of austerity;
- discipleship groups formed;

- youth work through the clearly successful Thrive project;
- music ministry through a specialist CMT worker;
- locally initiated outreach initiatives such as Chat-Tea;
- strategic networking with local authorities and local influencers;
- successful online services in lockdown which would otherwise have struggled;
- effective staff networks across all the towns (eg. of Operations Managers);
- valuable statistical data collected to demonstrate progress;
- early statistics (pre-Covid) showing good progress towards targets.

I do not need to list everything here in detail as you are already recording this through reporting to the centre from each town.

Some towns view the project achievements very positively. “An outpouring of the Lord’s favour,” was how one respondent put it, “with tremendous support from the incumbent and great training from the Evangelism Coach”.

If I show up a falling short of initial expectations later in this report, this in no way diminishes the progress that has been made by staff and others in seeking to develop new forms of Christian outreach and discipleship in a conservative environment. There is much to celebrate and staff should be thanked for all they have achieved.

3.4 **Hidden progress**

But there is more going on than can be counted or is clearly visible. I note that you are attempting fresh expressions work on a five-year timetable, when FX specialists will tell you that you need to expect progress to be slow and results can only really be determined after more like eight to twelve years, a point the Board are aware of.

The trouble is that this can be used as an excuse for lack of performance. Or you can end up with a brilliant social services project that has a significant impact on the local community but which does little to bring people into discipleship. Some people I met in my investigations pointed out that being able to tell a few encouraging stories was not the same as hitting specific targets that had been set. The difficulty is knowing what is a wise balance to hold between expectation of increasing numbers and a realisation that it takes time to change a well-embedded, traditional church culture.

What there does not seem to be is an agreement, sometimes within individual towns, on what progress looks like. Some clearly expect ‘bums on seats’ evidence. Some see major links formed with schools and local community groups which then need to be used as means of reaching people with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Having said that, I was impressed at some of the FX work being carried out and felt that this was a necessary, if not exactly a sufficient, means for creating an environment for the Gospel. One respondent commented, “The building of relationships across (the town) cannot be underestimated and this is often overlooked when reviewing the progress of the project”.

3.5 **A change in Project Manager**

At this point there is a retirement and new appointment as Bishop’s Change Officer for Market Towns. Normally this might be seen as a threat to the success of a project, especially as there is in some senses the departure of the well-loved ‘founder’ which is always a critical moment in any organisation’s history.

But I am including it in the part of this report on achievements because:

- the transfer has taken place seamlessly, with no vacancy period;

- the incoming Manager has been a successful 'end-user' and has considerable experience of change management from his business background;
- this gives an opportunity to adjust how the project is run from this report.

One factor that cannot be ignored is that the new post holder is a O.5 appointment so that he continues as a Town Leader and incumbent within the diocese.

3.6 Achievements by town

I was impressed with a wide range of outcomes in just the six towns I visited. Here is a quick summary of some of what I heard about. All this needs to be seen within the context of a long lockdown period that put the brakes on many actions.

Chatteris

The appointment of a CMT worker for music ministry and outreach shows creative thinking and she had a considerable impact until going on maternity leave, but is due back at reduced hours shortly. Lockdown enabled the Operations Manager to use her communications and IT skills in developing online worship.

Huntingdon

Working from a particularly low base so much has been achieved in a short time by experienced staff who are also able to offer support to another market town. The Thrive youth project is well embedded, a range of community contacts has been developed, action is being taken to provide both administration and operational support, there is a plan for future funding and there is active involvement by the Town Leader.

March

Lockdown showed up local needs which staff have met through food provision. There has been real benefit in an existing volunteer within the one congregation being appointed to a CMT worker role, as she was already known and understood the issues. Another worker, appointed during lockdown, is undertaking fresh expressions work in a creative way. The Operations Manager has raised considerable funding through grants for both existing work and future sustainability.

Ramsey

There is an impressive foodbank ministry. Community engagement through Wednesday Night Live has offered an opportunity for people to explore discipleship and, with the departure of the CMT worker for ordination training, this may now be taken over by volunteers. A new Town Leader can give effective leadership to local initiatives.

St Neots and Eynesbury

In spite of the town only joining the project at Phase 2, the Operations Manager has been able to bring a much greater professionalism to the parish office at St Neots and oversee the linking up with Eynesbury. Meanwhile the CMT worker based at Love's Farm is playing a key role in the congregation that has been established there.

Wisbech

The links that have been developed by two CMT workers in local schools are impressive and there are clear plans for future funding to enable this work to continue, even if in a reduced form. They are developing educational chaplaincy models of working. One CMT worker is now ordained, showing a strategic development of CMT staffing. A third CMT worker has developed a wide range of local community links at Walsoken.

4: Fundamental weaknesses

You started with a considerable financial pot that enabled you to appoint staff in market towns with a co-ordinating group at the centre. Much has been achieved but with hindsight there can now be seen to be a number of fundamental flaws in the methodology adapted and unfortunate outcomes.

This section lists five flaws (4.1-5), a context issue (6) and two outcomes that may have been affected in part at least by these but which now impact the project itself (7,8). Covid has already been listed in Part 2 and should be assumed as an unexpected, external influence which has had a considerable impact in addition to what I list here.

We need to identify these issues so that we can deal with them insofar as is possible in the remainder of the project timetable. It may be painful, but it is vital to correctly identify the main causes of problems if you are to reimagine the project in any way for its future.

Please see all that follows in the context of a highly innovative and creative project idea as Part 3 has made clear. But here are what I see as the strategic weaknesses.

4.1 **A focus on towns instead of leadership**

You identified towns as the focus. You may have then sought leaders with passion and competence to lead complex, cultural change but towns were the starting point.

The emphasis was not on PCCs that were eager to engage in fresh expressions of growth with all that implies in change of church culture. You left it to the Town Leaders to motivate and energise their churches. Some did not attempt this.

One respondent asked, “Is the approach of CMT to just throw money at a town and hope for the best (blunt as that might sound)?”

This means that there was in most cases little passion for the vision of the project, especially within PCCs, and that has continued even with changes in clergy. There was no bottom-up movement of churches begging to be involved, longing to welcome new staff resources to enable them to make progress. It was all about the town without necessary attention to the need for creative leadership from the clergy concerned.

Hence there remain low levels of ownership by PCCs. Some non-lead clergy and others have opposed the project. The mantra, ‘Centrally funded but locally managed’ has not worked well because the concept of ‘leadership’ has been side-lined. The diocese imposed instead of investing, as you say yourselves – it was ‘top down’.

There are also complications in towns with several churches, each with their own PCC. And not enough attention was seemingly paid to the importance of line management for local employees when the clergy had little concept of what good practice entails.

As one member of the clergy expressed it to me, “Its success is very much dependent on the parish priest in the town.... On the incumbent being (a) missionally minded enough to really care and (b) aware of their own context to know what CMT workers they need and how resources might best be spent.”

Churches in other dioceses that have used STF money for resource churches have expected each church to make their bid for funds. You had an open palm approach. This has led to considering management too much and leadership too little. The central staff are seen as managers of the project rather than the leadership team.

4.2 **An over-optimistic view of changing a culture**

The CMT project is a bold one as I have outlined in section 2.2 of this report. This is to be applauded. God's work demands bold initiatives and a criticism in reports like this is often of a lack of vision and a reticence in expecting God to provide. But you set off with breath-taking aims for the project and an expectation of seeing 800 new people linked in some rather undefined way to discipleship.

Much of what you are doing falls under a 'mission' or even 'fresh expressions (FX)' heading which is why you appointed an Evangelism Coach who has led FX and call on the services of the diocesan FX specialist. This would be tough enough in large, 'successful', Cambridge churches. But in the deeply conservative area of the Fens the change of attitude and then behaviour that you are working towards represents a fearsome challenge. "Mission is separated from most congregational members," said one CMT worker. "This is why they do not take ownership over the project as they do not understand that mission is something they should also be involved in."

When a complete change of church culture is required to meet the needs of people who are aged under 40, say, I usually recommend add-ons rather than trying to change what already exists. So start a new church service or operate a church plant rather than seeking to integrate new people into a liturgical setting that is loved by those in it but totally foreign to someone whose life has not included 'church' in any real sense.

You are seeking to reach children, teens, school parents and others based in a setting of church membership that is largely over 60 in age and well set in their preferences. This needs strategic thinking for what you are seeking to achieve.

This is indeed what is happening in some towns (see, for example, the Love's Farm initiative in St Neots). But that then introduces tensions within those in the historical church who want to see growth in their own church but only on their own terms.

I wonder if you have been too optimistic of your ability to change a deeply set church culture, have not thought creatively enough about how to do this and what the end results might look like, and have underestimated the time to be taken and the need for persistent prayer.

Where are armies of people praying for the project's success and informed of progress? This is, after all, a missionary project.

And then there was Covid....

4.3 **A matrix structure which confuses**

Such management comes from two sources: first town by town but secondly from a small central project team under the 'Change Officer'. This means that staff look both to local managers but also to central co-ordination. If the local towns form the columns of the matrix, there are also central bodies forming the rows. A few staff told me they considered their effective line management was in practice coming more from the central team than from the local Town Leader or other clergy.

Line management of staff and HR issues have been left with local clergy, some of whom have little understanding of how to go about this, leaving staff frustrated and not performing to their best ability. You expected clergy to do something they were unused to and did not really see a need for, all without training (other than one printed and rather complicated sheet from what I have seen). "Was the question asked," enquired one member of the clergy, "whether people would be well managed, before posts were designed and allocated?" Several staff tell me they have never had a proper review.

The Market Towns Change Officer has no authority over MT workers as they are

managed by the Town Leaders and employed by a PCC. This puts him in a difficult position, lacking the ability to do his job properly. You also have a Project Board who are largely unknown to staff and who do not seem to focus sufficiently on normal Board priorities (such as monitoring vision and finance) and PCCs, most of whom have little interest or involvement in the project. There is also a Delivery Group whose purpose is, in my view, far from clear.

But there is also confusion over leadership locally. In one town one CMT worker is linked to a Rector who is not the Town Leader, and so it is not clear who manages her. In another town the clergy post for the project post has been vacant for some time and the incumbent the staff naturally look to for management has no desire to take on this role. In this case the CMT workers look more to their Operations Manager for oversight. In cases such as these not only is there a confused reporting structure, there is also uncertain local leadership. This is on top of the confusion as to whether the project is led centrally or locally. And in cases such as these there is little set out in writing to clarify the arrangement, whether it is temporary or permanent.

In all the above there are variations from town to town with no one common structure. This is hardly surprising given that each town entered the project from its own, unique standing. This no bad thing. A diocese is not a corporation where every department has a common structure dictated from above. But it adds to the confusion.

4.4 The appointment of Operations Managers without Administrators

Medium-sized and larger churches appoint Operations Managers as paid leaders who, among other things, line manage Administrators. But several of your churches have no Administrators so your OMs find themselves embroiled in administration, with clergy who have in most cases little idea of what an OM is and clearly do not want to see them as leaders. That seems to be borne out in that they are paid a lower salary than CMT workers, and at a rate well below national norms for church OMs.

Sharing OM appointments between two churches that are not part of the same team and town has not worked and causes upset. You did not see OMs needing Occupational Requirements under equality legislation when I would have thought that was essential. Again this focus on management, good in itself, means you have overlooked the need for inspirational leadership.

Operations Managers have had a hard time because they are initiating change for the church rather than just for one member of staff. The idea is that they are senior staff but they are not paid for this and clergy were unprepared for how to work with them. It was perhaps a step too far for churches and clergy unused to such appointments. "I was the gift no one wanted," said one Operations Manager. However some have thrived in their roles and clearly been appreciated. But others have found themselves trying to work in both operations and administration, which is never satisfactory. It is a very mixed picture.

4.5 Insufficient planning for future sustainability

Some towns do not seem to have given sufficient thought to the legacy they want to see arising from the project over the medium term.

This is not a universal pattern as some Operations Managers and Town Leaders have received considerable grants or have realistic plans to seek and find these. They see this as the way to continue the project after central funding runs out, coupled perhaps with limited use of resources and a realistic expectation of increased congregational giving. The point is that they have a plan in place.

But others have no plan at all and all achievements may come to nothing. And this in spite of considerable attention having been given by Delivery Group and Board to this issue. Admittedly some staff see themselves as working themselves out of a job but others expect to be made redundant with their work coming to an unwelcome end.

There is one further confusion. Funding for posts is for five years and so the end point depends on the start date for that appointment. This means there is no one 'end' point for the project funding. It is all rather untidy and may result in discomfort near the end point when some may still be in post when others are not.

There is still time but it is short, to plan for an investment to produce a dividend for years to come.

4.6 A general suspicion of the diocese as an institution

I can only report on what people tell me, but it seems that clergy and therefore congregations are wary of central control by 'the diocese' and there is a lack of respect for central staff (I am not including the central team for the project) and diocesan systems. This means that any project initiated at the centre is seen to come with a health warning. I did not set out to look for such a view and have not researched this in any detail. I suspect those who receive this report will be able to make a better judgement than I can, provided they are in touch with rank and file viewpoints.

If the parish clergy and lay leaders have little respect for diocesan staffing and policy, it is not surprising that an innovative initiative such as CMT will start on a back foot. If people feel there is lack of transparency and a culture of male clergy dominance, a point that was made to me with feeling by several women whom I interviewed and with no obvious lead-in from me to talk about such things, then any diocesan project has an initial mountain to climb to get its message across. Perhaps the diocese might initiate a culture review.

People tell me that line management within the diocesan staff is poor, so there is no role model there for the project (where line management is often poor – or non-existent). There is no central in-house HR provision. It seems that some of the difficulties experienced in CMT are in fact caused by poor relationships and structures within the wider diocese. This goes beyond my brief but it feels like an unhelpful environment for what you are attempting to achieve.

There is also a feel by staff that 'the diocese' (however you define that) take little interest in the project. One CMT worker asked how the project was perceived by the diocese as there was no feedback at all. Another stated, "It seems like senior staff know nothing of what we are doing on the ground for the project".

Much of the successes achieved to date through CMT need to be seen in spite of this point and owe much to the gentle leadership of the Bishop's Change Officer who has recently retired, and the high respect in which he is held by many.

4.7 Local ownership that is worryingly weak

The poor questionnaire response from Church Wardens (which by that stage of my enquiries did not surprise me) indicates, not only that they are not owning the project, but that they have a very low image of its value for the diocese and relevance to their church. Some it seems would be delighted if the project was shut down and the funds employed for church buildings (which demonstrates a lack of understanding of the terms on which such funds have been made available!). The project mantra might well be changed to 'Centrally funded, locally managed and nobody owned'.

It is the PCC (or one of several PCCs) that employ the local staff. But here I met two very different views. Some incumbents clearly see the Council as the trustee body for the church involved in every area of discipleship, and therefore tightly bound up with mission. The PCC is of course tasked with “co-operating with the incumbent” in the “whole mission” of the church.

But other clergy believe the PCC is only there to handle finance, resourcing and governance, leaving mission to the Ministry Team. Can you say that mission is the responsibility of the Ministry Team alone when mission is a core part of Christian discipleship, not an add-on activity? Yet most (not all) PCCs appear to take little interest in CMT and some are deliberately told little about it.

“The idea of putting the PCCs as the employer to ensure local ownership,” explained one Operations Manager “has been one of the biggest flaws of the project; they don’t want or even know how to take responsibility for us as project workers and it leaves us in no man’s land with regard to support and HR processes.” Another said, “We were supposed to be a help, but instead have been treated like an outsider trying to force things on them”.

If the PCCs know little, congregations will know less. Here there was criticism of lack of communication from ‘the diocese’. But some congregations simply want the project to deliver more and younger people coming to a worship service that will be culturally far removed from where they stand. What should be good news for each parish is ignored or unknown in most cases. And of course there are those who hand in their resignation as Church Wardens when they see that a paid Operations Manager is being appointed to do their work for them.

It is sad to hear that some SSM and retired clergy object to the work of those engaged in the project. Some staff are exhausted by both the work but also by fighting against those that oppose what they are doing. “The Ministry Team have made no effort to support/pray/get to know the CMT team,” explained one worker, “and there is a clear divide”.

The few Church Wardens who responded to the questionnaire were in most but not all cases dismissive of the project, showing little understanding or knowledge. “I am not sure that anything tangible has been achieved so far,” said one. “Scrap it and use the money where it is needed” said another.

An additional issue here is when CMT staff are not embedded into the local congregation. Several worship elsewhere and some live some way away so they rarely meet the congregation. It is very different when a CMT worker was already in the congregation and is known to everyone. Sunday visibility is a key factor in congregational involvement.

4.8 Fractured and strained relationships

I have left to last the point that is perhaps the most concerning.

This does not feel like a happy ship. The reasons may well be linked to poor structures and lack of both inspirational leadership and a shared vision. Both lay staff and clergy showed, while talking or writing to me, what most would regard as lack of respect for others within the project, either for the value of the work they were doing or more about their competence or behaviour. It felt as though there were tensions throughout the staffing structure, clergy and lay, rather than a feeling of a team who were pulling together.

Such a spirit of criticism affects the tone of the whole project. This is an issue that the Board should be aware of and concerned for.

There appears to be a great deal of tension simmering just under the surface. This impacts mental health, teamwork, morale and, most importantly, God's blessing. While people, or groups of people, are unable to express their true feelings in a controlled setting, the pressure builds in an unhelpful way.

Part of the problem is no doubt the lack of accountability when you have clergy working across parish boundaries with gifted lay staff who are used to normal management practices and systems. But it must be more than that.

I was told about 'problem individuals' and unnecessary roles which have resulted in frustration and disillusionment to the CMT workers. But the situation is not straightforward for some seen as 'problems' are seen very differently by others within the project who are dismayed at people being so critical of others.

On a related but different point, almost all the CMT workers and Operations Managers are now female. Almost all the lead clergy are male. There are different perceptions along gender lines although this will not be the only division.

I have noted several structural and vision issues as possible causes. But I wonder if there might be, also, direct spiritual attack. This is a project seeking to grow the Kingdom of God. It is placed at the cutting edge of the Church's outward mission. Perhaps spiritual blessing on this creative project will not come until relationships are improved through prayer, honesty, quality communication and mutual support.

5: Recommendations

Whatever you decide to do needs to be actioned very quickly as time is not on your side. But major changes at this stage in the project (eg. of employer) are out of the question. Instead, here are some reasonably rapid and straightforward ways ahead. I believe all are workable even if it means operating in a hybrid mode (as when someone is employed by a PCC but line managed within the project, or when someone has one job title when on project work and another when on other work). I would not necessarily be recommending what I offer here at the start of a new project.

5.1 Strengthen links to the centre

The 'staff', by which I mean those employed as CMT workers, Operations Managers or on the small central team, have, to date, been locally or departmentally managed. This has in several cases not worked well leading to considerable frustration. You can seek to solve this by training Town Leaders in how to line-manage well, or you can arrange for others more skilled to undertake the line management still in the local towns, or you can restructure line management back to the centre. My recommendations would be as follows.

R5.1.1 **Appoint the CMT Project Operations Manager as line manager for the local OMs**

This is the job title I recommend the Projects and Development Officer should more correctly hold while he works his O.5 for the project. This new management arrangement would build a sub-team of OMs, enable effective sharing of information and ideas and provide quality line management. It would require regular, personal communication. Each OM would of course also have a link to their own church Town Leader for daily work but not as their primary line manager.

R5.1.2 **Give the CMT Project Leader* responsibility for appointing line managers for CMT workers**

*This term for what has been known as the CMT Project Manager or Bishop's Change Officer for Market Towns is explained at R5.2.3.

He might line manage some himself (but needs to beware too wide a span of control), ask the Evangelism Coach to line manage some where there is already a good relationship, ask a local Operations Manager to line manage CMT workers in their town if this was in effect already happening, or ask the Town Leader to provide this if this is already being done well. Although this would result in a varied structure, effective line management is more important than structural neatness. As described above the Project Leader would have control over the structure.

R5.1.3 **The Project Leader should line manage each of the other three central staff**

It is vital that the four members of the central staff form an effective staff team and for this to happen they need to be line managed by the Project Leader while they work on the project. In two cases this means they would have a different manager for when on other work.

R5.1.4 **Offer a training session to line managers**

I can offer this if requested or it might be bought in from another source. It would enable a common way of working. The point is that you now have staff-based line management and no longer expect Town Leaders to provide this where they are not skilled in such a responsibility or unwilling to undertake it.

R5.1.5 **Establish a staff team**

Although rather large for a team, this would consist of central and local employees of the project, under the CMT Project Leader. Local members would remain members of their own churches' staff and continue to be employed by the appropriate PCC, but this has now shifted the focus of the matrix structure rather more away from the local and in to the centre. It may not be tidy but it should be quite workable. It is important that all project staff take pride in belonging to CMT and are supported by the whole team. See Appendix App2 on page 26.

R5.1.6 **Clear these arrangements with the employing PCCs and Town Leaders**

Local staff would still work to their Town Leader so the structure is a hybrid and will depend on the goodwill of all those involved. It will be too complicated to make a more radical restructuring at this stage. But it needs the agreement of PCCs and the Town Leaders (most of whom will notice no difference) and the reasons will need to be explained to them clearly. It will be vital for the CMT Project Leader to stay in close touch with Town Leaders in case there are misunderstandings and to meet up with them from time to time.

5.2 **Provide leadership in both staffing and governance**

You have until now talked in terms of the activities of management and resourcing (through finance), but little about leadership. Yes, you have Town 'Leaders' but some of them see CMT as an add on to their priestly responsibilities rather than as a priority – and this is hardly surprising. But a project that seeks to be innovating and which acts as a contrast to normal, inherited church culture is going to be stifled by the status quo, and many people who fear change, unless there is inspirational leadership and effective staffing. You have some very gifted staff. What you lack is the concept of overall, visionary leadership, though the potential is there in your new CMT Project Manager or, as I recommend below, CMT Project 'Leader'.

R5.2.1 **Give the Board clear responsibility for vision and finance**

Although, from what I can see, the Board has no legal status, it should act like the Trustees of a charity. Members should take responsibility for agreeing and monitoring vision (as they do), handling the finances being made available to CMT, and encouraging all Bishops and Archdeacons in the diocese to take a real interest in those who work for the project. There should be regular Management Accounts and decisions about the medium-term operation and future continuation.

R5.2.2 **Link each Board member with a specific town**

The Board is currently unknown by staff and so becomes a shadowy body with considerable power. As part of good practice, each Board member should seek to champion the staff in one of the towns of the project, getting to know the staff there and visiting them on site occasionally. Staff should know they have a direct line to 'their' member of the Board at any time. This will enable Board and staff to work better and complement each other's role. It would promote better understanding.

R5.2.3 **Retitle the CMT Project Manager role as CMT Project Leader**

This will involve only minor adjustments to the role definition but the job title needs to change. The post holder reports directly to the Board and is accountable to them. But it should be clear that he leads the staff team and the day-to-day work of the CMT project. This corrects the current focus on resources and management without mention of leadership. It would be helpful to drop the Change Officer title.

R5.2.4 Provide the 0.5 CMT Project Leader with EA support

I have recommended significant extra responsibilities to the CMT Project Leader who from now on is only on a 0.5 appointment. This will not be possible unless there is a job-share (which I do not recommend) or he is given Executive Assistant (EA) back-up. With a good EA appointment (perhaps also 0.5) he should be able to handle all his responsibilities, because he could be released from almost all but front-line work. Note that this is about an EA rather than a PA appointment.

R5.2.5 Disband the Delivery Group as you now have a Staff Team

I see no point in maintaining the Delivery Group whose purpose is not clear. The employees of the project meet together from time to time for decisions on the day-to-day running of the project, for mutual encouragement, and for the sharing of news and ideas. The CMT Project Leader is the leader of the staff team. Project business is conducted by either the Board (for vision, finance, governance) or the Staff Team (for detail). The central staff team (four members) are, effectively, the senior staff.

5.3 Rethink mission and staffing in the context of each town

The project needs shared understanding of mission and an appreciation of its challenge to the inherited culture of the churches you are working within. For example, what does work with teenagers look like when the host church consists of people aged over 50 with traditional liturgy? Also, what can you learn from each other's shared experiences of work to do? What targets make sense and what does success look like?

Note that there are currently three CMT staff posts which need to be made. Current action on these will need to be taken in the light of these recommendations.

R5.3.1 Set up a small central group to work on an understanding of mission

It is important that the CMT project is backed by good theology and praxis. This group might consist of one or two central staff, one or two local staff, a Board member and an external FX specialist from the diocese. Then share an understanding of the work that you are all seeking to undertake so that its vision is recaptured and enabled. The group might well revisit the McKinsey model at this point.

R5.3.2 Establish a clear, unique plan for each town

Work with Town Leaders to include deployment of current staff, definition of projects that fit with the new shared understanding of mission, funding for the future after the project closes, and the management structure. Focus on what is currently working and put aside what is not. Strategy should be based on new start-ups rather than expecting to see existing congregations increasing in numbers. But create and publish a plan for the sustainability of work in each town.

R5.3.3 Rethink Operations Manager roles within the context of sustainability

Ensure these are high level posts which do not become quasi-Administrators. Give each one responsibility for co-ordinating the sustainability plan above and task them with seeking grant funding. The March OM will have valuable experience to share. I also recommend that they consider asking each worker to raise part of their own salary from friends and churches as would be the case in many mission agencies. Encourage churches to appoint Administrators where appropriate outside the scope of the project. Protect OMs to enable them to be able to fulfil a high-level role.

R5.3.4 Give OMs responsibility for one town alone and pay them as other staff

Shared appointments, as currently structured, do not seem to have worked and should be abandoned. The exception to this would be if someone can operate as OM for one town and then be given hours per week to undertake specific projects for another town. But this is not the same as being an OM in this second town. All Operations Managers should be paid at the same rate as other CMT workers in future.

R5.3.5 Develop new communication channels

Church Wardens and PCCs need to be regularly informed of what is happening in the CMT project because they remain the employers. The central staff team might consider some form of broadsheet (in e-format) to keep everyone in the picture. Local ownership under these arrangements is not as critical as it has been, but good communication is essential. I appreciate there will be implications for staff or bought-in time in producing such mailings. If you follow recommendations above and bring the structure more clearly into the centre, it will be vital to improve communication to PCCs, clergy and congregations. Otherwise there will be increased mistrust of 'the diocese'.

R5.3.6 Outsource HR issues

You need to be able to buy in to HR resources in a Christian context, perhaps on a retainer basis. One need is to rethink the provisions offered in existing contracts of employment which are seen by staff to be lacking in both worker care and detail.

R5.3.7 Liaise with the Church Commissioners

I am aware that all the above recommendations have implications for SDF funding. It will be up to the Board in discussion with the Church Commissioners representative to take all necessary action on this point. I would like to think that these recommendations will lead to a more effective use of the funds being made available.

5.4 Promote a spiritual heart to the whole project

The whole project is not a secular social services project but a local-church-based work of God. This needs to be emphasised and the project operated as though this was the case. In particular you need to improve working relationships throughout.

R5.4.1 Ensure prayer is at the heart of every aspect of the project

I would like to think that there is no need for me to make this point but I feel that there is a need to refocus on prayer at every level. You might encourage all staff to build up a group of prayer supporters for their work. Many are operating on the front line of Christian mission. You might call a day of prayer for the CMT project or for specific difficulties within it, such as new staff appointments. This is cutting edge mission work which will come under spiritual attack. It is however encouraging to see the emphasis on prayer in the latest leaflet about the project with your own CMT prayer printed there. As the leaflet states, prayer is vital.

R5.4.2 Re-envision the project

This would be a good time for the Project Board to revisit both the original vision for the project under God and to check out and, if necessary, update the original aims (summarised above in Section 2.2). The Board might also recheck the McKinsey Influence Model to see how it might impact current thinking. There needs to be a

challenging vision for how you believe God might act through CMT, but this needs to be coupled with viable aims that everyone can work to with enthusiasm. These then become matters for urgent prayer.

R5.4.3 Place an Occupational Requirement on each Operations Manager post

I place this recommendation in this section because it demonstrates the attitude of what the CMT project is. Though ORs may be difficult to justify for an Administrator appointment, there is no problem with a senior post in a faith-project such as yours. If you have a correct view of an OM post, you will justify an OR for it as you do for all CMT workers.

R5.4.4 Tackle the relationships issue

This is an urgent need which impacts staff and clergy but also the wider diocese. I believe that as relationships are not good throughout the project, at clergy and at worker levels, the Board should decide what action would be appropriate to seek to improve the situation. You may need to bring in external facilitators but there is a need for everyone to be given opportunities to share their fears and the threats they feel to their ministries. Part of the problem is, no doubt, caused by insufficient understanding of others' roles. Unless you are prepared to address this issue the CMT project cannot flourish under God.

Summary

This report is part of a piece of work you have asked me to carry out. Originally it was looking like some research and then the production of some policies and some training. We then agreed to move next to a mid-term review.

This has identified a number of major issues with the CMT project and recommended some changes, mostly in structure, and in action to take over relationships and seeing the project as a spiritual exercise. But I want to emphasise that I believe in the CMT concept and applaud the staff who are often working in difficult circumstances. It has encouraged my faith to meet with dedicated Christians who have a deep sense of call to this work. Something is very right about it all!

I feel that to train Church Wardens and parish clergy in how to both employ and line manage staff would be wasted work. The project ownership in the parishes is so weak that I have felt it right to recommend moving the central focus more into the centre.

I therefore feel that it would be wise to assess Board reaction to this report and then reassess the work you ask me to do. I am quite happy to rethink this and then to prepare policies, to step back from the project or to build on this report in any way you wish. The decision is in my client's hands. I simply wish to be of help to a project which, although with flaws, has already achieved much in church outreach and could bring about much more change in years to come.

This report has identified a wide range of achievements which should be celebrated. It has also drawn attention to eight key areas of fundamental weakness.

The recommendations, 22 of them under four broad headings, are designed to be able to be put into action quickly. I am well aware that they lead to some structural untidiness, but mid-project is no time to be digging up all the foundations when the end of the external funding is already in view.

I pray that what is recommended here may be used to enable greater effectiveness in the future of this innovative project. May you reach out to new people and see people becoming disciples and growing in the faith. I have immense hope in the project's future, provided some key weaknesses are sensitively but thoroughly addressed.

Whatever other work you ask me to do I offer to stay in touch for low level support on this report for a year without further charge.

Summary of the recommendations

5.1 Strengthen links to the centre

R5.1.1 Appoint the CMT Project Operations Manager as line manager for the local OMs

R5.1.2 Give the CMT Project Leader* responsibility for appointing line managers for CMT workers

R5.1.3 The Project Leader should line manage each of the other three central staff

R5.1.4 Offer a training session to line managers

R5.1.5 Establish a staff team

R5.1.6 Clear these arrangements with the employing PCCs and Town Leaders

5.2 Provide leadership in both staffing and governance

R5.2.1 Give the Board clear responsibility for vision and finance

R5.2.2 Link each Board member with a specific town

R5.2.3 Retitle the CMT Project Manager role as CMT Project Leader

R5.2.4 Provide the O.5 CMT Project Leader with EA support

R5.2.5 Disband the Delivery Group as you now have a Staff Team

5.3 Rethink mission and staffing in the context of each town

R5.3.1 Set up a small central group to work on an understanding of mission

R5.3.2 Establish a clear, unique plan for each town

R5.3.3 Rethink Operations Manager roles within the context of sustainability

R5.3.4 Give OMs responsibility for one town alone and pay them as other staff

R5.3.5 Develop new communication channels

R5.3.6 Outsource HR issues

R5.3.7 Liaise with the Church Commissioners

5.4 Promote a spiritual heart to the whole project

R5.4.1 Ensure prayer is at the heart of every aspect of the project

R5.4.2 Re-envision the project

R5.4.3 Place an Occupational Requirement on each Operations Manager post

R5.4.4 Tackle the relationships issue

Note that this report is backed up by free resources on my website. Those that are particularly relevant are listed in Appendix App3 on page 27.

Appendices

App1 **The descriptive questionnaire**

This is a copy of the questions sent out for this assignment. See Section 1.6

*You may find it helpful to read all the questions before starting to answer them. **Don't worry if there are questions which you cannot answer** because you have no experience of what is being asked. Those that show an asterisk are worded for those in the market towns and need to be appropriately adapted into a more general form for CMT central staff and Board members who are answering this.*

- A What is your name and your role within the project? May I contact you by email if I want to follow up anything you write in your response? (See the point about confidentiality in my letter.)
- B In your experience, what to date has been achieved through the project for good within your own* church and town?
- C In your experience, what has been good about the project's purpose and its central leadership, resourcing and staffing within the diocese?
- D Other than Covid, what has hindered the project from being as effective as it might have been from within the leadership, resourcing and staffing in your own* church and town?
- E Other than Covid, what has hindered the project from being as effective as it might have been within its diocesan organisation and central leadership?
- F What might be done for its second half to overcome issues in D & E and so to let the project flourish?
- G To what extent does your* PCC take ownership of the project within your town and understand its responsibilities as employers of the staff (if relevant)?
- H How is your* church planning to continue to resource staff and activity once funding comes to an end?
- I How aware are your* PCC members of what is happening in the other market towns within the project?
- J What else would you like to tell me about the project to help me in my review and suggestions for change?

App2 **The CMT staff team as envisaged in this report**

This list only shows staff at the six towns I was asked to review. Figures show hours employed as a fraction of 35 hpw.

Note that many staff put in extra hours. For church-based roles I normally expect full time to be seen as more like 40 hpw.

Central staff team

CMT Project Leader	0.5	previous post-holder was full time
EA to CMT Project Leader	0.5	
Strategic Programme Manager	0.5	effectively half time on CMT
Evangelism Coach	0.8	just increased from 0.7
CMT Operations Manager	0.5	

Chatteris

Director of Music Outreach	0.6	on return to work from maternity leave
Operations Manager	0.4	assumes also 0.4 at Ramsey*

Huntingdon

Children's and Families' Missioner	1.0	
Youth Missioner	1.0	
Operations Manager	1.0	due to decrease to c.0.7 with an Administrator

March

Community Mission Worker	1.0	
Children and Family Worker	1.0	
Operations Manager	0.8	

Ramsey

Community Mission Worker	1.0	vacant at present
Operations Manager	0.4	assumes also 0.4 at Chatteris*

St Neots with Eynesbury

Youth Pioneer	1.0	
Children's and Families' Minister		no appointment has been made yet
Operations Manager	1.0	

Wisbech

Youth Worker	0.6	
Family Worker	0.8	
Church Family Worker	1.0	
Operations Manager	0.5	vacant at present

*division depends on a decision to be taken.

App3 **Website resources to back up this report**

The following are all freely available in the Resources sections of my website and relevant to the analysis and recommendations in this report. There are also many other items available that support those I list.

Articles

- A4 Twelve questions to help you plan – A jargon-free toolkit
- A32 Be creative as a line manager – How to develop paid staff
- A38 Appointing an Operations Manager – Or reviewing a post
- A45 How to lead a team at church – Practical help for beginners

Training Notes

- TN3 The bewildering world of change
- TN5 Responsibilities of mission agency Boards
- TN12 Twenty ideas to help people change
- TN20 Line management in a church staff team
- TN32 What do you mean by 'vision'?
- TN35 Causes of friction in a mission agency
- TN41 What makes a group a team
- TN59 Don't you dare change anything!
- TN79 'One another' teams
- TN92 How genuine are your GORs?
- TN121 Making a case for change