FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

These questions were noted from the 5 workshops held across the Diocese in January, February and March 2012.

1. **I think the responsibilities listed in the generic role description are too broad and vague, how do I make it more specific?**

A role description serves as a non-binding (but well understood) guide to the requirements of the appointment. The template role description already has the support of the Archdeacon and Bishop and is unlikely to be helpful unless it has also been shared by the office holder to the churchwardens.

It outlines what needs to be done and it should help to manage and clarify the expectations of office holders, bishops and parishes. If you feel it is too generic and you would like to make it more specific than you may refine the "Specific Responsibilities" section. Any changes will need to be agreed with your Incumbent, Church Wardens and Archdeacon. It is a fluid document that changes as the requirements of the role change and should be discussed at ministerial development review to ensure it continues to reflect the nature and requirements of the appointment.

2. **How do I refine a Specific Responsibility?**

If you are expanding or refining a specific responsibility then you will need to state:

- What is done and to what/with whom, describing a main activity that states the role holder`s responsibility in connection with the activity;
- What the end results ought to be, describing the reasons for or the end result of the role

For example, "Inspiring, motivating and empowering …. Members of the church, individually and collectively so that the whole community of faith is encouraged to participate more fully in God`s mission to the world".

Please note, role descriptions should be no more than 5 pages long so be careful to avoid fine details and a list of tasks. The role description should describe the core of the role in *broad* terms. Also, take care not to repeat the same information in different sections.

3. **What is the process for having the role description agreed?**

The role description needs to be developed in an inclusive way and the recommended process is that the role description is agreed by the churchwardens of the benefice and the PCC be kept informed. A copy of any changes will need to be shared with the Archdeacon.

4. **How do I share the role description and inform the PCC?**

It is suggested that it is presented to the PCC at a PCC meeting as an agenda item for their information. There may be dialogue about its content and this conversation should help clarify mutual expectations.

It should have the PCC`s support and a consensus should be reached where there are questions or disagreement.

If there are differences about what the specific responsibilities are, the differences should be acknowledged and both positions taken into account. However there should not be an expectation of the office holder having to fulfil both sets of expectations. Where agreement cannot be met the matter may need to be referred to the Archdeacon.

5. **Key Contacts are listed on page 4 of the template role description. Are these people I should be in contact with – is it should be or could be?**

They are provided as a list of contacts and relationships that you may have. You may use them as your support network, or you may use them as a source of information and guidance. The purpose of this section is to help contextualise your role and who you may be working alongside.

This section will vary from post to post.

6. **Who owns the role description?**

The generic role description has been devised and is owned by the diocese on behalf of the Bishop. Once it is issued to an existing office holder it is then the office holder's responsibility to "own" the document by ensuring that it reflects the role that is undertaken. The role description should describe the role, not the person. At this present time, Role Descriptions are being developed for existing office holders, rather than at recruitment and it is therefore harder to separate the two.

For new appointments, the role description will accompany the Parish/Benefice Profile and will therefore be part owned by the Parish developed as part of the recruitment process. They will either review an existing Role Description or write a new one depending on how up to date and accurate the existing role description of the outgoing office holder is.

7. **What happens when you have 7 parishes, how do I get agreement?**

The role description will need to be shared with the churchwardens of the benefice (s).

8. **What does a role description look like when you "work" part time?**

The role description should reflect the responsibilities and accountabilities that the office holder holds. It is likely that some of these may be shared where a post is part time and this should be made clear. The Specific Responsibilities will be proportionate to the hours of the post however the Overall Role Purpose will remain the same regardless of the hours.

9. **I have more than 1 post, how do I include this in 1 Role Description?**

Where possible, Office Holders will only have 1 Role Description and additional responsibilities will be recorded in the Specific responsibilities section. For example if someone is an Area Dean, or Assistant Director of Ordinands.

However where someone has another separate and distinct role and the responsibilities are clearly defined and different, then this should be described in a separate role description.

10. **I have concerns about how seriously it is going to be taken – does this have the Senior Staff and Bishop`s support?**

There is great support and a commitment from the Bishop and his Senior staff for all existing office holders and new appointments to have a role description. There is a requirement that role descriptions will be referred to in the Ministerial Development Review process.

11. **How does my role description fit with the parish profile?**

The role description at recruitment should make a potential candidate think… "this is the job for me". The PCC should make no assumption that every minister is the same so by including an initial description of the role within the profile will help provide clarity for potential candidates.

It is important to note that at recruitment this is an initial role description which will be refined and finalised after 6 months in post with the office holder and Archdeacon.

12. **Can I divide my role description into more sections – can it be broken down a bit more e.g. section on Mission, Legal, Admin responsibilities**

Role Descriptions should not be more than 5 pages long and provide a summary of the main functions. By breaking it down into further sections it risks becoming a long list of tasks under each header.

13. **I feel we should place more emphasis on safeguarding issues, can this be emphasised?**

There is a requirement for an office holder to comply with the Diocesan policy that each office holder will have an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check on appointment. This will be renewed in line with guidance from the House of Bishops and Diocesan Policy. At present this is every 5 years or where there is a change in appointment.

The following sentence was added to the role description “To adhere to diocesan policy and commitment to safe recruitment and safeguarding”.

14. Should there be separate sections for Self Supporting Ministers?

No, there is a clear view that there should be no divide or distinction between the role of an Self Supporting Minister and that of a Stipendiary Incumbent. There may be a different emphasis on certain aspects of the role and these can be reflected in the Specific responsibilities section.

15. I`m a focal minister – I am the first point of contact for a number of churches how do I reflect this in my role description?

Your licensed title will be Assistant Curate and on the role description you could then add, “(known as Focal Minister supporting….churches)” to help make it clear. You could then expand as necessary the points in the Specific responsibilities section and potentially in the Role Context if this is required.

16. Sixth Day ministry – where is this recorded?

You would include this commitment in the “Other responsibilities and/or key roles that you hold in the Deanery, Community and Diocese” section.

17. Where responsibilities are delegated – how do I reflect this?

You will need to amend this within the Specific responsibilities section to make clear your scope of responsibility. Your Key Contacts section will also need to reflect who you are working alongside or sharing responsibilities with.

18. Does this replace Ministry agreements or Working Agreements?

For existing office holders there may be some overlap between the two where the Ministry or Working Agreement describes more than what the local team arrangements are. For example they describe ministerial responsibilities. However, if they are being used to describe on-going relationships/time commitments then a role description will not replace a Ministry/Working Agreement.

For Assistant Curates in Training, Working/Learning Agreements are intended to ensure that there is a clear understanding of expectations of both a training incumbent and the Title post curate. By drawing up this Working Agreement at the beginning of the Title post, misunderstandings can be avoided and a clear context established in which they will be ministering together. Therefore there is no requirement to have a Role Description for Assistant Curates in Training.

19. How will it fit with the capability procedure – will it be used?

The role description is used:

(i) To clarify roles and responsibilities for existing role holders
(ii) To inform training and development needs

The purpose of the capability procedure is to:

(i) Support a change in capability of a person
(ii) Assist someone reach their full potential
(iii) Develop the ability to adapt and apply knowledge and skills
(iv) Enable someone to learn from new experiences
(v) Envisage the future and contribute to make it happen.

In the event that there are discussions about improving someone`s capability, the role description will be considered as part of these discussions and objectives set based around the role description. The capability procedure is a supportive procedure for making changes and improvements so the role description will support this process. It will help clarify exactly what is required/needed or expected.

The procedure can be accessed on www.commontenure.org

20. How do I make it a useful tool?

The role description will be best used when it is discussed with your Churchwardens so that mutual expectations and obligations are openly agreed as well as plans and priorities. If it is referred to and used as the basis for your MDR discussions it will provide you and others with clarity about your ministry and how it and you grow and develop.

21. What happens if my MDR cycle has already started and my role description isn't agreed?

If this occurs, the advice is to go ahead with the review.

22. Is there a relationship between the role description and disciplinary procedure?

No, the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM)is a very separate piece of legislation which provides a framework for investigating the conduct of the Clergy.

Depending on the nature of the misconduct, the role description may be referred to as part of this CDM framework as reference, for example to provide some context of the role and environment but it would not be the only document referred to – it may be one of many.

23. It feels one sided – where do we put what the responsibilities of the PCC are?

The role description is not intended to include the PCC`s responsibilities. These are outlined in law. Acts govern the establishment and function of PCCs. While there is legislation that determines the legal requirements of a Vicar, they do not build the picture of your ministry in a particular place. The role description needs to command the support of the Church Wardens so that you are supported by the PCC.

24. "Is it a tool for mission or to bang me over the head with?"

No, it will not be used as a "tool" to threaten someone with. The role description feeds into the MDR process so it will form part of your development as a Minister.

In the event that there are discussions about improving someone`s capability, the role description will be considered as part of these discussions and objectives set based around the role description. The capability procedure is a supportive procedure for making changes and improvements so the role description will support this process. It will help clarify exactly what is required/needed or expected.

For new appointments the initial role description will set out the responsibilities so that potential candidates can make an informed decision about whether it is the right vacancy for them.

25. Where will extra responsibilities be described in the role description eg. Area Dean?

They will be listed in the Specific responsibilities section. Examples may include,

- Play an active role in the development of and functioning of Deanery Synod, Deanery Chapter and the M&M Committee
- Liaise closely with the Archdeacon on Deanery planning
- Support individual clergy through practical advice and guidance on exceptional parish issues
- Support parishes in vacancy
- To act as a key contact point for the Deanery and support implementation of Diocesan wide initiatives.
- To undertake a specific role for a geographical area/nationally which extends beyond the Diocese

26. What are the timescales for completion?

The Role Description will be sent via email to all office holders week commencing 2nd July 2012. By sending via email it will enable people to update and save electronically. It will also be available on the Terms of Service webpage of the website.

A Guidance document on Completing Your Role Description is also available.

Once completed please send to Sarah Carruthers by 30th September 2012.

Sarah will then share with the Archdeacons.