

# Social Responsibility in the Diocese of Leicester



## Purpose of this document

This document aims to set out a rationale and strategy for the leadership and co-ordination of Social Responsibility within the Diocese for the foreseeable future.

## What is Social Responsibility?

While most people will have some sense of what we mean by 'social responsibility' there is no succinct universal definition. It is important, therefore, that this Diocese identifies a collective understanding, which I suggest is about loving service of the world. This requires understanding, engagement and action around Kingdom issues with which, as missional Church grounded within both local and national and international societal contexts, we cannot but concern ourselves. The social context, local needs and Diocesan strategy will determine which are, at any given time, the most pressing issues.

## Aims of the Social Responsibility function within the Diocese

- To help us recognise, repent of and address injustices;
- To frame faith in terms of serving those excluded and marginalised;
- To enable growth in Christian discipleship through love in action.

These require three levels of activity - prophetic, strategic and practical. We are called to raise awareness of the challenges that face our society and individuals within it and, reflectively, to connect this with Biblical understanding, recognising both God at work and God inviting us to witness and action. Where is God steering us? This should then lead, in context, locally and regionally, often working in partnership with others both of faith and outside of faith towards developing the building blocks for a more inclusive, just and peaceful society.

From this must follow focussed support and the nurturing of local gifts and skills, to enable positive action 'on the ground' within communities. It should also be noted that, in strategic terms, there are issues and action which of necessity transcend not only parish, Council or Diocesan boundaries but, of necessity must needs even be regional in focus, and that other bodies (for example the Chamber of Commerce) and funding arrangements also operate on that basis.

## Strategic objectives

- Clear articulate and joined up comment and analysis from a range of sources within the Diocese to support local strategic action and initiatives;
- Easy access for all to appropriate theological and practical resources and good use made thereof;
- Identifiably more communities actively engaged with these issues;
- Emergent partnerships (with agencies, Councils and others) up and running;
- Focussed practical action addressing key issues evidenced widely across the Diocese.

## **Addressing these aims - A Diocesan Panel for Social Responsibility**

It is proposed that we have a Diocesan Panel for Social Responsibility, comprising specialist officers and others with a particular brief for different aspects of social responsibility. This group would meet termly and be chaired by an Archdeacon. The purpose of this Panel would be:

- To resource and inform Diocesan strategy and policy;
- To resource and support local parish action;
- Collectively to reflect on and support the different SR work streams in their development;
- To support strategic involvement in the work of particular initiatives;
- To share information, exchange ideas and work together on shared issues.

The panel would not be of itself an action group; but it may decide actively to support and facilitate particular action at a local level, or to recommend the setting up of wider task groups with particular remits to address certain issues.

Given that Social Responsibility can be understood to encompass a whole range of differing areas of interest and responsibility, in the context of this Diocese, we have taken a wide view, and are inviting expertise and representation from the following (some of which may be fulfilled by the same person):

- Urban affairs;
- Rural affairs;
- Estates churches;
- Homelessness and poverty;
- Criminal justice;
- Health and social care (including mental health);
- Asylum seekers and refugees;
- Environmental matters;
- International affairs;
- Work, employment and workplace ministry;
- Sexual exploitation and trafficking;
- Family issues;
- Ministry to the deaf, the disabled and older people.

Ex-officio members of the Panel would be:

- The Diocesan Social Responsibility Enabler;
- The Bishop's Chaplain and Policy Advisor;
- The Diocesan Mission Enabler.

## **Addressing these aims - resourcing**

**The following are required:**

- A full-time Diocesan SR Enabler (whose role is already well-defined)
- Part-time administrative support (answerable to the SR Enabler)
- Funding to support the work of the SR Enabler (including paying the current post-holder's expenses) and to facilitate the Panel meetings. This budget is delegated to the SR Enabler.

Currently the SR Enabler is self-supporting and would expect to continue in that role for some time. However, looking to the longer term future, there is a need for appropriate succession planning to ensure that the work will continue beyond the present post-holder.

Beyond the work of the Enabler, any specific major proposal would need to seek support and funding, both from the Diocese and possibly from other sources, on its own terms with a clearly worked out rationale and people willing to undertake the responsibility for development. A good example of this in action currently is the Sound Cafe.

## **Addressing these aims - functional responsibilities with other Diocesan bodies**

There are clear key functional relationships, some of which are implied and would be fulfilled within the composition of the Panel. The SR Enabler would be accountable to the Chair of the Panel and would, either directly, or through him report to BSM.

The Cathedral, with SMH, holds a particular strategic role as not only as prime location for activity and potential excellence, but also as the locus of episcopal ministry and therefore having a prophetic role and presence. Locating the current postholder at the Cathedral ensures both s/he and SR action are rooted in a community with a committed SR strategy and a heart for action, but does not grant the Cathedral specific particular oversight of Diocesan SR policy.

The Department of Mission and Ministry has a particular focus and well-articulated brief. While SR could be rightly considered, at one level, as part of the wider mission of the Diocese, there is a clear need to articulate a distinct identity for SR, while still enabling this to flourish in synergy with the work of M&M. This latter will be achieved not least, through the involvement of the Diocesan Mission Enabler on the SR Panel.

The SR officer would expect to be in good communication and relationship with Deaneries, Mission Partnerships and other church groupings as relevant.

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*Approved at Bishop's Council June 2015*