**Director of Communications Background paper**

A review of the Communications department has recently been undertaken.

Given the changes in communications channels over the past decade, the refocussing of diocesan priorities and expectations of staff and clergy, consideration has been given to the necessary changes in current practices.

We expect the new Director of Communications will continually review the work of the department and develop it further.

**Chester Diocesan Communications**

**Strategic aims**

The aim of the department is to enable the whole Diocese of Chester (in all its aspects) to communicate the Gospel effectively.

**Operations/objectives**

The department consists of two full time members of staff with ad-hoc support provided by secretarial staff.

The Director of Communications has had a focus on media relations, issues management and editorial quality and provides line management of the Design and Communications Officer.

The Design and Communications Officer currently has a focus on design, publication production and marketing material.

We would expect the Director of Communications to keep under review and develop the areas of responsibility within the department

**Current operational practices:**

**1. Media Relations**

The Communications Department advises the Diocese and helps to manage crises with special reference to preparing statements and managing press interest. This important area of work is often invisible but vital to the success of the role. The department also works to enhance the profile of the Diocese working to foster respect, trust and understanding with the media and wider public. The department has the potential to reach millions of people.

a) The Communications Department needs to develop a media distribution list for regional and church media (traditional print, digital and social bloggers).

b) A media plan should be developed tied to departmental/national initiatives, liturgical seasons and the ministry of the bishops.

c) The department will need to keep up to date with national protocols in order to advise the Diocese and help manage crises with special reference to preparing statements and managing press interest.

**2. Promotion of the work of the Diocese**

The Communications Department helps the Diocese identify its audiences and target its communications for mutual understanding using the most effective tactics. There is emphasis on the active promotion of the Church’s mission and ministry. Examples include placing promotional material and stories for Church House and parishes with the appropriate channels and with an appropriate timescale. Selection of channels and content would need to take into account the different demographics, cultures, and priorities found across the Diocese. There is also support to diocesan organisations and committees in their advancement of the Gospel.

The department should adopt a strategic approach to its campaigns. Aims should be clear, plans developed and results evaluated.

a) The Director of Communications will be responsible for working with those in charge of key pieces of work to identify audiences, advise on the marketing mix and best tactics to use, and coordinate the work of the Design and Communications Officer and others to deliver the best outcomes.

b) The Director will meet with the Bishops regularly to discuss opportunities to communicate their ministry and to develop a communication plan for each bishop which includes media profile, areas of work and social media.

c) Advertising –Some mission initiatives would benefit from paid ads in local newspapers. Facebook advertising needs to be considered when it offers a good return on investment and advertising Foxhill (the Diocesan Retreat house and gardens) in the church media should be explored.

d) The Director of Communications will manage the communications budget for specific projects (for example major exhibitions where the diocese is represented, and major diocesan events) and will assist and advise departments in their diocesan communications spend.

e) It is important that sufficient time is given to the promotion of major events to maximise responses.

f) Advising parishes on their communications is an important part of the department’s work. However, budgets limit the availability of staff. The department cannot manage every parish magazine or website, or even necessarily promote all parish events. However, parishes do expect to have some space to promote their events. To them the Diocese is often one of their media promotional tools. A way of servicing this demand needs to be found. The Director should invite Rural Deans and others to provide feedback for how best communications support for parishes can be planned and fitted into wider plans.

g) The Communications Department needs to identify and work with key strategic partners: Parishes, Cathedral, Church Schools, National Church, Mission agencies, Local authorities, statutory agencies etc.

**The Director of Communications**

The Director of Communications will meet with Heads of Departments to schedule work. Regular contact will be maintained on the progression of work. The Director of Communications will support the shared work of Church House in their key departmental goals. For example:

a) numerical growth in discipleship and work with younger people.

b) supporting those in ordained and lay ministry.

c) communicating the work and place of social responsibility.

d) supporting safeguarding and be a member of various CORE groups.

e) Helping increase the numbers of visitors coming to learn and be resourced for mission and spirituality at Foxhill.

f) assisting in the smooth transmission and flow of necessary information to stakeholders .

g) supporting head teachers and governors and promoting church schools.

**3. Bishop of Chester’s Media Adviser**

The Director of Communications acts as the Bishop of Chester’s media adviser, and will help the bishops in their promotion of episcopal work.

**4. Training**

Currently the department provides an annual training day and some internal training for staff. It also works with in conjunction with other departments in aspects of communication training.

The department needs to produce / coordinate a communications training scheme. The National Church is offering free courses, there are also national courses which can be offered locally. In conjunction with courses provided by other departments, specific communication department sessions need to include:

a) Advice to newly ordained / office holders / teachers

b) Promoting events and courses for parishes and schools

c) Communications courses for clergy and others holding licences

d) Social media courses

**5. Publications**

The department ensures the production of timely, engaging and accurate diocesan publications. Publications are an important part of the marketing mix. There will be times when one channel is more important than the others. The Church of England nationally is giving priority to digital communication, and this is clearly an area that is strategically important for the Diocese of Chester and developing this further will be a key part of the Director of Communications role. However, it is important to understand that it is the rich tapestry of tactics which make communication successful. Publications include the following (with current readership, and with some aspirations for improvement / future development)

a) Regional media releases (potential for 1-8 million)

b) CDN (print run 31,000 - 40,000 readers) – To retain but integrate its use more fully. To consider move to full colour.

c) Website (38,500 page impressions per month) Launched May 2017– to evaluate the new site from a user perspective. To evaluate performance on mobile devices.

d) eBulletin (2,800 readers twice a month. This is currently a manual system with complex sign-up procedures – an email package could be used which will also allow people to sign-up for news easily.

e) Facebook (combined accounts 470 (diocesan page) + 543 (+Libby page) likes with reach depending on sharing) - to increase followers. Develop a policy regarding role holders’ accounts. To use tools such as Hootsuite to plan posts. To agree when and how micro Facebook pages are established. To train staff in using Facebook.

f) Twitter (2,673 DBF followers / 96 Mike Gilbertson followers / 508 Ian Bishop followers) - to increase followers. Develop a policy regarding role holders’ accounts. To use tools like Hootsuite to plan tweets.

g) Youtube (15,500 views) - This medium needs to be more integrated into the marketing mix and videos planned and agreed before shooting takes place.

h) Cycle of Prayer (1600 print run which has doubled since 2013 + Electronic) – to continue. As well as the clear focus on prayer the cycle is designed as a vehicle of belonging/identity. The content and editorial work is carried out by the ministry department with design assistance from the communications department

i) Yearbook (1,100 print run) - this is felt to be an important way to provide information on those who work in the diocesan family

j) Paper Mailing - Print can be a very effective medium. Where appropriate certain targeted paper mailings could be considered for significant festivals in the Church calendar and major diocesan events.

k) Photography - to set a budget and source photography with appropriate vetting/acknowledgements (including photographers both paid and volunteers)

l) Adverts

To keep up to date in developments of communications media and propose their best use. To include introducing new items into the mix as they emerge and discontinuing those that cease to be effective.

**6. Stakeholders**

The department needs to be able to be sensitive to different and wide traditions of the Anglican Church. It is important that its actions reflect Gospel values such as telling the truth and building relationships with those of differing opinions.

The key stakeholders the department works with are:

a) Diocesan Bishop

b) Suffragan Bishops and Archdeacons

c) Diocesan Secretary

d) Other committee chairs and heads of department

e) Parish clergy, readers and other licensed lay workers

f) Identifying and supporting other key voices around the Diocese

g) Others with employed and volunteer roles in parishes (Church Wardens, Treasurers, administrators, youth/children/families workers, parish giving officers, safeguarding officers etc.)

h) Head teachers

i) Media

j) National Church