

Guidelines for a House of Clergy Chair

This document was originally drawn up in 2001 at the request of the annual residential meeting of the House of Clergy Chairs (now the Diocesan Clergy Chairs' Forum - DCCF). It was reviewed and discussed with the Chairs themselves, the Archbishop of York (David Hope), Philip Mawer (Secretary General of Archbishops' Council) and the Ven Gordon Kuhrt (Director of Ministry Division). Archbishop Stephen Cottrell is now the Forum's usual liaison point for the House of Bishops, and William Nye (Secretary General of Archbishops' Council) for Church House departments.

The preamble (this page) has now been simplified. Much of the content may apply to Diocesan Lay Chairs, who have their own membership group and have produced their own "Guidance and Recommended Good Practice" document.

A number of points need to be emphasised.

- Without creating formal structures, it is reasonable to have some mutual agreement on expectations, and ways of collaboration between the Chairs of each Diocese and between a Diocesan Clergy Chair and Diocesan Senior Staff.
- The document deals with local arrangements to be agreed as part of a normal working relationship between a Chair and a Bishop and the Senior / Diocesan Leadership Team
- The Guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive or to apply to all Chairs in all circumstances but indicate the sort of role which a Chair might be expected to take in the wider life of the church
- The experience of Chairs in working with Bishops does vary considerably. The gifts and abilities of those elected as Chairs are not uniform; however, it is reasonable for the Chairs to expect some consistency in the way in which their role interacts with the diocesan Bishop and the Senior / Diocesan Leadership Team.
- A designated Chair should liaise from time to time with the Archbishop of York to review areas of concern on behalf of the Chairs, including any difficulties being experienced with the operation of these guidelines

Guidelines for a Chair of Diocesan House of Clergy

Officer of Synod - the Chair is the senior elected clergy officer of the Synod.

Essential	Desirable	Good practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in the setting of the Synod agenda • Membership of Bishop's Council • Convening meetings of House of Clergy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairing of sessions of Diocesan Synod • Membership of other senior committees, as agreed locally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convening meetings of all diocesan clergy if appropriate • Liaison with colleague Chair of House of Laity

Representative of the Clergy - the Chair is the senior elected representative of the clergy of the Diocese.

Essential	Desirable	Good practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A relationship of trust with the Bishop so that matters of general and pastoral concern can be raised • Role in senior appointments • Role as senior public representative of the clergy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasional attendance at Bishop's Staff Meeting • Involvement with the Rural/Area Deans team as agreed locally • As senior cleric, use in other roles within a diocese, and more widely, locally agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with clergy • Receiver of confidences from clergy; exercise of sound judgement

National and other responsibilities – the chair is a key link in communication

Essential	Desirable	Good practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A budget for expenses, agreed locally, to include training, and attendance at meetings with other diocesan chairs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A role in communication and consultation over national issues of conditions of service • Participation in the national chairs' forum is expected 	

Guidelines to best practice for a Chair of House of Clergy

- 1 The role of Chair of the House of Clergy (as also Chair of the House of Laity) is a highly responsible post which should be recognised as such both by those who elect and by the Bishop, the senior pastor and leader in the diocese. Clearly there needs to be a balance of agreed expectations and local flexibility.

Officer of Synod

- 2 Best practice is achieved when the Bishop shares with the two Chairs and the diocesan secretary the practical management of the Diocesan Synod. This needs to involve input to the agenda as well as sharing in the chairing of Synod meetings.
- 3 As the senior clergy officer of the Synod it is important for the Chair to be involved with the strategic direction of the Diocese. The exact arrangements might vary locally but should as a minimum include membership of the Bishop's Council or equivalent.

Representative of the Clergy

- 4 A good relationship with the Bishop is essential so that the Chair can raise matters of concern of a more pastoral and wider nature so as to enable the Bishop to maintain maximum awareness of sentiment among the clergy.
- 5 The Chair of the House of Clergy should be invited to attend the Bishop's Staff meeting at least once a year.
- 6 The Chair should be in some way involved with the diocesan team of rural/area Deans under an appropriate local arrangement.
- 7 As the senior representative of the clergy the Chair should be available for a "public representative role". This may include representing the clergy at farewells to senior staff and being willing occasionally to represent the diocese more widely.
- 8 Chairs may communicate and show concern for clergy by letters or cards, perhaps on arriving or leaving the diocese. Chairs too are also likely to be consulted by colleagues on pastoral or other confidential matters requiring a sound professional judgement.
- 9 The Chair should have an appropriate role in senior appointments to the Diocese. This should normally include membership of any Advisory Group convened by the Bishop for the appointment of Suffragan Bishops and Archdeacons under the guidelines for senior church appointments.
- 8 As an experienced cleric the Chair would normally be among those considered by the Bishop in respect of other local or national church responsibilities.

National and other responsibilities

- 9 Chairs have a responsibility to liaise with other Chairs, to share good practice and make themselves aware of national issues facing the church.
- 10 The Diocesan chair is an important link to the parochial clergy and the network of clergy chairs thus has an important role to play in action, communication and consultation with the national church institutions on matters connected with clergy conditions of service.