



To the representors and the interested parties

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*Secretary to the Mission
Pastoral and Church
Property Committee*

Our ref: NB22/214

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**Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011
All benefices and parishes in the deanery of Wigan
Proposed Pastoral Scheme**

1. The Church Commissioners have now carefully considered one hundred and thirteen representations against, ninety in favour (five of which also expressed some concerns), three letters of comment (in favour) and two letters (against) out of time regarding a draft Pastoral Scheme providing for:
 - the termination of the team ministries established for the area of the benefice of All Saints Wigan Team and the area of the benefice of The Chapelfields Team;
 - the creation of seven new parishes (from the existing 29 parishes which comprise the deanery of Wigan) of:
 - o Wigan Central
 - o Wigan East (Chapelfields)
 - o Wigan North East
 - o Wigan North West
 - o Wigan South
 - o Wigan Town Centre
 - o Wigan West;
 - the creation of a new benefice to be called "the Benefice of Wigan" comprising the 7 new parishes;
 - the establishment of a team ministry for the new benefice of Wigan; and for:
 - the cure of souls to be shared by a team rector and seventeen team vicars;
 - the appointment of fourteen of the team vicars;
 - the housing arrangements for the team; and
 - the future patronage arrangements for the benefice.
2. The Commissioners have come to the decision that the Scheme should proceed, and the following statement indicates the reasons for their decision.

Background

3. The draft Scheme carried the following 'diocesan rationale' as a footnote:

The deanery of Wigan has been discussing for the last 10 years how it might ensure that its churches have an effective ministry across the whole area, given 21st century challenges of limited finances and clergy numbers.

Five years ago, Wigan received around £1 million from the Church Commissioners to fund the Transforming Wigan project, including a team to help the deanery identify what changes would be necessary to turn around the mission and financial strength of the deanery.

There are currently too many small parish organisations to maintain. In order to remain committed to a presence in every community it is necessary to change the way that "presence" is organised. The proposed structure will resource a presence in every community and give greater opportunity to grow the existing and plant new church communities while enabling more shared leadership and more efficient organisation of the church's work across the deanery.

The Diocese of Liverpool has a policy to have larger parish organisations responsible for multiple churches, and experience in Wigan has also shown the need for central leadership at the deanery level.

These changes support the national church agenda for Renewal & Reform, and for nationwide simplification of burdensome church structures. They are intended to help the churches of Wigan to be more effective in their mission and ministry.

The Transforming Wigan Team, supported by diocesan officers, have developed systems to make running this new structure as easy and effective as possible.

Summary of the main points in the representations against the draft Scheme

4. Many representors, particularly from the parishes of St Michael and All Angels, Wigan, St Peter Hindley and St Aidan, Billinge (*about 60% of those who had identified their parish*), had written against the "Transforming Wigan" scheme sharing their concerns regarding, amongst other things, the restructuring, the stress on clergy and the laity, mission, finance, consultation, PCCs and churchwardens, the proposed patronage plus other points and some asked "Where is God in these proposals?"

The Scoping Document

5. Some objectors felt that it was premature to invite comments on the pastoral reorganisation before the Scoping Document which was intended to provide details of "how it is all going to work" was finalised. They said this document had been produced with little lay input and said nothing to align it with the two broad outlines of the Transforming Wigan initiative or to show that what was being proposed would deliver these outcomes. Many felt that, while the stated intention was to reduce the number of structural levels within the Deanery, this would be far from the case, with at least two (possibly three) more levels being proposed than in the existing structure. Some pointed out that there would be a disproportionate lack of lay representation and that all the authority and decision-making would be in the hands of the ordained ministers.

Proposals to create seven new parishes (from the existing 29 parishes), their geography and the PCC structures

6. Many of the objectors accepted that something in Wigan had got to change but said that the current draft Scheme was not the correct way of going about it. Several said that their main cause of concern was the loss of the PCC system as they knew it where their PCC was responsible for running their own parish affairs and financial matters. They said that having one PCC for a number of churches seemed an unnecessary complication and was likely to reduce the ability to respond quickly, dilute local democracy and accountability, and result in employing people to do what was now being done on a voluntary basis.
7. Some expressed concern that the new PCCs would be totally unrepresentative of the current parishes and were merely a method of complying with Ecclesiastical Law, with the main authority being in the unelected hub leadership team. Similarly, at deanery level the actual leadership and authority would be with the Wigan Church Leadership team, including co-opted members, and this coupled with the proposed Joint Council, would make a mockery of the need to have a Deanery Synod. One representor asked that the constitution and ability to be a candidate for the PCC be rethought and asked that it be made clear whether elected PCC members spoke for the members of the parish.
8. Several objectors thought that some of the boundaries of the new parishes did not make sense. In particular, several said that the boundary of the proposed "Wigan Central hub" was bizarre with a new larger parish/hub leaping across its neighbours. Other objectors said the restructuring appeared to be based on relationships between like-minded leaders rather than on logic or what the parishioners wanted, resulting in piecemeal changes in the last couple of years. They suggested this procedure should be put on hold whilst the configuration of the new parishes was determined on boundaries that would hopefully continue for several decades.
9. Another objector said that the Wigan Town Centre hub incorporated a parish (St Mark's) that was, in fact, miles out of the town centre, which precluded it being seen as a "neighbour" of the other three parishes in the hub.
10. The *Churchwardens of St John the Evangelist, Hindley Green* said that it was not as equitable as it appeared to have a hub leader and associate hub leader for each of the seven proposed parishes as no consideration had been given to the number of churches within the hubs. They said this varied between three and seven with the ratio of clergy to churches varying from 1:1.5 in the West Hub to 1:3.5 in the Chapelfields Hub which also had the second highest electoral roll of the seven proposed new parishes and therefore needed more team vicars than the smaller hubs.
11. Some expressed concern about bringing in the outlying churches rather than just concentrating on the Wigan town churches. It was said that each parish had its own particular characteristics, ethos and history, and it was a mistake to think that one size fitted all not only in governance but in worship style.
12. A number also expressed dislike of the term "Hub" to describe the proposed new parishes and one disliked the purely geographical names proposed for them.

Mission and the benefits (or not) of restructuring

13. Many representors said they were told that re-structuring would improve efficiency, cut costs and create “many new worshipping communities”, but that four years on they were yet to see those benefits, despite the massive financial investment made. They questioned the recent claims that over 1,000 people were now engaged in new worshipping communities and asked whether they had just shown interest or were they actively engaged in new worshipping communities and, if so, where were they?
14. Several said that nothing was being said about the negative impact that the restructuring was having on existing “traditional” worshipping communities. They feared that not only would the project fail to deliver on its promises, but their worshipping communities would have been damaged beyond repair. Many said that the aim was to try and bring more young people into the Church, but existing older parishioners were feeling very hurt and excluded.
15. Many objectors from *St Michael and All Angels, Wigan* disputed statements by Transforming Wigan that maintained that the traditional worship strategy was “failing”, stating that their parish was flourishing, had a healthy bank balance and was led by a well-respected vicar, Stan Higginson, with an excellent team of churchwardens, and PCC and a large band of volunteers. They said that St Michael’s was a thriving community, held many services and had a building in use most days of the week and required no interference from those that think they know better.
16. Several said that the assumption that PCC members would be “freed up for mission” and would wish to engage in evangelism was flawed. The required skills sets were completely different, and individuals might not have the time or inclination to do so.
17. Individual representors made the following points: -
 - One was not sure how many barriers had been broken down or what boundaries they were crossing. She said they seemed to be attracting the same few young people, when they could be out reaching disaffected youth.
 - Another said that she saw no working together at St Peter’s Hindley as they had no help and saw no vision for growth outside St Peter’s but just decline.
 - The *PCC of Christ Church, Ince-in-Makerfield* said that mission had been very low on the agenda and there seemed to have been no growth. It said that the effort put into the restructuring process had got in the way of clergy playing the role they had been called to do.
 - Another objector said that far from refreshing their traditional worshipping communities, this “hub and spoke” strategy would not result in the extra 1 in 10 disciples which the Team Wigan team envisaged.
 - Another said that the money should be spent on more good clergy to energise their areas and then there would be more people involved with the church.
 - One said that instead of starting from what was good and existed now, the approach had been to invent a whole new untried system with a set of “buzz

words" as if this new jargon validated the process.

- Many objectors said the new arrangements risked being autocratic, stating that one "old" parish church (Saint George's, Wigan) had been turned into a night shelter and its PCC had resigned in protest at having their wishes over-ruled.
- Other objectors said that the "new" structure failed to mention the many local volunteers they depended upon to maintain their churches, to look after the everyday running of the church, make sure all churches were covered and prepared for and to organise and run fund-raising events.

Clergy and lay ministers

18. Many representors were concerned about the falling number of stipendiary clergy in the deanery and many from *Billinge* and *St Peter, Hindley* thought that the loss of their own priest had led to a fall in their previously thriving congregations.
19. Many were concerned that this meant that the full-time stipendiary clergy were losing contact with their parishioners as they had to conduct multiple services on Sundays. They said that clergy were becoming managers and no longer had the time to engage in pastoral work and apply their theological and pastoral training. Many objectors believed that a parish priest should act as a point of contact for all spiritual and community matters, be involved at every stage of a congregant's life, live within the parish, have an open door to visiting parishioners with spiritual issues, and lead initiatives to bring both religious and non-religious communities together.
20. They said that much of the worship and pastoral care was now carried out by lay ministers who were not sufficiently well trained for these roles and often didn't have the time to visit people in need. Several suggested that this lack of spiritual guidance was reflected in the fact that congregations had dwindled, services had been cancelled and Baptism applications were at an all-time low. Another objector said that funerals were often undertaken by Lay Readers who didn't know the bereaved families. They hoped it was not too late to look at the issues again and reconsider the number of full-time stipendiary clergy and their roles.
21. Many were also concerned that the amount of work for the reduced number of clergy and the Readers was causing many of them to suffer from stress and "burn-out", one to the extent of saying that their lives were literally at risk. They said this had led to some clergy leaving the deanery.
22. However, others also attributed this in part to some not being comfortable with the ethos and style of ministry of TWIG. One said that many of the clergy were doing valuable work in their parishes (some flourishing and growing) but this work was not appreciated if it did not fit in with the mould of Tim Montgomery (*The Deanery Missioner*) and consequently they had moved elsewhere, where they could still exercise their pastoral skills and do the work for which they were ordained.
23. These views were endorsed by one of the current clergy, who was herself about to leave, who said that the clergy raced in and out of different churches/worshipping communities to preside and baptise, not building relationships, ignoring pastoral issues and hoping lay leaders could pick up the pieces. She said some lay leaders were receiving training and being licensed but many were exhausted, under-resourced and poorly supported. She thought local pastoral issues were becoming difficult to manage and that safeguarding could become a bigger issue. She said that

whilst the focus on mission was crucial, the pressure to plant new worshipping communities would lead to more stress and burnout in clergy and laity.

24. Another objector said the Scheme could be rescued if people gained credible reassurance that ordained clergy, and not laity, would lead them on their journey and provide the pastoral care they expected. She said that the laity could be trained to be the new-level managers. Another objector asked what was happening regarding patronage. She asked who was to interview and appoint the new clergy and whether the individual parishes would have a say in the matter or was it the hub that had the control?

Churchwardens

25. Several existing churchwardens expressed their unhappiness at the proposals and said their co-operation would be withdrawn if any of the schemes were introduced. They say they knew everything about their own church building and by working together they could keep them maintained and in good repair, and plan for reorganisation, restoration or reordering. They believed deputy wardens could not replace this, because they would not have the responsibility and ability to make decisions and would be responsible to wardens who would not always appreciate what they were being asked.
26. An individual objector pointed out that for the *Wigan East (Chapelfields)* parish only two wardens would be appointed to represent an area that currently encompassed seven parishes and it would be impossible for them to adequately represent the views of the laity across an area of this size. He said they would be over-stretched by having legal responsibility for the property and goods in all seven churches.
27. Another objector said the proposals underestimated the work that existing church wardens did, how important their role was, and how many of them were required. They said the concept of "assistant wardens" might not work in practice. One said that the role of "assistant church warden" was the same as her current church warden role but without the support of a local PCC elected by the congregation. She said assistant wardens would have to report to the Hub PCC and it was not clear who would comprise the local church meeting. Some thought there would be a reluctance to take on the assistant churchwarden role.

Finances

28. Some of the objectors said that the main aim of the proposals was to make cost savings and there was great concern regarding the future financial arrangements.
29. *St Michael and All Angels PCC* said that taking "old parish" funds and centralising them was controversial and its parishioners were outraged that money donated over the years would now be used to bail-out others and it was already seeing a resultant reduction in donations, and legacies. It also said that whilst designated funds and donations for specific items was to be honoured, the "new" parish PCC would have to prioritise expenditure on other items and the "old parishes" may find that their projects could not be funded, even though they had raised the money in the first instance. This concern was echoed by many others who questioned why they should fundraise for their church for it all to go into one pot.
30. A further concern for some was the lack of information regarding the future funding arrangements in the reorganisation and a number of objectors believed different

things which was puzzling for many.

31. Another objector expressed concern over the accounting records of the "hubs" although assurance had been given that accounting records would be produced not only at new "hub" level but also at "old" parish level. He was concerned that if they did not fully account for all receipts and payments at "old parish" level then they risked closing 6 or 7 churches because 2 or 3 of them were not viable.
32. Another objector pointed out that it was proposed that a pool of organists would all receive the same fee, irrespective of experience or qualifications. He asked what research had been done and what about the recommended fees drawn up by the Incorporated Society of Musicians in consultation with the Royal School of Church Music and The Royal College of Organists?
33. The PCC of St Michael and All Angels and others were concerned about the deanery funding. The PCC stated that aspirational (deficit) budgets indicated fiscal failure and yet "old parish" debts totalled some £556,000 across the deanery. It understood from correspondence with the Bishop that some of this had been matched off against the Deanery's accumulated Mission and Growth Fund but that £183,000 had been written off by the Diocese. It said that as the Mission and Growth Fund was itself raised by the deanery this had in effect been met by the other parishes and this was resented by those of them who had consistently paid in full.
34. A number of objectors were concerned about the cost of paid staff at Deanery or Hub level envisaged in the proposed arrangements and one listed these as Team Rector, Core Services Manager, Finance Officer, Funeral Coordinator, part time funeral coordinator, grants coordinator (fund raiser) and at least seven part time administrators (one for each hub). Another objector questioned the rationale behind having to employ an accountant, should the proposed reorganisation take place, when presently each Church had an unpaid Treasurer to deal with its finances. She also questioned paying for four Archdeacons within the Diocese where there was previously only two and also paying for the Deanery Missioner when finance was tight.
35. One of the clergy stated that there was no clear budget for this Scheme and that the salaries might be met by a grant in the first year, but there was no clear plan as to how this shortfall, which would only grow bigger, would be sustained into the future.

Increased bureaucracy and representation on PCCs

36. Many believed that Transforming Wigan was just creating more bureaucracy. They reiterated that the new structure saw a new layer of management where people got a salary for work which was presently being done on a voluntary basis.
37. Another major area of concern related to the arrangements for funerals. Concern was expressed regarding funerals being sorted out centrally which would result in the church being seen as even more impersonal and unpastoral than it currently was.
38. Some were concerned that there would be too few lay representatives on the new PCCs, and that decision making would be dominated by the clergy and hub leadership teams.

Churchmanship and parish identity

39. A number of representors had concerns about their parish identity and churchmanship tradition. Several said that Wigan was a town with a High Church tradition while the ethos of TWIG and the background of many of the new clergy being appointed to the deanery was Evangelical, and that they needed to call on retired clergy for alternative forms of worship. Many placed a high value on celebrating the Eucharist (at least) every Sunday and were concerned about the reduction in Eucharistic services and said that in some Hubs these were now held by rotation in different churches. Lack of transport meant that many elderly worshippers did not travel to other churches, but they were reluctant to attend non-Eucharistic services at their own church.
40. Several objectors were concerned about the loss of their church's identity. *St Catherine Scholes' PCC* said their churchmanship had always been extremely "low" and unique in their experience within the town. They said they would not attend services in other "higher" churches. *St Elizabeth Aspull's PCC* said the parish's background was about local history, local values and identity; which it felt was being lost. One objector from *St Aidan's, Billinge* said its church no longer held the spiritual certainty that once permeated throughout the parish and it was suggested that the Transformation had achieved an unexpected effect of fragmentation. Others said that Billinge had its own identity, distinct from Wigan, as many Billinge people came from St Helens or Liverpool and most of the parish was in the Borough of St Helens.
41. Another objector believed people were looking for stability, peace, and comfort in a changing world and youngsters were turning towards traditional and familiar worship – cathedral congregations were growing – choral evensong was popular. She questioned whether it was wise to brush aside centuries of accumulated tradition. One was concerned that although the new approach would work in some churches, 'one peg does not fit every hole' and she was worried that the reorganisation would lead to a real decline in the number of church members. Another said the changes should be tried in churches which wanted to be involved, with others invited to join if it was seen to be successful.

Consultation, communication and "top-down" reorganisation

42. Many objectors were concerned about what they saw as the "top-Down" imposition of the Transforming Wigan project. Some said that the Deanery Missioner had turned up and announced that their churches were broken, churches would close, and it was their fault.
43. Others said that they were initially enthusiastic about One Church Wigan and it could have worked but with the dictatorial attitude of Church Wigan telling parish members at meetings what they intended to do and not listening to their concerns, they were now against it going ahead.
44. Many objectors strongly felt that their earlier questions had not been fully answered and during the "consultation" process they were told that "this is a consultation, not a vote" and that "opting out is not an option". One who attended nearly all the consultation meetings felt that it was evident that if members of a congregation did not possess the required gifts of leadership, evangelism and outreach and were in their twilight years and felt they would be able to worship under another denomination, then this would be acceptable collateral damage.

45. An objector from the proposed *Wigan East (Chapelfields)* parish said they were told by the Reverend David Brooke (Team Rector of the Chapelfields Team and Hub-leader designate) that if the majority of a church's congregation disagreed with the proposal then the church would have no option but to leave the Church of England at the point of the proposal becoming church law. They were also told that the objections raised were factually incorrect and that they did not understand what the proposals were trying to achieve. They said it was unacceptable to be given such an ultimatum.
46. One representor said that formal notice of the draft Scheme was not displayed at one church, as was required, and suggested that the vicar concerned supported the restructuring and assumed his flock were of the same mind.
47. A number of representors said that the Deanery Missioner had encouraged those in favour of the Scheme to make representations and provided a template for them to do so but no such encouragement or assistance had been offered to those who opposed it.
48. Others said that the reorganisation proposals were consuming too much time and energy and causing distress and dissension rather than promoting unity.

Churches

49. While some thought that there were too many churches in Wigan and that some should close, others were concerned that their church might be more likely to close if the draft Scheme proceeded. Several objectors stated that the congregation at *St Catharine's, Scholes* had plummeted alarmingly over the past two years since they were informed at the AGM in 2018 that their church would close in the next two years or so.
50. Some expressed anxiety about the future of *St Aidan's, Billinge* and said that the reduction in statutory services being held there had not been properly authorised.
51. Those from *St Peter, Bryn* were concerned that their "Oasis" church in a rented shop, which they had set up after their church building was closed, would not be continued when the three-year lease expired. The Reverend Sian Gasson said that St Peter's congregation worshipped in a school on Sundays and in the shop midweek and if it did not continue, they would have no base for midweek meetings, to draw the community in or to reach out in mission.
52. Several referred to the recent closure of St George's church for worship, at short notice and with no opportunity for a final service, so that it could be used as a night-shelter which they stated was imposed by the Leadership Team against the wishes of the PCC, whose members all resigned as a result, leaving the building to be run by the Transformation Team.

Other issues

53. Other representors raised various concerns.
 - A few questioned the legal basis for the proposals as they said the Wigan parishes were created by an Act of Parliament and questioned whether they could be changed without another.

- A parishioner from *Highfield* feared the loss of their parish hall.
- One objector said they had a school with over 400 pupils that seemed to have been overlooked in all the plans and other objectors expressed concerns that the schools should be included in the plans.
- One objector stressed the need for all churches to be kept open not just on Sundays but to have an open-door policy.
- Another said that a great, largely untapped opportunity existed to further God's kingdom by working more closely with churches of other denominations and that Transforming Wigan had failed to exploit these opportunities.
- One of the clergy said that Transforming Wigan could be so much more; something that would carry Christ's message into the 21st century and beyond, something different, something bold, something audacious, something exciting and most of all something filled with the grace and love of Christ. Instead the proposals were an unimaginative reimagining of nothing more than that which already existed in Wigan.
- Another representor said that if it was not possible for every church to have its own vicar then, if there were two vicars for each district, they should reside in the two largest former parishes. One from *St Aidan, Billinge* said that both of the Hub clergy would live at the far end of the Hub.

Summary of the main points in the representations of those largely in favour of the draft Scheme but who still have concerns

54. The *Lay Chair of Ormskirk Deanery* said that although he supported the draft Scheme in general, the Archdeacon of Wigan and West Lancashire should be a member of the patronage board. He said this was a vital role for the Archdeacon given the remit of that office in the Diocese of Liverpool pertaining to appointments.
55. The *PCC of St Catharine's, Scholes* supported the proposals but had reservations with regard to the number of clergy around the Deanery. It said that lay ministry was being actively encouraged and new lay leaders being developed but was aware that present clergy numbers fell short of what was needed and felt that clergy and laity had a duty of care to and for each other and the more resources were stretched, the more difficult that became.
56. The *vice-chair of St Andrew's PCC, Springfield* said she supported the scheme but was appalled that Wigan Family Welfare had been asked to leave their premises at St Catherine's House, Scholes to make room for Transforming Wigan. She said that Wigan Family Welfare, which offered help and support to vulnerable adults and children, was surely part of One Church Wigan.
57. Although in favour, one representor said that there had been so much delay in starting the project that at some point it might be decided that it was no longer financially viable, and her church must close. She also said that clergy were stretched to a maximum at present and although the local missional leaders did their best to provide the necessary services, the people liked to see "our vicar or curate" as often as possible.

58. Whilst in favour of the Scheme, one representor said that some funeral directors had good working relations with parishes, knew who to contact and knew that they would have a reply within a few hours. He said that elderly parishioners and their families expected “their vicar” to be the person to conduct the funeral and be the person to approach for pastoral care, not someone from another area of the deanery who they may not know.

Summary of the main points in the representations in favour of the draft Scheme

59. Representors in favour of the “Transforming Wigan” scheme expressed their support for the new structures, their enthusiasm for the new initiatives, their positive views about the new local Missional Leaders, supporting the reduction in bureaucracy and many other issues which they said had grown out of this journey of prayer and by seeking God at the centre of all their work.

Background and context

60. Many representors described the background to the Transforming Wigan project, the first of the national Church’s Strategic Development projects – begun in 2015 with the key objective of “turning around the mission and financial strength of the Deanery of Wigan”.
61. The *Archdeacon of Wigan and West Lancashire* and others explained that the churches in Wigan Deanery had been deliberating for over a decade how to manage the difficult effects of decline in church attendance and giving resulting in massive parish share arrears. As a result, the Wigan deanery had been allowed to trial a new parish share system to attempt to overcome those difficulties. Together with the grant awarded by the Strategic Development Fund, a plan was designed to address the decade-plus-long difficulties in Wigan and the “Transforming Wigan” project was launched.
62. Several representors stated that they started with the “Order of Prayer” with 30 people across Wigan committing to pray. They said that this had grown and throughout this journey, prayer and seeking God had been at the centre. Church leaders, lay and ordained, had been working hard in the last four years to renew the vision and develop a new strategy accordingly. The vision was to enable one in ten people in Wigan to be on the journey of following Jesus. The strategy was to refresh traditional worshipping communities and plant many new ones so that all the people of Wigan had the opportunity to be connected into what they called “Church Wigan”.
63. *Bishop Cyril, Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Liverpool*, said that the Deanery could not continue to support 29 churches, many of which did not have either the human or financial resources to continue as before. He said that the proposed Scheme was imaginative and provided the only hope of making any progress in mission. Sharing of resources at every level offered real opportunities for growth and the possibility of shared leadership made the Church’s mission in the community manifestly more achievable.
64. One representor said that whatever the challenges and difficulties, the Church in Wigan had got to change. She said the old model was no longer working and so, despite considering that it had some flaws, supported the Scheme and felt that Church Wigan was the way forward, even if they had to accommodate small adaptations.

65. One said the result of a steady decline in church membership had left a huge void which had been filled by greed, homelessness, addiction, often leading to violence and other crime. He said in Jesus, there was hope – however, the Church needed to become more viable through significant reorganisation. Another highlighted God's obvious and clear involvement in all that was going on with Team Wigan. He said that when Team Wigan was formed and started to take shape, he was both inspired and dubious but after prayer and reflection his conclusion had been and still was “trust in the Lord our God”.

Views from the Hub Leader clergy

66. *The Reverend David Brooke, the interim team rector of the Chapelfields Team Ministry* and designated Hub Leader for Chapelfields, explained that this was the only grouping of churches which was already formed into a team and would not be altered by the Scheme other than by the union of parishes and the formation of the benefice. Its six parishes, with a seventh church, had all undergone rapid, unwanted and uncontrollable change of which he gave examples. He said the Scheme made it painfully clear that there was no returning to former glories and independence, so objections and outright rejection were fully to be expected.
67. He said they had achieved a great deal in the last 11 months, but the structures were now the limiting factor. He said the new structure was needed to free them for their shared ministry. In terms of pastoral offices, they would have a stated responsibility for mutual support; schools work would be radically improved; administration would be an order of magnitude more effective; management of safeguarding, health and safety, data protection and buildings would take a massive step forward. He thought there would be a new freedom to form connections with the community as boundaries would be erased; they could focus on pan-Wigan partnerships, not just local ones; they would be enriched by engaging with their differences, and the realities of wider society, instead of fighting to preserve their cherished traditions; they would benefit from each other's strengths, and support each other in their weaknesses; and new leaders would have a supportive cohort rather than feeling alone.
68. He said the rise in lay confidence, without support, guidance and mentoring, had resulted in significant control issues affecting the spirit of cooperation with the minister, which needed to be addressed. The proposed restructure provided the ideal vehicle for rebalancing leadership, management and governance, and getting the best out of the renewed lay energy resulting from the reduction in the number of clergy.
69. *The Reverend Christina Nicholson, acting Hub Leader for Wigan Central*, said that in the All Saints Team they all felt the benefit of praying, working and ministering together. She said that some of their churches were struggling and they could see that in 10 years some of their communities might not be viable as they were not attracting younger people into the church. The “pool” of money and resources was diminishing, they had huge buildings which needed maintaining and were costly to run and clergy numbers was also an issue. She said that they needed to have a mother church and refresh, but also needed many more small worship communities where people were, that naturally grew people in faith, worship and outreach. This required growing more leaders, enabling them to grow the new thing God was doing and also to refresh the old.

70. **The Reverend Frances Shoemith, All Saints team vicar and North East Hub Leader designate**, said that three of the four churches in the North East Hub were on the verge of being non-viable; forming a “Hub” parish was vital to lead them back into growth, through focusing on mission, or it would not be long before at least one closed. She said they desperately needed a light structure and less cumbersome governance if they were to be able to connect with more people and share with them the Good News of Jesus.
71. She said that within the North East Hub she had been greatly encouraged to see how a small but growing number of people in each existing church had caught the vision. She acknowledged that there were also many who did not welcome the loss of autonomy and identity or (for the wealthier parishes) of having to share their finances. Increasingly though, particularly in the churches which had seen the most decline, and where finances were poorest, there was a recognition that the new structures gave them the best hope of turning the life of their church around and growing again. She gave examples of ways in which they had begun working informally as a Hub.
72. **The Reverend Will Gibbons, the interim All Saints Team Rector and designated Town Centre Hub Leader**, said he had valued the collaborative approach to ministry that had helped to overcome the isolation that could occur as a parish priest. He said he had seen growing support for the proposals and whilst recognising that change was difficult, working as “one church” had enabled them to be better connected and to offer support, advice, and practical help across the deanery.
73. **The Reverend Dot Gosling** said she would shortly be joining the team as a team leader and was very impressed with the way the Diocese had gone about the restructuring in a very well thought through process. She said she was impressed by the desire to work together and get out of the silo of lone ministry working. She said no-one had all the gifts needed and so working with others who had different gifts, experiences and skills meant they could do more than any one person on their own.
74. **The Reverend Neil Cook, Hub Leader, Wigan West** explained that in nearly all congregations a number of lay people had caught the vision of Transforming Wigan and formed the nuclei of emerging Hub Leadership teams to encourage the change at local level. He said that gradually attitudes and behaviour had changed and a new commitment to working across parish boundaries had emerged.
75. **The Reverend Tim Montgomery, Deanery Missioner**, said that as the project-leader it had been his privilege to help the Deanery negotiate the very challenging terrain of change over the past four and a half years. He said the network of leadership and relationship, together with the overall strategy and local Hub plans, were already developing within the deanery and the Pastoral Scheme would simply provide the best structure to facilitate the vision and mission strategy.
76. **The Reverend Jeremy Thomas, the designated Hub leader for Wigan South**, believed that one of the keys to Transforming Wigan was the development of a leadership structure at Deanery level that enabled clergy to work together in a significantly stronger, more supportive and enabling way. He said within the new structures the vibrancy and energy of larger parishes offered many more opportunities for collaborative working and helping to develop mission in Wigan South and the wider Deanery.

The new structure

77. Many representors explained that a lot of work had been done to form the new parishes and infrastructure, based on a Hub and Spoke structure with an ordained Hub Leader and Associate Hub Leader assisted by non-stipendiary clergy, readers and local mission leaders, and one PCC to cover the new parish with its own Church Wardens. They identified benefits from the proposed new structure at both the deanery/new benefice level and the hub/new parishes level. A member of the Leadership Team said it had been discerning the appropriate strategic response to their great challenges and they were looking for a structure that orientated them towards mission and planting; provided a greater sense of unity of purpose; allowed a more streamlined governance structure; encouraged greater involvement of the laity in leadership and made significant savings in financial and human resources.
78. The *Finance Change Manager for TWIG* said that the key to the Project was the objective of "turning around the mission and financial strength of the Deanery of Wigan". He said that they needed to move away from the traditional model of operating as 29 small and unsustainable parishes and that with fewer, more efficient organisational structures to maintain, energy could be diverted into mission and ministry.
79. Others referred to positive aspects of Transforming Wigan which they believed would be enhanced by the proposed new structure. One said that worshipping alongside those from other worshipping communities across Wigan had already begun to create a sense of unity and an ability to draw on each other for support. She said that this new approach to mission and ministry had a real focus on giving opportunities for people outside the Church to meet Jesus in a way they felt they could connect with.
80. Another emphasised that by supporting, encouraging and helping one another, and sharing their facilities and talents, they could do so much more together than they ever could individually. She acknowledged that these were difficult, unsettling times of change but also exciting times.
81. A third said that they needed to find ways of providing spaces for people of all ages to meet with God and if they just waited for churches to close, needy communities would not have a presence for those families who were desperately seeking for God. She said they needed to do something, and Church Wigan was a God-given opportunity, which they had grasped with both hands. A fourth said that she had been a Christian all her life but for a long time it had felt a duty but now, because of all the new worship services they were attending via the TWIG project, it had become something wonderful and fulfilling again.

Deanery/Benefice level

82. Representors in favour identified administrative and financial benefits from working within the proposed new Hub structure. They said that having a Deanery Officer to look after all their buildings, a finance team to look at purchasing and energy deals, a HR coordinator for the employed support teams for organists, vergers and cleaners and to help them move forward digitally in this technological age, could only help and would take the pressure away from PCCs of small parishes struggling

to keep their heads above water.

83. They emphasised that the Scheme enabled their scant resources, in a deprived part of the North West, to be brought together and they believed they would reap the benefits as time went on, once they were one benefice.
84. One representor said that the centralisation of the funeral ministry had brought together all the churches in union and had encouraged the funeral directors to use them for the growth does not decline in funerals within the Church.

Hub/Parish level

85. The *PCCs of St Stephen's Whelley and St John the Baptist, New Springs* gave their unanimous support, explaining that for several years both churches had struggled with families leaving, falling attendance and shrinking finances, as well as struggling to meet their costs and finding people to fulfil key roles in leadership. They recognised that working alongside other churches would mean they could share resources and make it easier to begin new ministries which in the long run would help them to grow again and contribute to a more secure future.
86. The *Reverend Christina Nicholson* said that within the Central Hub people now worked well across the churches and they knew each other. They had had a hub weekend away and they had a 5th Sunday joint service where all five churches came together. She said there would always be a small group of dissenters, but the majority of people had travelled with them.
87. Two joint representors who were involved in planting on an estate said that the shift into a hub-parish rather than individual parish had been valuable in that they were getting good support from the hub, which they don't think would have happened under traditional parishes, being viewed as an entity in their own right, rather than something which wasn't really church but hoped to feed people into "proper" church on Sunday mornings.
88. Others gave examples of the benefits of the embryo Hub structure:
 - Two explained that they were already reaping the benefits of being part of the larger missional grouping, in a Hub consisting of seven traditional worship communities, together with some embryonic fresh expressions which would become one parish in the current proposals.
 - Another said that she no longer felt constricted by geographical boundaries and had been to "The Well" in various venues and, whilst experiencing some anxiety, experiencing different styles of worship enabled her to learn and develop a greater understanding.
 - Another representor said that working together in Hubs had encouraged Church officers, wardens, treasurers, worship leaders and clergy to support each other and to have joint activities, which had been viable and enjoyable because they attracted larger, joint congregations encouraging the laity to get to know each other and enjoy each other's company and camaraderie in worship.
 - Another believed that the new hub structure, with its co-ordination and central financial scheme, should help those churches which had had difficulty

finding treasurers, PCC members or wardens.

- Another hoped that the Hub parishes and a Joint PCC would result in less bureaucracy in the running and maintenance of buildings although as part of Central Hub, she felt that the geography of the churches in this hub could sometimes result in travel difficulties on the occasions of joint worship.

Mission, ministry, new initiatives and worshipping communities

89. The *Archdeacon* said that they had counted about 400 new people engaged regularly with a worship community in the last couple of years. She believed the decline in numbers had begun to turn around with repeated outreach events such as "Wigan wide Alpha", and outreach initiatives into the local communities around Wigan (often in partnership with the Borough Council and friends) such as several Junk Food Cafes, a homeless shelter, and work with Safe Families for Children. She also counted the new chaplaincy ministry across many sectors in the community including prison, schools, government, military and retail as a success.
90. Many other representors gave examples of new mission initiatives and new mission and worshipping communities which had been established and referred to future initiatives which were being planned.

Schools and Young People

91. Several representors said that one of the strengths of the proposed new structure for Church Wigan was that it enabled better development of work among children and young people. Combining scarce resources and the small number of people willing and able to engage in this work had renewed their mission and they were working hard to grow a new "youth network" and raise up many more young disciples.
92. Others gave particular examples:
- A headteacher said the opportunities to think more creatively about inviting families to worship Jesus had had a really positive impact on school and community life.
 - A Local Missional Leader said that she was involved in a worship community in a school on a Saturday which was appealing to children and their parents and extended family. She said it had been exciting to see so many lay people step forward to take on new ministries or to lead and preach at established services.
 - Several representors said how helpful it had been to have the Reverend Dawn Harrison work across the deanery as Schools Development Officer.
 - The Wigan and Leigh college chaplain said that the College had never had a college chaplain up until 2015 when Transforming Wigan got involved and now Chaplaincy was embedded within there.
 - One representor said they were looking to develop the chaplaincy ministry at the local Church high school and another that they had initiated lay readers working jointly with schools in a monthly "Seekers" service led by a different

class each month.

Clergy

93. The *Reverend David Brooke* said that truly collaborative clergy were a rare commodity and as Wigan had a full house of them, they could not step back from this opportunity but instead must move forward with the restructure to realise the gains for which they had worked so hard. He believed in doing so they would create a breeding ground for the kind of clergy and lay people the church needed more widely than Wigan or even Liverpool Diocese.
94. *Frances Shoemith* said she did not know anywhere in the Church of England where such strong working relationships existed for those in "normal" sized churches, across traditions and theologies, and where these relationships were so foundational to how they lead and do mission and ministry. She said that these people she shared her ministry and mission with were truly a God-given gift.
95. One representor said their clergy appeared to be becoming more administrators than ministers but pointed out that this was not a criticism just a fact.
96. Whilst in support of the draft Scheme, the *Reverend Rachel Sheehan* believed that within some of the proposed Hubs, particularly Chapelfields, the ratio of traditional worshipping communities versus the amount of clergy allocated was quite stretched. This concern was acknowledged by the *Area Dean* although he said that it could be addressed by deploying clergy and resources within the new structure.

Lay leadership and local missional leaders

97. One representor who was part of the Church Wigan Leadership Team described the various events held since 2016 aimed at identifying and raising up many more leaders for the work of mission. Another said that the involvement of more lay people meant the "vicar" was no longer expected to do everything, and instead they were all working together and to their strengths, with a strong sense of unity of purpose. A third said that she had seen people who would not previously have come forward do so in faith and take on potential leadership roles, which was exciting and a vindication for lay involvement in the growth of church.
98. The *Reverend Christina Nicholson* said that growing leaders was essential for the future of Team Wigan and it was a joy to see people released into their God given ministry. She pointed out that they had no licensed lay leadership in St Andrew's and now they had Local Missional Leaders along with their teams in three of the churches in the Central Hub. She said the change for those who felt called to this ministry as Local Missional Leaders had been wonderful to see: they had brought new ideas, they were not lone workers but team players and were growing others too.
99. Several of the new Local Missional leaders who had been commissioned gave details of their experience in the role.
100. However, another representor said that the pressure on clergy numbers across Church Wigan, was a cause for concern as demands on Readers, LMLs, churchwardens and other parish officials and lay leaders across the Deanery, who gave their time willingly, may affect the ability to carry out all they wanted to do. This concern was echoed by another representor who was also concerned that it may

lead to lay leaders feeling out of their depth.

Finance

101. The *Financial Change Manager* said that the current model of 29 independent parishes was unsustainable financially and that in 2017 for 11 of the 29 parishes in the Deanery expenditure exceeded income. He stressed that levels of and trends in attendance indicated that the financial position would worsen if nothing was done and that within the next 5 to 10 years many of the current parishes would have to close their buildings and be absorbed into neighbouring parishes. He said many parishes struggled to fill key lay administrative posts and there was neither the human nor financial resource to provide stipendiary clergy cover to run the Deanery under the current model.
102. He said that the deanery reorganisation would remove unnecessary bureaucracy and create sustainable units that could focus on growing more worshipping communities in the hub parishes. He said that financially there was a stable base under the proposed structure; overall the Deanery "broke even" in 2017, with total income exceeding expenditure by around £4,000. Only one of the Hubs showed a loss: this included a parish funding major works from Reserves.
103. He said they would be able to make huge financial savings, particularly through group purchasing of energy, goods and services that could be done more efficiently and at a lower cost through bulk purchasing – to date he said around £10,000 of savings had been identified across Church Wigan and they had yet to conclude negotiations on areas such as insurance.
104. Another representor, whilst in favour of the Scheme, had concerns regarding the financial viability of the project. He said a number of parishes were in debt regarding their parish shares and he feared that until the Scheme settled and there was less fear about giving without knowing where money would be used, there was a risk that donations/weekly giving would drop, leaving the deanery at risk of further deficits. He also said that the cost of employing school workers, administrators and central service workers would be covered by the parish share and was concerned that these positions would be at risk if parishes were struggling to pay.

Consultation

105. The *Reverend David Brooke* said that negative voices about the Scheme were strident, had not engaged with the flow of information, and were often not directly engaged in active ministry. He said those who were positive were not vocal but largely very involved and just "getting on with it" as if they were already in the new world. He said that many of these people originally raised very good questions, were heard, and liked the answers. He said they had also looked around at the many good things happening as a result of the new collaborative spirit.
106. The *Reverend Christina Nicholson* and the *Reverend Frances Shoesmith* both said that they had had communication evenings, which had been open to everyone, to help more people get involved and to work through some of the difficult questions and concerns together, and people did get their questions answered and go away with a better understanding. This was echoed by another representor who said she attended the regular consultation and communication meetings across the deanery, to help understand more herself and help other people to understand and get

involved, as she did, to find answers to difficult questions and concerns.

107. Mrs Shoemith said that one of the PCCs she chairs had recently recognised the need to embrace the opportunities the Hub would bring, or face closure but, sadly, another PCC remained in denial. She said that some were not even willing to engage with the issues, while others were sitting in their pews waiting for a vicar with a magic wand to appear and reverse their decline.

Church Buildings

108. One representor said that looking at four churches from a church tower some years ago he realised that if their congregations all came together, they still wouldn't fill one church. He said that this could lead to the thought that churches should be closed but Team Wigan was about filling those buildings, utilising them and building God's Kingdom in Wigan.
109. Another representor said that they must consider the buildings and make them suitable for today's communities. They must be able to accommodate different organisations or meetings and services all at the same time, with separate heating and lighting for each section significantly reducing their running costs.
110. Other representors who were licensed readers said that they had been able to keep all their church buildings in Wigan Deanery open (apart from one which was structurally unsound).
111. Another said that the new structure had enabled churches to benefit from the Buildings Manager. At St James's Poolbrook they had received expert advice on the reordering to ensure that they were compliant with building regulations, which otherwise would have absorbed the energy of the clergy or PCCs, who would have lacked the expertise to ensure compliance.

Churchmanship

112. The *Area Dean* said that as a proud High Churchman he could understand the fears that a new structure would mean that church traditions were blurred, or that there would be an evangelical takeover, but had limited sympathy with them. He emphasised that the priority of the project, quite rightly, was on making disciples and no tradition should expect special protection if it isn't able to win converts on its own merits. He said his colleagues, who would mostly identify as charismatic evangelicals, had always treated him with great respect, and had built a culture of mutual accountability around seeking to plant and grow the Church. He said that one of the first achievements of the project was the commissioning of a group of people, now including over 100 people, to pray for the town daily, from every point of the Anglican spectrum and beyond.

Support from other denominations

113. The *lay leader in Queen's Hall Methodist Mission* in the centre of Wigan said she had been deeply encouraged by how prayer was such a fundamental part of what was happening and was encouraged by the number of chaplains at work in the town, by the youth and schools work and the enthusiasm, zeal and strategy of the core team.

114. A local preacher in the Methodist circuit in Wigan wholeheartedly supported Transforming Wigan. He said he was delighted to be part of the weekly prayer initiative, journeying together, of one heart and mind.

Names of the parishes

115. The *Reverend David Brooke* agreed with those who found the geographical names of most of the other hubs impersonal and awkward but recognised that these could be changed very simply at a later stage.

Proposed patronage board

116. The *Revd David Brooke* said he was delighted that the Patronage Board would also handle the appointments of Team Vicars which he believed was essential. He also believed that the Archdeacon of Wigan and West Lancashire should not be on the board as this could create a serious conflict of interest with her role in overseeing the appointments process.
117. The *Area Dean of Wigan* who would be offering up his own patronage and benefice, said that he supported the patronage board and its composition.
118. *Simeon's Trustees* had concerns about the potential unwieldy appointment processes but were content to accept the draft Scheme as it stood.

Links with Wigan Council

118. Several said that the reorganisation connected well with the reorganisation of Wigan Council across the town and borough. There were good overlaps with the new hub-parish areas and the Council's "service delivery footprints" and they were able to work better together in partnership projects. The *Reverend Rachel Sheehan* said the Safer Families for Children Network across Wigan was something she got involved with because of the closer work happening across the deanery.
119. Several Start Well Workers at Wigan Council said that the family nurture sessions that Wigan Council and Church Wigan had been facilitating with a group of parents at St James Centre, Wigan had been going well. One said this was a fine example of how the Church in partnership with the Council was already being a blessing and how the new Scheme and hub structure was starting to bear fruit in the community.

Thanks for the Transforming Wigan team

120. Several representors thanked the Wigan Team and especially the Deanery Missioner for helping them to move forward.

Change

121. Many said that whilst change was never easy, and some conversations had been hard, especially when people felt that what they did in their church was fine, it was clear that there was renewed understanding of what it meant to be church, and this had enabled new forms of mission to be created and new leaders developed.
122. One representor said that in their church people were angry and hurt and it had been hard for those of them who were behind the project to deal with. They did recognise the hurt of many of their number and tried to deal with this sensitively, by

speaking the truth with love. They said that the fact they no longer had ordained clergy based at their church had caused splits in various worshipping communities who went to different services. The group of lay people who worked tirelessly to keep services going, support the parish and the school and carry out the many tasks needed, could not focus as much as they would like on the strategic planning and prayer needed for development because of “firefighting” and hoped the new parish system would work to alleviate these issues so that they could focus on bringing more people to Jesus.

Concerns about the restructuring

123. Although in support, one representor said that there were concerns about the restructuring as it was felt that there were too many changes being brought in too quickly causing disaffection and stress amongst both clergy and laity. Parishioners found dismantling recently set up teams such as All Saints Wigan Team very confusing. Another concern was that there would be vacancies in some of the hubs at a time when the new structure should begin. Strong leadership and guidance for parishioners was essential at such a pivotal time.

The future of Team Wigan

124. One representor who supported the Scheme said they must complete Transforming Wigan but there must be a team of people who had the authority to review this process when the Team Wigan team left Wigan.

Summary of letters of comment and out of time representations

125. Three letters of comment were also received. One lady said she had difficulty in understanding the concept of the meaning of the Scheme and would have thought it would have been better to produce a document in layman's terms rather than expect people to understand the repetitive and confusing content of this one. She said that she realised changes must take place and although she didn't like the idea of the hub, with different parishes losing their individuality to become one, if this was the only way forward then so be it.
126. Another wondered whether it would be better if Transforming Wigan worked with just one section/hub rather than risk wiping out the whole of Wigan Deanery. She expressed concern that the children of the parishes, the next generation of parishioners, only seemed to be involved with church long enough to get into the school at 4 years of age and then again at High School age and commented that presumably headteachers and governors did not seem to be interested in becoming involved in church life and attendance. She also believed that a church should have its own vicar whom the parishioners could identify with and one who could get involved with the children and their school.
127. A member of St Matthews Church, Highfield said that they needed to bring more people into church and that the Church must go out to people. She said that other denominations should have been involved and that the bottom line was a shortage of clergy. She also had concerns regarding finances and said that many people were worried that donations made to “our” church which would go to other churches, and about communication and felt there was a lot of jargon that people did not understand. She asked that existing church members, who had given lifelong service to their particular church were not alienated.

128. One representation in favour of the draft Scheme was received out of time. The *assistant principal at Wigan and Leigh College* said that the restructuring of Wigan Deanery had made a huge difference and had had real impact in the way the College could work with the Church through a new chaplaincy scheme. She said they were a college who made space for faith and were keen to support the whole student experience and their progression.

Summary of the Bishop's views

129. The Bishop said that the Transforming Wigan project was a good example of collaboration between local churches, the Diocese, and the national Church and commended the work that had been done there, which had seen improvements in financial and missional strength. He acknowledged, and was not surprised by, the representors' concerns as to the future of the Church they loved. However, he was largely unpersuaded that the concerns expressed should halt or derail the plans they had been painstakingly making. He pointed out that almost every letter or conversation began "Of course I do understand that we need to change; but..." and went on to unfold why the necessary change should not apply to one or another specific situation.

Scoping document and proposed new structures

130. The Bishop said the proposed new structure had two parts: 1) the combination of multiple existing parishes into seven new larger parishes; and 2) the team ministry covering the whole deanery.
131. He said he was encouraging the creation of larger single parishes across the whole Diocese to enable groups of local churches to support one another through sharing resources and opportunities for mission and ministry. He believed these larger parishes should be more robust in terms of cash flow, able to draw on a greater range of volunteers, and avoid unnecessary duplication in administrative matters. He said that in Wigan this had been trialled in the groupings they had locally called "hubs" and believed they were beginning to see the fruit of working together in this way.
132. He explained that the team ministry structure would ensure that Wigan would continue to have central leadership in the person of team rector and in the other central structures. He said that both clergy and elected lay representatives from across the deanery would have the chance to have a say in the appointment of the team rector so that he/she would be truly a leader in ministry for all of them. He said they intended to use the forthcoming provisions for joint councils to produce a real representative body to be a substantive centre for the team's decision-making and resourcing and this would enable the Wigan churches to deliberate and act as a whole.
133. He said that the team ministry would ensure some flexibility in deploying clergy where needed. There would be two team vicars in each of the new parishes, so that each would be able to work with a close colleague and each parish would have some local leadership. There would also be flexibility for other clergy ministry across the parishes either regularly or temporarily, for example where there were many Sunday services or occasional offices, or a particular ministry requiring more clergy involvement or in chaplaincy or building up new network churches across the deanery.

Proposed new parishes and boundaries

134. The Bishop said that the decision to have seven new parishes was partly based on a calculation of the number of viable stipends given the current finances of the deanery and the realisation that the church in Wigan needed to be financially self-sufficient. He said that current deanery levels of giving could pay for 15 stipendiary posts, seven parishes with a pair of clergy, working collegially and supporting each other (plus the team rector with an oversight role), which was a sustainable and potentially effective staffing level.
135. He acknowledged that the new parishes would face the same problems as the existing ones, including the challenges of mission in the 21st century, difficult finances and church members with limited time. However, the Wigan churches would now have a very clearly articulated and shared vision and strategy, enjoy mutual support, a larger pool of people to draw on as volunteers, better cash flow, a clear leadership structure and the support of central services run by the Joint Council and Wigan Deanery Trust, which should give the new parishes a better chance, under God, of facing their problems fruitfully.
136. The Bishop said that, although the new parishes would have different numbers of churches, each should have two team vicars as working together in pairs had solid Biblical precedent and would be a source of strength and support for clergy, reducing isolation and stress and improving their well-being. He believed the clergy workload would be fairly equally distributed in each of the seven parishes, taking into account Sunday and weekday services, occasional offices, new worshipping communities and other ministries. However, the team ministry structure would allow flexibility of clergy deployment, making it possible for clergy from other parishes to cover Sunday services in hubs with busy Sundays, or to assist ministry in parishes with busy weekdays. The scheme was intentionally designed to allow flexibility and creative deployment of clergy to ensure needs were met and the leaders of the team might decide in the light of experience that a different deployment of clergy may be more fruitful in the future.
137. The Bishop said that during the planning of this reorganisation geographical names had been convenient and transparent, but he expected that the parishes would want to propose new names and he would certainly be prepared to alter them by Pastoral Order in the future.
138. He explained that the Central Hub comprised five parishes working together despite being separated geographically and that the response from lay leaders had been that this relationship was not simply based on the affinity between the clergy and now, after three years of working together informally, they had built a shared identity and believed it would be a backwards step to dismantle this.
139. He said that St Mark's Newtown and St Michael's Swinley parish boundaries were equidistant from the town centre of Wigan and several of St Mark's clergy had been working in the town centre for many years. In 2018, St Mark's PCC agreed to no longer explore joining together with the parishes of the north of the deanery, but instead, look to join with the parishes of the Town centre, which had proved a far more satisfactory arrangement. The Bishop explained that the hub leader and associate leader in Wigan Central would work collegially across the whole parish hub, but the existing parsonages, where the two clergy will reside, are located in its two geographical areas.

Mission and the success or otherwise of Transforming Wigan

140. The Bishop emphasised that the priorities of the Wigan project aligned with the wider mission and ministry of the Diocese of Liverpool. He and his colleagues identified 4 strategic areas: engagement with schools, starting new worshipping communities, improving discipleship and serving their communities.
141. He said that there had been new engagement with 5,000 children, young people and staff through the Pais Team working in nine of the High schools, new chaplaincies in Wigan and Leigh College, the Deanery High School and the Town Centre as well as a massive piece of work being driven by the newly appointed schools-liaison minister in every one of their Church primary schools.
142. As regards new worshipping communities, there were five new fresh expression plants fully up and running with an average of 50 members by the end of the project-bid period and five emerging. He mentioned the well-established Wellspring and Lifelines projects together with a further 4-6 projects developing in the West Hub; the Saturday FM and Oasis projects with a further few in early development stages in the South Hub and a few emerging in each of the other hubs. He said the culture of planting new congregations was becoming embedded and part of everyday language. He said that alongside the new worshipping communities, six lay-led congregations were committed to the challenge of trying to “refresh” existing congregations to be more discipleship-growth focused.
143. In addition, as a result of Transforming Wigan, they were now better engaged with community and social partners in terms of connections/partnerships/networking with the Council, education, social services, mental health, etc. He said this work also connected well with the Borough’s centralised hub structure which was helping the Church in Wigan to be a church that was making a bigger difference, most especially in terms of social welfare and justice.
144. The Bishop believed that evangelism and social-justice work were organically linked, and the work in Wigan sought ways to establish bridgeheads in the local community to engage people in the Christian faith in ways that connected better with their lifestyle, circumstances and situation. He said the team in Wigan estimated that over 500 people were connected into new Fresh Expressions and, where Hubs were developing both planting and refreshing initiatives, the existing more traditional communities were growing as some were re-engaging through these various initiatives.
145. The Bishop said that in Wigan they were looking to combat the pay-for-use culture, and to inspire gracious and spiritually rooted giving. He said the average attendance figures for existing parishes in the deanery for 2015-2018 were: 94, 90, 91, and 95 with comparable figures for the Diocese as a whole being: 78, 77, 76, 77. Of the 21 parishes in Wigan where full figures were available, eight showed increases of between 3% and 24%, one was static, and 12 showed a decline of between 7% and 51%. Electoral roll averages for the same period were 124, 122, 129, 97 but based on incomplete data, especially in 2019, compared to the Diocesan average of 107 in each of the four years. The Bishop explained that both growth and decline were impacted by a number of different factors and the changes which had been part of the Transforming Wigan project had been life giving for some and difficult for others.

Clergy numbers

146. The Bishop said there had been a reduction of stipendiary posts in Wigan since 2011 for reasons common across the Church: clergy retirements, fewer serving clergy and not enough money. Wigan was no different from other deaneries in this regard, and successive deanery plans had taken account of these reductions. He said that Liverpool was moving to a system whereby deaneries decided how many stipendiary posts to deploy, paying an amount of parish share as appropriate. Wigan had been trialling this system, which enabled realism about the costs of ministry and, based upon present giving and revenues, it budgeted for 17 posts in 2019, one per every 10,900 of population, with the figures for comparable deaneries in the Diocese ranging from one per 9,800 to one per 11,400. If current levels of giving and other income continued, they anticipated that the number of team vicar posts in the new benefice would be sustainable for the foreseeable future, but this would be largely for the deanery to determine.
147. There were presently three vacant posts for hub leaders or associate hub leaders and the Bishop said that plans to fill them were proceeding. He said in the last year four stipendiary clergy had left the deanery for a variety of professional and personal reasons, but it was expected that some clergy would move on in a time of change as church and ministry was being reshaped and revitalised. He stated it was often a challenge to attract applicants to the north of England and to a Diocese with high levels of deprivation, but they had not experienced any special or additional difficulty attracting candidates to Wigan. Some had been particularly drawn to the innovative work they were doing, and the last three vacancies had attracted three very able clergy from outside the Diocese.
148. As regards staffing in the Deanery, he said that in addition to the fourteen hub leaders and associate hub leaders, and the team rector, the stipendiary schools minister, who had a licence in the neighbouring deanery, was working in Wigan and could in the future be licensed to the team. In addition, there were presently two self-supporting clergy serving curacies and the Reverend Stan Higginson as a self-supporting team vicar. There were 25 licensed lay readers, plus another seven with permission to officiate and he had also commissioned 21 local missional leaders in Wigan since 2015 and would expect the number to grow as church leaders grew disciples and identified, encouraged and released lay leaders. There were approximately 12 retired clergy who ministered in the deanery and he did not expect this contribution to change.

Roles of clergy and laity

149. The Bishop said that priestly leadership and lay Christian leadership was key in growing and developing active lay ministries and shared responsibilities and the Transforming Wigan model endeavoured to reduce duplication and grow numerical, confident and competent disciples. He agreed that some of the clergy were spending more time resourcing, discipling and training lay leaders to carry out their ministries, rather than conducting all pastoral work themselves, but he saw this as a positive development and exactly what clergy were ordained to do.
150. The Bishop said he was concerned about the workload of his clergy, but this was not an issue in Wigan alone, and the flexibility of the team ministry structure proposed for Wigan together with the development of lay ministry was designed to help. Rebalancing responsibilities within the team, working together in pairs, and the availability of central support, might make it possible for some clergy to refocus on pastoral relationships as a priority.

151. He said that in Liverpool they actively encouraged lay ministry and he honoured those who had responded to this calling. He said that lay ministers leading worship and carrying out pastoral work created opportunities for worship and care that would otherwise not exist, but they needed to be properly gifted, trained and authorised for this, for which there were many platforms in the Diocese. He expected his lay leaders to be supervised with clear lines of accountability.

Churchwardens

152. The Bishop said there would be 14 church wardens rather than 58 in the new structure, two in each parish. The church wardens' duties would be shared with assistant wardens, who would have delegated responsibilities within churches. Role descriptions had been developed for both roles and it was intended that churchwardens would delegate authority to their assistant churchwardens who would carry out most of the everyday customary work of churchwardens, with power to authorise appropriate expenditure to carry out their responsibilities. However, this would be a matter for local decision by the new PCCs. He pointed out that many parishes across the Diocese had found that people were reluctant to take on the role of churchwarden and the role of assistant churchwarden was designed to be less burdensome and onerous, to have more clarity, and to be more flexible with shared responsibilities.

Parish and deanery finances

153. Regarding finances, the Bishop said that the principle of the new financial system was that budgets would be set at Team (Joint Council) and parish (PCC) level, with office holders (clergy and lay) being authorised according to agreed budgetary provision to spend money to ensure that local officers could do their work easily. However, income and expenditure would be recoded through central systems, ensuring that financial control and planning were possible for the deanery as a whole, and that administration and accounting were done centrally and efficiently.
154. The Bishop believed that Transforming Wigan was leading a major transition in church ministry and mission. To achieve this, he said there must be a major cultural shift from the unhelpful idea that a local church should merely pay for and receive its own ministry. He believed that as people began to see the positive change and growth in confidence and impact, they would want to be a part of this and invest in the ministry and mission.
155. The Bishop explained that the previous parish share system was a diocesan formula applied to individual parishes based on average weekly attendance and a deprivation score. Under that system new worshipping communities could be counted as part of the attendance in a parish for the purpose of the formula, although in practice they would often not have been counted. Within the proposed new parishes of Wigan both new and existing worshipping communities would make appropriate contributions as agreed to the costs of ministry.
156. He said that there was a plan for the possible resolution of historic parish share debt in Wigan which would involve some payment from parishes in arrears but with reserves, some foregoing of diocesan Mission & Growth funding, and some writing off. This would not affect current parish share calculations and he did not believe it had adversely affected current parish share collection rates.

157. The Bishop explained that the deanery was currently breaking even and covering its own costs. The current Commissioners' funding was supporting the change project with items/leadership that facilitated change to and developed the new systems that the new structure would require, but the deanery would not rely on such funding for its internal working after the end of 2019.
158. The Bishop stressed that the Deanery had set a budget for 2019 and would set one for 2020 in the autumn, encompassing the plans for deanery share and the Transforming Wigan project. There was a financial plan for sustainability until 2025 and in the new structure, a Finance Committee of the proposed Joint Council, made up of the treasurers of each of the seven PCCs and the JC treasurer, would be charged with this responsibility for this. The Finance Committee would have full visibility of the entirety of parish income and expenditure, which would allow complete financial management to take place by that team. New systems would require slightly different ways of working, but the financial needs of congregations were well known and had been designed into the new systems.
159. He said that in general, normal parish share costs (based on 15 stipendiary posts) were covered from deanery giving. The Wigan Deanery Trust (WDT) would employ fundraising resources to raise around £150k per year for specific additional projects to do with youth and young people. Until this came on stream, the Diocese was incorporating an amount for support for youth in Wigan into its SDF4 bid for development work on the Missing Generation in the Diocese. However, if any of this funding did not materialise, Wigan would have to cut its cloth accordingly and would have to accept a loss of opportunity to grow in the areas of children and youth or reassess its priorities.
160. The budget for paid central staff for the future would be roughly equivalent to the costs of two stipendiary posts, but they would undertake some responsibilities which would otherwise in practice fall to the clergy although others which might have been done by volunteers. The intention was to reduce burdens on clergy and lay volunteers and release them for their ministries. Other responsibilities of paid staff would be new ones to improve the effectiveness of the deanery's internal work (e.g in finance, buildings management, safeguarding) or its relationships with others (funeral coordinator, communications officer).

Increased bureaucracy and representation on PCCs

161. The Bishop said that the number of people approaching the Church for pastoral ministry in general, and funeral ministry in particular, was declining. He said this was a major concern by no means unique to Wigan. He emphasised that good pastoral care was vital, and it almost always began when a minister had taken a booking from a funeral director and then contacted the family. He believed this should be easier and quicker under the proposed arrangements, and a real improvement in the ministry they were able to offer.
162. The Bishop said that the new PCCs would be fairly large bodies with ample opportunity for all parts of the parish to be represented, particularly as the lay members would include (at minimum) 2 churchwardens, 4-6 deanery synod members and a planned 12 elected members. He said that Members of new and existing worshipping communities would be equally members of the parish and able to choose representatives and be chosen. There were no plans to regulate the representation of different worshipping communities, but to leave this to local

decision and flexibility, including the use of co-option as necessary.

163. The Bishop said that there was an expectation in the Scoping Document that lay PCC members would step down after three years but in practice, this would be a matter for local decision, depending on whether there were sufficient willing candidates from different parts of the parish.

Churchmanship and parish identity

164. The Bishop said it was certainly true that some of the leaders of the Transforming Wigan project had been formed in a particular type of evangelical churchmanship; but this was by no means universally the case. He said that key leaders who had commended this project included the Area Dean (a self-described "proud High Churchman") and the Archdeacon, whose formation in the US Episcopal Church had greatly enriched the mixture of approaches developed.
165. He continued by saying that Transforming Wigan was drawing on all churchmanship traditions, none of which had a monopoly on making disciples, serving God's people, or creating a sustainable church for the future. He would continue to honour and respect the traditions and churchmanship of local churches. He said that where there had been minor reductions in the availability of the Eucharist, provision was made in nearby churches to ensure continuity of worship.

Consultation, communication and "top down" reorganisation

166. The Bishop confirmed that all requirements of the Measure had been met, particularly with regard to the display of church door notices.
167. He pointed out that the DMPC had carried out a second round of consultation on draft proposals in March 2019 on two possible amendments: moving the existing parish of St John's Pemberton from one proposed new parish to a different one, and changes to the proposed patronage board. He said the DMPC had decided to include both amendments in their recommendation to him, which he had accepted in full.
168. The Bishop said that the Transforming Wigan project had been first and foremost a locally led initiative. In 2008 the deanery synod formally took notice of the increased financial problems. A local informal arrangement for working together in clusters had been trialled, a forerunner to proposed new parishes. The Diocesan Secretary, Mike Eastwood, had been the only outside person involved up until 2014, when the opportunity arose for an SDF bid. The Project Director and others had worked with deanery clergy and laity towards the current proposals.
169. He said that the Guiding Coalition had comprised 8 local stipendiary clergy, who had worked very closely forming local hub leadership teams, comprising 2 clergy plus 8-12 lay leaders. The leadership teams had been key in shaping the ministry and mission for TWIG.
170. The Bishop was convinced that there had been every effort by the project team and deanery leaders to communicate well and involve as wide a range of people as possible and that they had endeavoured to listen to any comments and concerns and to respond accordingly. He had personally met churchwardens, the deanery, and others to listen to concerns. No letter of concern had gone unanswered to his knowledge. No formal or informal accusation of bullying had been laid against any

individual, or against any group, to his knowledge.

171. The Bishop said it was always important in processes of formal consultation to hear positive voices as well as those with concerns and objections. In his experience, those in favour of proposals sometimes think it unnecessary to reply to consultation, and the impression can then be given that only voices of concern exist. He understood that a number of people, including those opposed to the reorganisation, may have encouraged a wider response to this consultation, and he welcomed their interest and concern as it was a very good thing that the Commissioners should have before them the widest possible range of views. He was clear that the DMPC and those responsible for running the process of consultation had remained strictly neutral.
172. The Bishop understood that change was never easy. He believed that given the scope of these reorganisation proposals it was inevitable and right that time and energy be given to do justice to their importance and to the many people they affected.

Churches and services

173. The Bishop thought there was a widespread fear or misconception at the beginning of the Transforming Wigan project that there was a hidden agenda of closing traditional churches, whereas the intention had been to revitalise and support all congregations and to grow and develop new ones.
174. He said the only church building that had closed was St Peter's Bryn, on safety grounds, and that worship would continue in the rented premises at the "Oasis" in Bryn. He said that currently there was a mid-week Eucharist where about 30 people attended regularly, with average weekly attendance of about 15-20. In addition, the daily office was said there and attendance at that was growing.
175. St George's Church in Wigan remained open and in use but given its location and the size of its congregation, he explained that "The Brick" used the nave as a night shelter under a Licence to Occupy, on condition that the chancel remains available for services and that the building is not used by them on Sunday mornings.
176. The Bishop was mindful that all changes to statutory services must be authorised by Canon, and his understanding was that all have been. He said he had authorised some changes at St Aidan's Billinge, as requested. There were currently no regular Sunday services at St George's (though there was a regular Monday night prayer service and occasional seasonal worship). This was at the PCC's request so that the congregation might explore other places for worship. Depending on the outcome of this the DMPC might bring forward proposals for the closure of St George's for public worship or as a parish church, but that had not yet been decided.
177. The Bishop said that he encouraged the widest possible provision of worship, including Eucharistic worship, both on Sundays and midweek, but this placed a strain on available clergy resources. Where people were able to attend worship in other parishes it should encourage neighbourliness and mutual relationship between churches. He hoped that transport provision for those who were less mobile would be made as part of their care and service to others.

Inclusion of outlying parishes

178. The Bishop explained that the new structure was being created to address challenges that affected the whole Deanery. The parishes with the largest parish share arrears, which had been one presenting problem, were in the suburban areas. He said it had been proposed in 2014/15 that St Aidan's Billinge move to St Helen's Deanery, but this was rejected by the DMPC after consultation with the parish and its incumbent, before the Transforming Wigan project began.

Clergy Housing

179. The Bishop said that the location of clergy housing was an important question both for their effective ministry and for their wellbeing and that of their families. Clergy should live in appropriate housing located where it would be best for their ministry, and there were a large number of factors to bear in mind. It was essential that clergy housing was located where it would best serve their effective ministry and mission, and this was always kept under review.
180. He said that the Bryn Vicarage, in the north of the South Hub, was for sale as part of the site of the former church of St Peter's Bryn, so the next Associate Hub Leader would not live there. Appropriate housing would be provided either from the houses listed in the draft scheme, or from suitable alternative housing to be found, and the location of housing would be one factor to be considered.

Patronage

181. The Bishop explained that the original draft proposals had proposed a large patronage board which included all those currently involved in patronage within the Wigan deanery (including the Archdeacon). As part of the DMPC's consultation two things became clear: some interested parties thought that the patronage board proposed was too large and unwieldy, and some patrons with smaller patronage interests were requested or willing to relinquish their patronage rights. The smaller board now proposed had been constructed so that, although some patrons were not represented, the voting balance of the board was preserved between lay/clergy, Wigan/non-Wigan, and diocesan/independent members. During local consultation, no interested party objected to this change.
182. He expected, as part of the normal appointments process in this Diocese, that the Archdeacon would be closely involved in all appointments. It might also be sensible to revisit how well the patronage process was working when some appointments had been made under these new arrangements, and if necessary, to amend it in the light of experience, and he would be happy to do so.

Mission and cure of souls

183. The Bishop said that the new deanery structure, if agreed, would be a sustainable organisation for the long term, financially viable for the first time for many years in Wigan, and with the capacity for planning as a whole. It would have central leadership and support structures in the team and identifiable local leadership in the parishes, with clergy and laity working together at every level. It would enable mission and ministry to be offered wherever it is needed in the deanery, not just where the nearest church had the capacity to do so. It would sustain the future of existing churches which would otherwise be vulnerable and be an organisation into which new worshipping communities will fit easily as they grow. He believed it would be a model for mission and ministry which others would follow.

Supplementary comments from the representors against the draft proposals

184. Eighteen representors against and three representors in favour submitted further comments on the Bishop's response. In addition, thirteen comments were received from people who had not previously made representations. As these were received outside the consultation period they did not count as representations duly made. However, they were given to the Commissioners for their information.
185. Having read the Bishop's response, many of the representors were convinced that the Scheme was a "done deal" with the parishes already being organised into hubs with hub leaders. Several mentioned that a letter from Archdeacon Jennifer had been read out in all the churches letting them know that the Reverend Neil Cook had been chosen as Team Rector designate and said that this appointment must have been planned for some time.
186. They also made the following points:
- the consultation process was one-sided, and the Church of England was not a democracy but in fact a dictatorship; opting-out was not an option;
 - a loss of faith, not in Christianity, but in the bureaucratic church;
 - the clergy were under the stress of too much work and the Bishop refused to acknowledge that several had left due to the way they had been treated by the TWIG hierarchy;
 - finance – outstanding parish shares to be written off, a deficit budget and the finances not stacking up, did not point to a sustainable future; less income as a result of parishioners not giving to the "central pot";
 - scepticism about missional and other claimed successes – where was the proof of all the new worshippers?
 - St George's church and the way the congregation had been treated;
 - dominating leadership of the TWIG project and lack of communication;
 - lack of connection between parishioners and the clergy;
 - the TWIG team demanding copies of all church keys and all church money when the Scheme was not yet legally approved;
 - the financing of St Catherine's house with new, salaried personnel and essential costly equipment;
 - scepticism about what would happen when the TWIG team moved on.

Supplementary views of representors in favour of the draft Scheme

187. Those in favour stressed that they were still in favour of the draft Scheme. Further points included:
- urging the Commissioners not to derail the project, particularly for the sake of the work intending to be done and for the disciples yet to be met;
 - experience showing that Team Wigan had the capability of making God's gift of unity to the body of Christ a reality in Wigan;
 - the need to acknowledge that often ministry in the past twenty years had been ineffective in bringing new people to faith.

Further letters of comment (not representations duly made)

188. Following the Bishop's reply being sent to all representors and interested parties a number of letters were received from people who had not previously made representations. Points made included:

- using funds to provide extra stipends rather than layers of administration;
- ministry, rather than bigger and more remote parishes, as the way forward;
- concerns from one of the priests leaving Wigan Deanery after four years of the Transforming Wigan Project that it has been unchristian in character: one that had been led without the love of God and love for His people at its heart;
- the St Francis, Kitt Green and St Barnabas, Marsh Green buildings should be consecrated and become parish churches of the new parish, so they become entitled to a Eucharistic service each week; and
- concern that some members of the clergy had been bullied.

The sifting group's decision

189. The case was examined by the Committee's case sifting representatives who felt that it was likely to be helped significantly in forming a view on the proposals by hearing directly from the representors. They felt that fairness to the representors required them to test the arguments advanced by questioning them and Diocesan representatives directly, and that it would be of benefit to the representors to attend and participate in a hearing. They further agreed that the hearing should be held locally in Wigan to enable as many people as possible, who wanted to attend, to do so.

Committee members' visit to Wigan

190. Four members of the Committee, Margaret Davies, Garth Watkins, Jay Greene and the Venerable Penny Driver accompanied by three members of staff visited Wigan on Tuesday 3 September to tour the area under consideration.

Meeting of the Commissioners' Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee on 4 September 2019

191. Approximately 220 people attended the meeting of the Commissioners' Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee held at the Edge Conference Centre in Wigan. The Reverend Stan Higginson, Mr Martin O'Kane, Dr Chris Wooff, Ms Anne Wooff, Ms Valerie Parr and Mr David Jones spoke against the draft Scheme. Ms Brenda Seddon, Ms Sue Sixsmith, Ms Alison Brown, The Reverend Neil Cook, Mr Clifford Unsworth and The Reverend Canon Tim Montgomery spoke in favour of it. The Right Reverend Paul Bayes, the Bishop of Liverpool accompanied by the Venerable Jennifer McKenzie, Archdeacon of Wigan and West Lancashire, and the Reverend Simon Fisher spoke for the Diocese. The speakers responded to questions from members of the Committee.

192. **Mr Stan Higginson**, SSM at St Michael and All Angels, Wigan, said that the Scheme had been good in that it had made people think more about mission and prayer, however it had done little to turn around mission for which he believed the deanery needed small teams to preserve a real sense of community and identity. He believed passionately that people must work together to foster strong relationships with hearts and minds open to change.

193. He said that being directly involved with God's people in their joys and their sorrows was what parish mission and ministry was all about. He said that people had been hurt and this was unacceptable anywhere, but in God's church it was inexcusable. He agreed with the Bishop that the Scheme should be adopted in other parts of the Diocese if it was successful, but this would not be known for about 5 or even 10 years. He hoped that if the Scheme went ahead that the people who had driven this project would still be in Wigan as he had seen too many people implement change and then move on, leaving those behind to pick up the pieces. He hoped that the Scheme would be looked at again with more people, especially parishioners involved, and would take into account people's feelings and work with them to implement the changes that all knew were needed. He said that only by everybody working together within the grace and love of God would effective and lasting change go ahead. He hoped that God's Kingdom would be strengthened in their Deanery with nobody being hurt in the process. He said that everybody needed to be totally committed to the "Open Table", to breaking down barriers, and so enabling people to walk more closely with God, excited and enthused about what was to come.
194. **Mr Martin O'Kane**, a parishioner of Saint Michael and All Angels, Wigan explained he had considerable experience of consultations and implementing change. He said that change could only be effectively implemented when the people affected by it were in agreement with what was proposed and had had a real part in the discussions. In his view, there had been no effective consultation over the last five years in respect of the Transforming Wigan scheme. He said that the Transforming Wigan Team had led to division across the whole deanery.
195. He believed that the team had ignored the very people who would be most affected by the proposals – the parishioners. He said proposals for change of this magnitude should have been put to parishioners to seek their opinions and understand their feelings; it was their giving of time and money which would be relied upon to support and drive any changes
196. He said that he had never come across proposals for change which, while under consultation, had had the promoters advertise for and employ people in positions which would not exist until a decision was made. Nor had he come across a situation where the promoters sought to compel others to conform to proposals which had not been agreed by the decision makers.
197. He said they had been told in no uncertain terms by the team that the consultation was not a referendum, and that the Church was not a democracy. When a PCC member had asked if their parish needed to join a Hub if it did not wish to, the team's answer had been "No, but if you don't join a Hub, you will have to give us the keys of your Church and leave". He said that many questions had met with a condescending, misleading or no response; all of this in stark contrast to the Team slogan of "forward together".
198. Mr O'Kane said that proposals for change should bring a sense of excitement, of people moving forward together, but they had become a very divided community with divided parishioners.
199. He explained that he had thought long and hard about whether he should make a representation to the Committee as he felt, for the reasons given, that the proposals were a "done deal" and he felt this was disrespectful to the Committee who had yet to reach a decision. He respectfully requested that the proposals be reviewed with

the benefit of full consultation with the parishioners stating it took courage to ask people for their opinions, debate them and then act upon them appropriately.

200. **Dr Chris Wooff**, a parishioner in the proposed Wigan South Hub, said that he had been highly enthusiastic when Team Wigan first started but, over time, he had, sadly, become disillusioned. He made three main points. Firstly, he believed the Hub model in its current form was not fit for purpose as it attempted to bring together disparate communities with differing needs which were geographically separated.
201. Secondly, clergy were being turned into administrators. He said that the suggestion that all the work in parishes was being done by clergy was inaccurate, as in successful churches the clergy were proactive leaders, leading teams who did a lot of the work, but Team Wigan was taking clergy away from pastoral support and genuine leadership.
202. Thirdly, he said that there had been a complete lack of communication and many people had not objected as they believed it was a waste of time and that it was a "done deal". He said that Hub leaders and a Team Rector had already been appointed and that all communication had been in terms of what "will" rather than "may" happen in the future. He said that the Team Wigan team seem to see the Church Commissioners' role as to rubber stamp this reorganisation. He hoped that this was not the case.
203. **Ms Anne Wooff**, a parishioner, also stated that she had been really excited when Team Wigan was initiated as she believed that the Church in Wigan was going to reach out to far more people in Wigan, but, as time had gone on, she felt that the project had become more about finances and how to save money in the deanery.
204. She expressed her concern that the Hub PCC would be a small group of people from different churches making decisions about churches that they did not attend and communities to which they did not belong, and the small number of members would mean that the breadth of parishioners' views were not represented. She was concerned about the financial issues and said that people were threatening to withdraw their money if it would not be going to their church; she said that whether she agreed with this or not this was going to happen. She emphasised that churches needed to make their own decisions about where their money should be spent.
205. She said that the clergy person was the visible representation of God on earth. They had taken vows to look after the people in their community and were the experts in looking after people, listening to their concerns and to guiding them in their faith. She said that with Team Wigan they were going to lose this, they would no longer have a pastor who they could go to.
206. She said that the LMLs were doing well but should be there to support not to do the work of the clergy. She emphasised that this felt like a "done deal" but needed to speak to express her concerns.
207. **Ms Valerie Parr**, a churchwarden at St John the Evangelist, Hindley Green said that she too had been very enthusiastic at the beginning for Team Wigan. She stated that they were not against the draft scheme per se but were concerned about the under resourcing of the Chapelfields Hub.

208. She reiterated her concern about the intention that there should be two members of the clergy per hub when each Hub had a different number of churches. She challenged the Bishop's response that he expected the workload of the clergy to be fairly equally distributed and that a Team Ministry allowed flexibility since ministers were not confined to one parish. She refuted this by saying that last Sunday the Reverend David Brooke had five services and asked whether any other vicar had to take five services that day. She felt that flexibility worked better in theory than practice and it was rare for a minister from a well-resourced parish to assist a parish that was less resourced.
209. She said the Bishop had not addressed the question as to whether the seven parishes would be similar in population. She said the largest proposed parish had around 29,000 adults and 8,000 children, three times the population of the proposed smallest with around 10,000 adults and 2,500 children. She thought that greater justification was required for the seven current churches in Chapelfields only being allocated 1 hub leader and 1 assistant hub leader whereas any other combination of seven churches from two of the other hubs would have two Hub leaders and two assistant Hub leaders.
210. She said that in his response, the Bishop had stressed the importance of pastoral care especially in relation to funeral ministry. She said that at St John's they commended the excellent lay ministers who looked after funerals but stated that they were not trained or called to minister in this field and were stretched to their limit; most parishioners wanted to see a priest in their time of need and not a lay person.
211. She also said that they were concerned about the increased level of bureaucracy and that appointments had already been made and noted that when asked the Bishop had ignored this question.
212. **Mr David Jones**, member of Saint Elizabeth's Aspall said that he had been a Churchwarden in two churches and had been involved in a lot of educational work. He explained that when the Deanery Missioner said that what they had been doing was not working many people had been upset and relationships with the ministers had been demolished. He said that many meetings had been held to tell them what was going to happen, rather than to consult, and that only vague answers had been given to any questions raised. He said that their views had reluctantly been listened to, and then ignored. The Church at Bryn had been closed and Saint George's Church had been taken over as a shelter for the homeless and the congregation kicked out. New clergy had been appointed without consultation where vacancies had arisen.
213. He said there were not enough clergy in the deanery to cover absences and that he was concerned about the health of his parish's OLM. He emphasised that "Southern" attitudes did not work in the North and that centralisation would not work, with "hubs" having only one treasurer and two church wardens. He said that each church should be able to control its finances. He also said that a vicar and the church wardens worked as a team, bouncing ideas off each other. He said deputy church wardens would not be the same.
214. He gave the example of some urgent repairs to the brickwork at St Elizabeth's which had been necessary, where it had taken four months to get approval and after the unnecessary involvement of a structural engineer.

215. In answering a question about how keeping the status quo would turn around the mission and financial strength of the deanery, Mr Higginson said that he did not think that anybody had said they did not agree with change. However, they did not agree with the proposal for big parishes. He felt that small teams working together and building relationships would open church doors and people would come in, whereas in a big parish the clergy would be taken away from doing the jobs that they were ordained to do. He said that the clergy who had not agreed with Team Wigan had all departed. He continued by saying that there was nothing to say that mission could not be done in smaller units and Bishop Paul's Open Table was an example of this. It had been a brilliant initiative but was best enhanced by people working together who knew each other and had a relationship. Mr Higginson emphasised that that Mission was built by relationships, for example in Hospital ministry, and that all places needed a leader who was known and was working with the community and building relationships.
216. Mrs Wooff suggested that the Hubs could become smaller. Seven churches in a Hub were geographically too far apart and it would be better for one or two churches to work together. Mr Jones emphasised that there were other denominations active in the communities with which they should be working. Mr O'Kane said that there were a number of parishioners who would not be leaving legacies in their wills and others who were looking at withdrawing from the giving scheme. He said there were many very unchristian feelings in the communities.
217. In response to a question about whether any negative effects of the Scheme would be outweighed by positive ones, Mr Higginson said that a lot of funding was being put into core services which would be better used employing clergy who would enhance mission and pastoral care. He suggested employing clergy to look after funerals and youthwork with no specific parish responsibility but able to go into parishes and help clergy who were on holiday or ill.
218. As regards how the Deanery Chapter was responding to the Transforming Wigan changes, Mr Higginson said that the Chapter meeting the previous day had been the best for some time, but the Chapter had not generally been functioning well in its role of providing spiritual support for the clergy because it had been so caught up in Team Wigan.
219. In answering a question about whether different churchmanships had been taken into consideration, Mr Jones felt that they had not. He said that there were currently four vacancies and all the adverts had been framed in the same terms. Mr Higginson disagreed with this view saying that he thought Wigan was well served with priests of different churchmanship and that whatever the churchmanship all should be working together.
220. In responding to how the representors thought the consultation could have been carried out better, Mr O'Kane suggested that a questionnaire could have been sent to everybody. He said that parishioners were receiving scare stories and he had been hurt when a member of the team said that churches were not so important and that a Eucharist every Sunday was not essential. He said that it was very important to him to have the Eucharist.
221. The view was also expressed that sensible change programmes need to listen to people and that if Team Wigan had shared what their challenges were, listed the concerns and listened to members of the congregations, they would have said what

they could do to help.

222. Mrs Wooff said that the timings of some of these consultations were not appropriate as many had been evening meetings which working people with children could not attend. She had suggested that consultations could have taken place either before or after a Sunday service, but her suggestion had been ignored.
223. Mr Higginson said there should have been better consultation from the outset. He said that the Hub communication had only been taking place for the last 12 months. He said that people had been forced into the Hub system before it was even set up formally and the recently formed team ministries had been broken up just as they were beginning to function effectively. He emphasised that he was 100% in favour of change but reiterated that the proposed big parishes were not the way to do it and suggested smaller parishes was the way forward.
224. As to whether there had been any consultation with people outside the churches in Wigan, several in the room said that there had not.
225. The Chair asked if there was anybody else in the room who wished to speak.
226. One representor said that they had been told they could not have more clergy as there was not sufficient money, but then more archdeacons and a project manager had been appointed. Another said that the paperwork suggested many new initiatives had been activated since the start of Team Wigan but in fact many of these initiatives had been in existence for some time and Team Wigan had taken the credit for them.
227. Another representor who had been a churchwarden for thirty-eight years explained that congregation numbers had increased whenever they had a vicar who had walked the parish and been involved in the community. He asked how many churchwardens were going to want the role when they know they have to look after seven churches as it was hard enough getting a churchwarden when the role involved just one church. He said that the apostles were told to go out and the people will come. He saw both sides of the argument that there was not the giving to support more clergy but at the same time churches needed their own clergy to provide pastoral care and he thought people would not identify sufficiently with the "hubs".
228. Speaking in favour of the draft Scheme, **Ms Brenda Seddon**, lay chair of Wigan Deanery from 2010 until January 2019, deputy lay chair for two years before that and a member of Deanery Synod for at least 30 years, stated that when Wigan was split into two deaneries in the 1990s, discussions started as to how parishes could be more efficient and effective with fewer stipendiary clergy. She said that they had tried clusters, partnership and now hubs. She said the proposed Scheme encouraged co-operation, fellowship, and the exchange of ideas and it supported stipendiary clergy as well as mission across the whole town. She said that most parishes could not support organisational groups on their own but by putting several parishes together in a Hub this could be achieved and gave the example of a men's group that met monthly with members from across five churches.
229. She said that in some churches it was often difficult to fill certain roles such as treasurer, church warden, PCC member or vergers and that the new Hub structure would help. She believed that Christ never intended individuals to be in isolation but to work together, sharing resources, people and buildings. She explained that

some buildings were no longer fit for purpose, some had small congregations, and the cost of maintaining some buildings was prohibitive but they also had good buildings which could be used.

230. She believed that joint services and joint social events would encourage parishioners to make new friends which would lead to new worship communities; that the clergy in the Hubs would benefit from having colleagues to work with and would be able to offer each other support; and that the opportunities for new forms of worship may lead to the identification of potential new lay Readers and Hub leaders. She concluded by saying that the Church in Wigan must change if it was to grow. She said they needed new ideas and new forms of worship to appeal to a wider congregation. She said they could only engage one in ten people in Wigan with Christ if they were open to new ideas; prayed together and prepared for the future.
231. **Ms Sue Sixsmith**, parishioner at St Mark, Newtown and part of the Hub Leadership Team for the Town Centre Hub, said that as churches they were commissioned to grow God's kingdom and evangelistically to look for new people. She said that through the Alpha programme over the last two years they had reached over 400 people, which had been done collectively with over 180 people involved. She felt blessed that they had seen people's lives transformed. She said that she heard what everyone was saying about their own parishes but asked what about the rest of the people of Wigan.
232. She confirmed that they had worked with independent churches and worked with the Methodist Church and believed that this would not have happened before the development of the Hubs. She said that the Alpha programme before Team Wigan had been on a much smaller scale. She said the power of churches coming together had been a great blessing and emphasised that they had grown together, learned together and the support for each other was to be commended. Within her own church she had seen more focus on mission and a strategy for how they could work with the community without taking away pastoral care. She believed that they could all worship in their own individual churches but that they needed to get out into Wigan and grow God's Kingdom.
233. **Ms Alison Brown**, parishioner of Saint James with Saint Thomas and administrative assistant to the Reverend Neil Cook, said that she was very positive about Transforming Wigan and its aim to engage one in ten people in Wigan on a discipleship journey with Jesus. She said there was a team with excellent leadership, spearheading worshipping communities outside the church buildings, such as her own involvement in dementia ministry and the food banks which were places to encounter Jesus as well as just a food outlet. She said that change was difficult, but she did not want to be part of a generation which let the Church die.
234. **The Reverend Neil Cook**, priest-in-charge of two churches, and Team Rector designate outlined his belief that the proposed scheme was a good thing for the clergy. He said the Scheme was not about clericalism, but clergy did play a major part. He explained how Team Wigan had helped him as a stipendiary priest by promoting his wellbeing; giving him new colleagues and expanding his vision as to what was missionally possible.
235. He explained that having arrived in Wigan nearly 10 years ago he had lived through the whole of the Team Wigan movement. He said that despite going into an affirming parish he was ready to quit after two years, suffered anxiety attacks,

considered resigning his orders and had to undergo therapy. He realised that this was due to isolation and the inability to see how he could ever make a real difference. He said that when Team Wigan started to emerge, for the first time, he had someone, the mission director, who cared and gave practical support and challenge. He was invited to join a team and the guiding coalition and realised he was no longer alone, and the anxiety attacks stopped.

236. He said that the ministry imagined by the new team was not about covering rotas or services but was about mission. He emphasised that the Bible talked about teachers and disciples who were equipped to serve the whole church. To say it was all about the provision of pastoral care was a narrow view of the role of the clergy. They were also there to foster the gifts of others and as a team they were better able to do that. He was now in a team that included all the giftings of the fivefold ministry (*Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds, Teachers*) and many of the best clergy from all over the country now wanted to work in Wigan, whereas before it had been difficult even to attract assistant curates.
237. His third point was that of bigger vision, with the whole of their shared vision greater than the sum of the smaller individual views. He said his weaknesses would be overcome by others' strengths. He said there were big discussion about estates ministry and caring for the poor and that Team Wigan had enabled mission communities, 50% of which were in marginalised communities. He said that it had been asserted that the clergy were no longer doing what they were ordained to do, but in the Bible the few had always been called to empower in this way. He said that he was now motivated as a priest in the Church of England and felt he could now make a difference as part of a bigger team and a bigger church.
238. **Mr Clifford Unsworth**, churchwarden at St Paul, Goose Green, drew attention to the age group in the room and stressed that the decline needed to be addressed and this is what Transforming Wigan had set out to do. He said that they must focus on removing obstacles that prevented people seeing Jesus. He said that the conventional church fed the converted but did nothing for the majority of non-Christians. He said it was very important to worship, and where possible in a consecrated building, but many traditional services and buildings did not appeal to a lot of people in today's society. He said that if you introduced people to Jesus and they accepted him into their life, the Holy Spirit would lead them to worship and praise.
239. He gave examples of how Transforming Wigan was working in their hub. A new worship community aimed at people who didn't go to church, especially those in their 20s and 30s, had been launched and was now often better attended than their main Sunday service. Another new worship community called "bravo bites" gathered together people with complex social needs. A free Christmas lunch on Christmas Eve for anyone that needed it had been provided by four different churches working together, which would not have been possible under the old parish scheme.
240. As a Church Warden he said he had seen significant advantages from pooling resources and from the expert advice available now that they were able to employ a professional building manager. He said that overall only 29% of buildings were regulation compliant which would cause a problem with insurance. He said that just 10 months after the appointment of the property manager, one church now had a score of 100% and a further fourteen sites had a score of 50% or above.

241. He said they were also working on centralised buying and there was a potential saving of 10%, equating to £15,000, on utilities alone. He said that already the 2019 figures showed a saving of £10,000 through ad hoc tendering for small projects or compliance maintenance. He said that in the past individuals had done their best often with little or no knowledge of building management but needed expert advice.
242. He said that forming the new hubs and pooling resources was the best way for them to serve God in Wigan and without Church Wigan decline would continue. No one had said that Church Wigan would be perfect: it would be tough and would need tweaking and correcting as it progressed, but they had to start somewhere. He felt that people needed to get on board to improve it as they moved forward.
243. **The Reverend Canon Tim Montgomery**, project-leader for Transforming Wigan, said that for the past five years they had been praying, discussing, discerning and working hard on forming the necessary change and taking the first steps forward together. He outlined the achievements of Team Wigan so far including:
- The Order of Prayer which underpinned the whole movement;
 - a core group of hub leaders working together each week to lead the change;
 - seven Hub Leadership Teams in various stages of development with clergy and laity working together on Hub Growth Plans and using pyramid reviews to help them set growth plans in place for every Worship Community;
 - 16 new Worship Communities had been planted
 - 11 mission initiatives were forming the foundations of new Worship Communities;
 - one new mission initiative was already emerging from a planted Worship Community led by someone who became a Christian only last year;
 - 12 traditional Worship Communities were on a refreshing programme with new leadership teams;
 - 20 Local Missional Leaders commissioned, with more than 50 others involved in new and existing Worship Communities or the refresh strategy and on the Cultivate Scheme of leadership development and support;
 - 588 new people on the discipleship journey in new mission initiatives and worship communities and an estimated 160 were on the fringes of these (representing 20-25% growth over the last few years);
 - 9 young disciples (11-25) completing the first ever "Brighter School of Discipleship" in 2018/19, and 12 enrolled for the coming academic year with four students from the first year doing a second year focusing on mission in their everyday lives;
 - 16 primary schools using the Heartsmart programme and a plan for a new Worship Community in each (five up and running and at least five more in the planning stages);
 - engagement with more than 3,000 young people each year for the past 3 years through the PAIS Scheme and two schools actively pursuing Chaplaincy links;
 - a thriving Chaplaincy in Wigan and Leigh College and a new Worship Community;
 - Chaplaincy also growing in the Town Centre, among Veterans and in the Council
 - partnering in specific initiatives with health, social services and the Council;
 - establishment of the Wigan Deanery Trust to manage core-services and raise new funds for initiatives among young people;
 - a purposeful and efficient core-services team in place, reducing the administration burden on clergy and church officers for safe-guarding, recruiting,

finance and buildings management, and communications and making savings in terms of resources and procurement of services such as energy and insurance;

- a Deanery Finance Group comprising Hub Treasurers working on a realistic budget and a more efficient financial management system to reduce the workload on local worship communities;
- a developing centrally organised deanery funeral scheme to increase the number of funerals taken and relieve the administration burden on ministers.

244. He urged the Commissioners to allow them to keep moving on and to give them the room they needed to flourish.
245. In answering a question about why the current draft Scheme was necessary to make further progress Canon Montgomery said that as part of Renewal and Reform it was needed to legalise the provisional structure and reduce the number of layers. He shared some of the anxiety that too much was at present being done on an “as if” basis. He emphasised that the strategy was to help those already in the Church as well as to enable those outside the Church to come to Jesus. He said how important it was to simplify the structure into larger units, which were working on the ground, and to get away from 29 struggling parishes. He stressed that he was not paid by the Diocese but by a grant and that Wigan was to be the flagship for future Schemes.
246. Mr Cook added that they needed to be honest about looking at current finances which were in decline. He emphasised that there was no status quo, there was either decline or growth. He said they could make cost savings but needed a bigger Church motivating more people. He said that new disciples needed to learn about realistic giving and stressed that the first rule of life was praying and learning but that should lead to giving and supporting.
247. When asked why the new structures had been brought in without getting more people on board first, Canon Montgomery said that there had been a need to embark on a journey and he had been encouraged by Bishop Paul to work on an “as if” basis. He emphasised that he had applied for a post to facilitate a process that had already been initiated. He said that views expressed in consultations had been listened to and he had consulted with Commissioners’ staff about different options and changes were made as a result. More people had become involved as the project had progressed, but some existing parishes had refused to engage.
248. When answering a question about whether Team Wigan was having a negative effect on traditional ministry in some parishes, Ms Sixsmith accepted that change was going to be uncomfortable for many. She said that Team Wigan was not looking at taking away the traditional element. It was looking to grow God’s Kingdom but not to the detriment of people and the way in which they worshipped. Mr Unsworth reiterated that the new worshipping community meeting midweek was now bigger than the Sunday community.
249. Ms Seddon said that Team Wigan was working better in some Hubs than others. There was a need to encourage some parishes to be more willing to adapt and cooperate. There were no longer enough clergy to maintain the traditional pattern of services and there was a need to plan them better.
250. Alison Brown said that one of the straplines of Team Wigan was “we love and care for people throughout the transformation” and she stressed that at Saint James’s, with all the changes that were taking place, including the new worshipping

communities, they had been very mindful of those who have been in church for many years. As a Hub they were looking at the pattern of worship and how they might move forward and were introducing a choral evensong.

251. When asked what “locally produced” meant in relation to the Scoping Document Canon Montgomery said that, as project manager, he had been brought in to help produce the document. He had talked to people at local level and at the Diocese and had changed things as part a continual updating process in response to meetings held. The Document had not been agreed by all 2,000 church members in the deanery but any who wanted to have an input had been able to do so.
252. In responding to a question about how the divisions which were apparent might be healed going forward, he stated that there were three or four parishes, well represented at the meeting, where many were very angry, very upset and hurt. He said he was very much aware of the hurt and the anxiety and the need to include all and exclude none, but also of the need for change. He said that as project manager he had another two years in Wigan, but he felt that the clergy and lay leadership was now in place to allow the team to continue to go forward with a commitment to love each other and work together.
253. As to how he saw the cure of souls being achieved for both “new” and “old” Christians in Wigan, if the Scheme went ahead, Mr Cook said it would be impossible for him, as team rector, to hold the cure of souls for the whole of Wigan. He said that Transforming Wigan had always been about enabling the clergy to be enablers of others, championing all ways to encourage lay leaders to release more and more of their abilities. He would wish to be a leader for and relate to both those in favour and those opposed to the draft Scheme. He was not neutral, but his vision was to always refresh the current Church and out of that would come growth and new leaders for new worship communities.
254. The Diocese was represented by the Right Reverend Paul Bayes, Bishop of Liverpool; The Venerable Jennifer McKenzie, Archdeacon of Wigan and West; and the Reverend Simon Fisher, Bishop’s Planning Officer.
255. **The Bishop of Liverpool** said that the agreed aim of the Church of England was to ensure “a Christian presence in every community” and, in Liverpool, they agreed with that and believed Christian presence to be transformative – of the world, and of the lives of Christians who received God’s life in word and sacrament. He believed that the purpose of the Diocese of Liverpool was aligned to that aim, because they were asking God for a bigger church to make a bigger difference, recognising that “more people knowing Jesus, more justice in the world”.
256. He stressed that the first thing they were doing was asking God because they believed that if they didn’t this would just be a management exercise. He pointed out that his colleagues had begun by establishing the Order of Prayer, led by the rural dean, so that, as best they could, they heard what God wanted. When they spoke of the bigger Church and the bigger difference, the intention was to grow the Church, and to be there for the whole community and, within it, for the poorest. He said that they were asking people to focus their discipleship and to follow a Rule of Life, believing that they were called by God to pray, read and learn, and sent by God to tell, serve and give. He said that at a time when the population of England was getting bigger, the size of the church, the number of clergy and of disciplined Christians had been getting smaller, which were facts that they must grapple with.

257. He pointed out that in 2010 the General Synod had approved a motion which said that the mixed economy of inherited churches and fresh expressions of Church was “the most promising mission strategy for these changing times”. He said that the Strategic Development Fund had been released to encourage new ways of acting and working in the light of this strategy and that Transforming Wigan was one of the first generation of these initiatives. SDF money did not necessarily mean pastoral reorganisation but he hoped their plans for Wigan were fundamental, positive and pro-active. They had tried to re-imagine what a missional Church as a whole would look like now and into the future and believed that they were in line with the direction of travel of the national Church towards simplification. Not as in previous days amalgamating parishes and multiplying governance, but by making the thing lighter with more congregations and fewer committees.
258. The Bishop said there was evidence of success. There was no doubt that the existing system had worked for some people and for some churches but not for the majority. He said that the bearing of one another’s burdens had not been happening as, historically, the deanery of Wigan had been the weakest in paying its parish share. In 2016 the Diocese had decided to change the way it collected parish share and had prototyped this in Wigan so that monies raised at local level would be spent at local level. It was early days, but they had set out on a journey which he believed was the correct one.
259. He said that they were not ignoring the pain and the anxiety and he believed that he had responded to every letter he had received about the Wigan initiative. He noted the perception that communication had not been the best but going forward he was committed to making the process better. He pointed out that they did not want to leave a mismatch for another generation to deal with; they wanted to shape a Church which was fit for purpose legally and structurally, as well as in every other way.
260. There were 29 parishes in the Deanery and they did not have the money to give every parish its own priest, but even if this was possible, he would demand that they work together so there would be fewer committees and more mission. He did not believe that it was God’s will that people should be associated with just one priest without reference to the wider Church, and that because they had all they needed they should then refuse to involve themselves with their neighbouring Christians; refuse to accept the sacrament in another church; or refuse to listen to what the Church as a whole was doing. He said they should be joining with communities down the road; they should receive the Word and the sacraments so that their spirits were fed; and these changes would foster and develop this ministry.
261. As regards this reorganisation, if successful, providing a model for enhancing mission elsewhere, the Bishop said that the Diocese of Liverpool was only of average size, was in the North and historically had less historic assets and money per worshipper than any other Diocese in England. He said that although they were not at the top, they were, and wanted to be, at the front; willing to try things out and respond to a changing England. He said they had been able to do this with the grant from the national Church. However, he did not want the Committee to think that the people of Wigan were test-tube subjects for a cavalier experiment and were doomed to suffer collateral damage, as the deanery had been grappling with what to do for a long time. The Bishop stressed that he shared the cure of souls with every one of his clergy and he was proud of them and trusted them all.

262. The Bishop acknowledged that this had not been a flawless initiative and mistakes had been made in communication and in implementation, but he believed that they were learning from their mistakes and had acknowledged these so that they and others may continue to learn from them. He ended by saying that he firmly believed that, through the work in Wigan, a lighter and more creative Church was coming forward and he hoped that the Committee would approve the Scheme.
263. A member asked Mr Fisher if he could explain the rationale for the staffing structure. He responded by saying that the creation of a team ministry was to enable flexibility. There would be two members of the clergy in each of the hubs, but the team rector and other members of the clergy would not have allocated Hubs and would work across the whole Deanery.
264. The Archdeacon said that the groupings of the parishes into the Hubs had started with working with what was already happening on the ground. She said that the deanery of Wigan had gone through several transformations and there were already a number of teams in place. She said that where there were existing relationships, they had built upon these and where clergy and lay leaders were already working together, they hoped that they would continue to do so and bring their people together with them.
265. Another member, concerned about the wellbeing of the clergy, asked what the Diocese was doing to support both clergy and lay leaders. The Archdeacon said that they no longer had enough clergy to maintain the inherited model of church and were therefore trying to encourage lay ministry as well. She said that her sermon about this at the inauguration of the All Saints Wigan team had seemed to resonate with those present. No scheme would get 100% support, but she felt that if these proposals worked in Wigan, they could work anywhere. She agreed that that the Clergy Chapter had been floundering. She said there were a number of self-supporting ministers and the deanery was nurturing the clergy through retreat days. The Diocese was very aware of the stress on its clergy and was focussing on this and it had a Mental Health Committee, which she chaired. She felt it was a positive sign that many members of the clergy now felt able to open up about these issues and although stressed they were now more able to deal with this.
266. The Bishop pointed out that, providing pastoral care for the clergy was an important part of the role of archdeacons and that now the Diocese had four archdeacons, each archdeacon had a manageable archdeaconry. He added that the cost of the archdeacons did not fall on parish share.
267. As regards how the new parish boundaries had been decided, the Archdeacon said they had mainly been determined by the relationships which had been built between the existing parishes. Some of these had arisen from parishes already being in the same benefice or in the ministerial areas which had been identified some years ago. They were mostly geographically based but the relationship between the previous incumbents had led to the parishes in the proposed Central "hub" working together.
268. In answering a question about whether clergy would stay in post long enough to provide continuity, the Bishop said that it was not possible to require clergy to stay for a minimum number of years. However, when appointing new clergy, he looked for people who loved the area and wanted to stay. He said that continuity could not be built-in, but it could be asked for. Another important factor in selecting new clergy

would be compatibility with the other member of the clergy in that particular hub.

269. One member asked how the proposed scheme was going to make the system lighter, whilst still allowing voices in the parishes to be heard at both parish and deanery level. The Bishop replied that the intention was to create a fluid structure which provided a creative tension. The Team Rector would not have responsibility for the biggest church or hold the office of area dean so would not be a single authority figure.
270. The Archdeacon added that for many years a small number of people have had to cover many roles. The new structure will delineate roles but keep them all connected. Deaneries and parishes would have different functions and some individuals would have more than one role but would be able to distinguish in which they were acting.
271. When asked whether the Diocese was hearing the concerns about lay representation the Archdeacon said that most churches in Wigan struggled to find a treasurer and two churchwardens. They hoped that people would understand what role they were stepping up to.
272. As to how the Scheme would provide for the better cure of souls, the Bishop said that the problem was how to do so with fewer clergy. Some functions legally had to be carried out by clergy and to support them in maintaining a Christian presence in every community, members of the laity needed to step in if the clergy were not to suffer from burn-out. He said that the Local Missional Leaders (LMLs) who held authorisation from him were local people from Wigan and he wanted to grow this concept.
273. The Bishop was asked how he reacted to the pain expressed by many representors and the threats to withhold financial support if the Scheme went ahead. The Bishop reiterated that Christians should share their burdens and said he thought that some people were angry and stressed because they knew the Church should be feeding others. He said he would continue to support and care for people. He resisted a "you are either for us or against us" mindset and stressed that opponents of the Scheme would not be abandoned if it went through and that he and others would continue to listen and talk about people's concerns.

Reasons for the Commissioners' Decision

274. The two overarching considerations for the Commissioners were whether the draft Scheme would further the Mission of the Church of England and whether it would provide for the better cure of souls within the whole deanery of Wigan. From the evidence which they had received in the written representations and at the Hearing they considered that it would do so. They were particularly encouraged by the evidence of clergy and laity working together to bring about real transformation in Wigan in recent years and by the early signs of fruitfulness, and the central vision of growth and justice, about which the Bishop spoke with passion and commitment.
275. The Commissioners thought that the proposed seven larger parishes in tandem with the proposed Joint Council and the provision of core services to the deanery through the Wigan Deanery Trust, in place of the 29 existing parishes, did offer the prospect of a simplified and more efficient administrative structure. They were impressed by the work that had gone into developing the Scoping Document and noted that this was likely to be further refined in the light of experience.

276. They noted that some of the existing parishes struggled to fill the offices of churchwarden, PCC secretary and PCC treasurer. They felt that having assistant churchwardens would provide sufficient local input in respect of the individual churches and thought that having a smaller number of churchwarden offices together with the less onerous assistant churchwarden posts would make it easier rather than more difficult to attract suitable office holders.
277. However, they did have some concerns about the level of lay representation in the non-statutory Church Wigan leadership team and hoped that this would be given further consideration.
278. The Commissioners also considered that the proposed new structure was likely to help make the deanery and the proposed new parishes more financially viable in the future. They thought that providing core services centrally through the proposed Joint Council and Wigan Deanery Trust would result in significant cost savings in respect of items such as insurance, buildings maintenance and utilities, which they felt would justify the cost of employing paid administrative staff. However, they also noted that under the arrangements set out in the Scoping Document the new PCCs would retain control over the use of other funds at a more local level and that they would have the discretion to delegate specific funds for use by assistant churchwardens at the congregational level.
279. They noted that the parish share system which was being trialled in Wigan would enable the deanery itself to set budgets and determine the number of stipendiary clergy posts which could be sustained, and that the deanery had recently been breaking even in financial terms and had a financial plan up to 2025 . They agreed with the Bishop that it behoved Christians to share their burdens and did not think that congregations paying into a single "pot" was different in principle from the redistributive element present in all parish share systems. They therefore hoped that individual parishioners would not reduce their giving if the proposed Scheme went ahead.
280. With respect to the proposed groupings of parishes, the Commissioners noted that these had been put forward mainly by the parishes themselves and saw no reason to disagree with what was proposed. They noted in particular that the two parts of the proposed Central Wigan parish had been working together and that one of the "hub" clergy would be resident in each part of the proposed new parish; that St Mark, Newtown PCC had opted to work with the Town Centre parishes rather than those in the north of the deanery; and that Pemberton had been included in the proposed Wigan North West parish as a result of the consultation process.
281. The Commissioners noted that the main concern for many of those representing against the draft Scheme was the perceived reduction in the level of pastoral care and eucharistic ministry provided by the stipendiary clergy. However, they considered that the reduction in the number of stipendiary clergy available nationally, for the reasons given by the Bishop, meant that this would have happened regardless of the Transforming Wigan project. They felt that Transforming Wigan and the reorganisation proposed in the draft Scheme were a response to this issue rather than the reason for it.
282. They agreed that the deployment of stipendiary clergy more flexibly within a team ministry and an increased focus by the clergy on enabling the provision of pastoral care by fostering greater lay ministry, was a positive way of responding to this

challenge. They noted and welcomed the intention that two clergy would have primary responsibility for each parish in the proposed team and that working in pairs would provide an element of mutual support. At the same time the team structure would allow for flexibility in the allocation of responsibilities if this proved necessary. They were encouraged by the evidence they had received that several of the clergy in the deanery already felt less isolated through working more closely together on an informal basis. They also agreed that the use of employed staff to fulfil some administrative tasks previously undertaken by the clergy would help to reduce stress on them and free more of their time for mission.

283. The Commissioners also considered that the proposed structure offered a framework for the development of new mission initiatives alongside traditional church congregations within the parochial system. They noted that an objective of Transforming Wigan was to foster such initiatives as well as refreshing the existing churches and agreed that both were needed to reverse the decline in commitment to the Church. They were encouraged by signs that this was occurring already although they were aware both that the initiatives were likely to take time to come to full fruition and that it was difficult to measure the degree to which greater engagement with the Church was likely to lead to greater commitment in the future.
284. They acknowledged that a potential consequence of this approach was that the stipendiary clergy might be able to allocate less of their time to the existing congregations. They noted that most, although not all, of the representations against the draft Scheme had come from three parishes in the deanery which in relative terms had been flourishing in the existing structure. However, they were aware that the cure of souls extended to everyone in the deanery, including those currently unchurched, and that to grow the Church and further its mission it was necessary to reach out to these as well as to existing church members. They noted the commitment of the Team Wigan leadership to refreshing existing congregations and noted that some of the new Local Missional Leaders were working within them. They were also encouraged by the example of Poolstock, where the development of a new worshipping community appeared to have also led to a growth in the traditional congregation.
285. In this respect they also noted that it was essential to the concept behind the proposed arrangements that it was a coherent deanery wide structure and they were therefore not attracted by arguments that particular parishes should be excluded. They also considered that the likelihood of the new arrangements proving successful would be enhanced if, now that a decision had been made, those who had made representations against the draft Scheme fully engaged with the new structure and hoped and expected that this would be the case.
286. As regards process, the Commissioners were satisfied that the consultations required by the Measure had been carried out and in particular noted that the DMPC had provided evidence that the statutory notices had been displayed at all the churches and licensed places of worship in the parishes concerned. They also noted that there had been extensive consultations and discussions beyond these requirements which had resulted in amendments to the proposals and the associated Scoping Document.
287. However, they also noted the degree of hurt expressed by many of those making representations and that the tone of some of the communication from Team Wigan had not been helpful in this respect. They were grateful for Bishop Paul's honest acknowledgement of the mistakes that had been made, and of the hurt experienced

and strongly recommended that, as part of the process of implementing the draft scheme, he and his team take steps to address the hurt caused within parts of the Deanery. They hoped that the Public Hearing would mark a watershed in bringing all parts of the Church community back together.

288. The Commissioners recognised that there were innovative and untried aspects to this draft Scheme and the sub-structure underpinning it. However, they also agreed with the view that under the existing structure the Church in the deanery as a whole, although not necessarily in each individual parish, had been in decline and that the proposed reorganisation was a significant element in a concerted attempt to redress this. They saw no compelling reason, on the basis of the representations made to them, why it should not be allowed to proceed.
289. The Commissioners also wished to record their heartfelt thanks to everyone who had taken the time to make written representations, to attend the Hearing, and to voice their both their concerns about and support for the draft Scheme; and particularly to those for whom speaking had clearly been difficult. They would not have been able to consider the draft scheme properly without such helpful and honest contributions.

Conclusion

290. In the light of these various points the Commissioners were satisfied that it would be right to allow the draft Scheme to proceed notwithstanding the representations made against it.
291. The Commissioners also considered all the other points made in the representations but felt that none of them was of sufficient weight to outweigh the points listed above.
292. They realise that their decision will disappoint some of those who made representations about the draft Scheme, but they hope that this statement will be helpful in indicating that their decision was reached only after careful consideration of all the relevant issues.
293. I enclose a notice, as required by the Measure, about the right to apply for leave to appeal to Her Majesty in Council against the Scheme or any of its provisions.

Yours sincerely

Andrea Mulkeen

Andrea Mulkeen
Mission, Pastoral and Church Property Committee Secretary
Church Commissioners