

RECRUITMENT PACK

Diocesan Secretary of the Diocese of Chester

This pack provides information about the post of Diocesan Secretary for the Diocese of Chester and contains the following documents:

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Abbreviations used

DBF	Diocesan Board of Finance
NCIs	National Church Institutions

Section 1 - An informal letter from Bishop Mark

Thank you for your interest in the post of Diocesan Secretary of Chester Diocese.

This is a role like no other: it is not just for doing, it is about being; it is who you are as well as what's on your task-list. It will be utterly life-giving for the right person, and it is a vital role for the health of Chester Diocese.

The Diocesan Secretary is:

- 1) A senior member of the Bishop of Chester's core staff team,
- 2) The chief officer of the charitable business that undergirds the Diocese of Chester, and
- 3) The most senior, 'lay' officer of the Diocese of Chester.

The role is complex as well as important. You will need an open heart and deep courage, patience, kindness, humility, determination, and constantly reflective practice. We value competence founded on transparent good character, grounded deeply in Christian faith. You will need to be able to see over the horizon without missing the personal needs of team members, enabling both with persistent grace and strategic focus.

You will be joining me in a vibrant team revitalising the Diocese of Chester for mission in the twenty-first century around a new vision... devoting yourself to making certain that not a single person among the 1.65 million inhabitants of this remarkable region misses out on hearing of what God has for them in Christ. You do the business and charitable side, I do the bishopping, others play their roles, and together we seek to serve the people and communities of this Diocese.

This might just be the toughest job you will ever do... but I believe it will be with the best colleagues, unceasing support, and an impact that spans generations. If you are the right person there are few better things that you can do with your life. If you would like an informal conversation about it, do feel free to be in touch.

Be assured of my prayers (and that the offer of an informal conversation really is intended for you not just for the people you think are better suited to the role than you would be: if the Holy Spirit is nagging you, please don't ignore it).

+Mark

Section 2 - Chester Diocesan Secretary: an introduction

The Diocese of Chester stretches from Merseyside to Manchester and serves from Wallasey to Warrington to Wilmslow to Whitewell. We engage communities aching in poverty and others enjoying remarkable affluence; the 'Cheshire Set', Ellesmere Port, Jodrell Bank, Crewe, Oulton Park, Stalybridge, Cammell Laird, and Whitewell... coast, hills, rurality, ethnic diversity, industrial creativity, academic and scientific excellence, farmers, commuters, and all that lies between. We have no one overwhelming centre of population and so we stand together, united in Christ as we have been called to do for the last Millennium. We cling to Him through the rather dramatically changing scenes of life, and we are utterly committed to the communities we serve; as we proclaim faith in this generation, so we experience the love of God bridging the gaps between us and with Him.

We exist to serve 1.65 million people with the Good News of Jesus in our diverse and rapidly changing communities. We are divided by geography, wealth, education, ethnicity, but united in our need for Christ. We have a vocation to bridge gaps and make links, and the new Diocesan Secretary needs to embody and enable this Christ-centred outward focussed calling.

This role is no mere job: vocation is at the centre of this post. The Diocesan Secretary will often be unseen, but is always present serving the people, clergy, schools, parishes, and communities that comprise the Diocese of Chester. They are the chief officer (akin to a Chief Operating Officer) of a very significant Charity, the Chester Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF – see *explanatory note below*), engaging in high-quality leadership and management in service of the charitable aims for which we have been established over the last five centuries. The post-holder forms an essential part of the Bishop's team and as such is both a key leader and a humble and reflective servant.

The Diocesan Secretary leads a team of about 60 staff members and oversees a turnover of more than £13m. Their role is to oversee the 'business' side of the Diocese of Chester (the DBF), working as a key part of the Bishop of Chester's team in his oversight of the whole of the life of the Diocese. The role is based at Church House in Daresbury, a modern office building providing an administrative home for the staff of the DBF and various related colleagues. They serve alongside 41 fellow Diocesan Secretaries around England, and with other staff serving National Church Institutions (NCIs).

We are looking for a relational, inspiring, pragmatic, and faithful individual to join the team and serve alongside us 'loving Jesus and loving others'. We're not looking for a hero; we need someone who walks simply and humbly in the manner Christ taught and inspires others to do the same. We're looking for someone with a high level of emotional intelligence and a deeply practical ability to serve, who enables us to be better 'together in Christ, sharing hope'. We're looking for someone who loves the church enough to keep us true to our calling and who does this in a deeply practical way. As feedback in the consultation expressed it: 'This is an opportunity to shape a diocese to grow the kingdom of God. It is both a leadership role and innovation role. The person will be preparing the diocese to make full use of the talented lay and ordained ministers'.

Will you come and learn with us, pray with us, laugh with us, open the scriptures with us, dream with us, cry with us, challenge and be challenged by us, and share Christian life with us... as you keep the finances in order, make sure we have robust processes, and oversee the team at Church House? We want our DBF staff, under the leadership of the new Diocesan Secretary, to be serving the privileged and the outcast without fear or favour and draw both into Jesus' dance

of hope. We want a team who keep survivors central to our safeguarding work, the lost central to our missional work, and Christ central to all that we are.

The new Diocesan Secretary will be an inspiring servant of God's people and a visible invitation of **grace** to those who don't think they belong. They will be an agent of hope, reconciliation, and grace. They will communicate excellently, drive efficiency, enable faithful prayer, missional focus, and visible discipleship to Christ. They will innovate transparently, creatively, and responsibly, and live a life of accountable integrity and **grace** among us. They will need to be resilient, strategic, and collaborative as they join us at a time of considerable change in the Diocese. They will also be much loved and regularly held in prayer.

An extensive induction programme, including the support of a mentor, will be offered, and the post holder will be expected to engage with a probationary period, annual review, and continuing professional development.

Explanatory Note regarding structure

*The **Diocese of Chester** serves 1.65 million people living and working in Cheshire, Merseyside, and South Manchester. It comprises roughly 280 churches, 110 schools, 50+ chaplaincies, 33,000 worshippers, 500 clergy, 500 licensed lay ministers, 200+ lay staff, the Cathedral, Church House, and Bishop's House (to name some of the key elements). It is led by the Diocesan Bishop, assisted by the senior clergy and lay officers (of whom the Diocesan Secretary is one).*

***Chester Cathedral** is the seat of the Bishop and mother church of the Diocese of Chester. It is led by the Dean and Chapter.*

*The **Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF)** is the charitable business which provides the legal structure supporting the life of the Diocese of Chester and which carries out charitable and business dealings on its behalf. Its sole purpose is to enable and resource the ministry of the Diocese, and its chief officer is the Diocesan Secretary.*

In practice, the DBF can be most helpfully thought of as two bodies

- 1. The **DBF** itself usually refers to the Board of Trustees who govern the activities of the DBF. These have an independent chair.*
- 2. **Church House Daresbury** is the location of employment for those employed by the DBF to serve the Diocese*

***Governance** is provided for the life of the Diocese in general by the Diocesan Synod (whose membership is elected), and for the DBF by a board of trustees.*

*The **Diocesan Secretary** is part of the leadership team for the whole diocese:*

- Within the overall leadership of the Bishop and Diocesan Synod*
- Responsible to the trustees of the DBF and their chair*
- Offering leadership to the employees of the DBF, mainly based in Church House*

Section 3 - Background and consultation regarding this appointment

We appointed a Diocesan Secretary in 2025 who is no longer in post. The factors leading to the conclusion of that appointment have been reflected upon at length and inform this role description.

In preparation for the appointment in 2025 we consulted around the Diocese including questionnaires shared with

- 284 clergy in post
- 269 clergy with PTO, or other Bishop's licence
- 283 licensed lay readers/workers
- 83 licensed pastoral workers
- 18 Deanery lay-chairs
- 255 PCC secretaries
- Members of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP) and the Safeguarding Executive Group (SEG)
- Direct Consultation Church House

The exercise resulted in around 150 responses or engagements. These are summarised in the appendix below (page 12), but the two graphics capture the tone of the consultation.

In reviewing the appointment criteria for making this appointment, discussions have been held with

- The Senior Team
- The Bishop's Council and DBF
- The Diocesan Synod

And the papers have been reviewed and lightly edited. The desires and needs of the diocese remain consistent with the 2025 appointment.



Figure 1: what we are looking for in our new Diocesan Secretary



Figure 2: personal qualities in the new Diocesan Secretary

Section 4 - Key Relationships

A Diocesan Secretary's work is relational, strategic, operational, and multifaceted. It is many other things, too, but none of them happens effectively if the work is done without effective team-work.

Crudely, but importantly, the Diocesan Secretary operates in three teams (or sets of teams). They work with their peers as part of the Bishop's senior team, and as the senior leader of the team(s) that comprise Church House, in order to serve the wider diocese.

The key working relationship will always be with the Bishop of the Diocese who holds responsibility for the life, work, and witness of the Diocese of Chester. The post-holder is first and foremost a member of the Bishop's senior team, working with the Suffragan Bishops, Bishop's Chaplain, Archdeacons, and Dean as peers. A good working relationship is essential, and thus it is ordered, collaborative, and prayerful.

Beyond the Bishop's senior team, the trustees of the DBF and directors of departments in Church House form the other sets of key relationships.

An illustrative list of these relationships would include those with:

- The Bishop and senior staff
 - Suffragan Bishops
 - Cathedral Dean
 - Archdeacons
 - Bishop's Chaplain
- Church House Staff
- The Chapter of the Cathedral
- Clergy and Lay Leaders of the Diocese
- Registrar and Chancellor
- Civic Leaders
- Third sector partners in leadership
- National Church Institutions, and
- Fellow Diocesan Secretaries, particularly those in the North West

This role is based in Church House, Daresbury which is a key operational centre for the life of the Diocese. One of the pieces of feedback when consulting on this post simply read: *'in terms of parishes... the best thing for us is a Church House which works well'*.

This is a post which will require some travel and some remote working; however, this is the exception not the rule. The postholder needs to be physically present in order to relate well to a diverse team, many of whom have responsibilities which require them to be elsewhere at times.

In terms of accountability, it should be noted that the Diocesan Secretary 'reports' to the Bishop in all strategic, ministerial, and operational matters, to the DBF (through its chair) in matters of governance and finance. (The Bishop and Chair are members of the DBF.)

Section 5 - Person Specification

“Appoint those to senior leadership whose character you want to see replicated in the church”
(Ness Wilson)

We are looking to appoint a person deeply and transparently sympathetic to Christian faith with sustainable, healthy, and exemplary patterns of life, spirituality, mission, and practice. All senior staff in this diocese should be role models, examples (albeit imperfect and humble examples) to all whom we are privileged to serve. Technical competence matters, but so does their attending to their own wellbeing and that of others. Thus, they attend to matters such as taking time off, attending to spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical health, and having a hobby or two. They champion the culture we seek in explicit ways (like safeguarding) and quiet ones (like encouragement or kindness). They attend to line management, confront silos, and enable sensitive Christian ethos to pervade all we do.

We also wish to be transparent in noticing that our current senior team is relatively balanced with regard to gender, but not in ethnicity or visible disability. We continue to seek every opportunity to address this lack of diversity. This concern will be in our minds when making this appointment and those who may feel less confident in applying are particularly encouraged to ask for an exploratory conversation.

The following specification illustrates the kind of person we are seeking for this role.

- 1) Inspirational
 - a) Clear, Christ-centred, servant-hearted and infectious faith, or a transparent sympathy with this faith and ethos that enables this in others
 - b) Inspired by our diocesan vision, committed to our missional goals and impact
 - c) Able to inspire others to commit to a common vision and hold them to it
 - d) Inspires confidence and trust through consistency, reliability and transparency.
- 2) Humble
 - a) A key part of the Bishop’s team: willingly participating in the culture, strategy, and direction which is ultimately held by the bishop
 - b) A generous champion of others: both serving and being led with a high level of self-confidence that never appears as arrogance.
 - c) Cheerfully negotiating the process of stepping in and out of the primary leadership role as the context demands: always able to raise the energy in a room and call it to focus, but equally skilled at joining another’s team and serving common purpose.
 - d) Serving Christ’s Church in a manner that has a high regard for others and points away from self.
- 3) Skilled and Experienced in Leadership in both ‘first-’ and ‘second-chairs’
 - a) With a demonstrable track-record of leading effective and accountable teams working with grace in complexity, but who inspires through excellence in current practice rather than qualification or length of service
 - b) Proven ability in strategic leadership delivering results in an accountable manner.
 - c) Skilled in leading leaders as well as offering leadership directly, and able to work with committees
 - d) Demonstrable ability to relate the 'big picture' to the 'local', giving confidence that the postholder can offer leadership on a Diocesan and regional level in a manner which engages positively with parishes, chaplaincies, and schools in their local context.
 - e) A team player as well as a team leader.
- 4) Change Manager

- a) A key leader used to working within a senior management team with an adaptable and flexible approach
 - b) Team leader who can take responsibility – with evidenced experience of effective teamwork
 - c) Contributes to culture change by taking opportunities to articulate vision and values at key strategic moments
 - d) Able to identify, translate and implement shifts in culture and practice
 - e) Impactful leader within their environment, with;
 - i) Evidence of delivering significant positive change
 - ii) Evidence of negotiating conflict
 - iii) Evidence of project management with successful outcomes and impact.
 - f) Demonstrable ability to take tough decisions, to hold a line, but with pastoral sensitivity
 - g) Entrepreneurial – able to identify new possibilities for innovation or promising connections, whether within church, between churches, or with other community partners
- 5) Relational
- a) Accessible, approachable, present, and demonstrably kind: reflecting profound Christian values in each interaction.
 - b) Joyful, kind, and caring, and ‘utterly lacking flannel’ (what you see needs to be what you get)
 - c) High level of evidenced emotional intelligence, able and demonstrably experienced in engaging with different socio-economic, age, and ethnic groups
 - d) A strategic visionary who is able to work as part of a team both as leader and member; ‘able both to think outside the box and to respect that the box sometimes matters’
 - e) Has demonstrable experience of and commitment to fostering a culture of diversity and inclusion, particularly for under-represented or minority groups
 - f) Able to spot talents and gifts in others, lay and ordained, and to invest effectively in them
 - g) A learner – able to develop new skills and understanding
 - h) A listener and coach, able to nurture and encourage
 - i) A permission-giver, encouraging new thinking and experimentation, whilst not blind to more traditional values.
- 6) Technical
- a) Demonstrable understanding of the statutory functions required by the senior officer of a significant charity and how these may be exercised to foster life and growth
 - b) Excellent safeguarding understanding and skills, and up to date with safeguarding training in their current context
 - c) Committed to their own professional development
 - d) Understands, enables, and values the collection and management of data in relation to missional outcomes
 - e) Demonstrable willingness to ‘get to grips’ with the complexities of the different and overlapping relationships of constituent parts of the Church of England (for example the DBF relating to PCCs, the relationship of Archdeacons to Rural/Area Deans, or how the Cathedral fits with the wider diocese)
 - f) Manages detail, specifics and technicalities while shaping and grasping the "big picture"
 - g) Clarity of communication – in digital and traditional form, both written and spoken

Section 6 – Responsibilities

As with any senior role, the responsibilities of this post are many and varied and include 'all other duties that might reasonably be expected of the postholder'. They will evolve and develop as time and missional focus progresses, particularly as the strategic development work (currently underway) begins to be implemented.

Broadly, however, the responsibilities are grouped here according to the three dynamics of the role, listed above: senior lay officer, business leader, and member of the Bishop's senior team. It can be thought of as having three general groupings of responsibility, which we are calling:

- 1) **Diocesan Secretary:** promote the mission, culture, and safeguarding practice of the Diocese as a senior lay officer of the Diocese of Chester.
- 2) **Leading the executive functions of the Diocesan Board of Finance:** offering excellence in leadership for the charity that undergirds the Diocese and maintains the ethos and values central to our shared vocation.
- 3) **Member of Bishop's Senior Staff:** providing counsel, support, fellowship, and wisdom in the Bishop's overall leadership of the Diocese as part of Senior Staff Team

Particular challenges at this time include culture change, financial constraints, clergy age demographics, and strategy implementation, but we note that each of these areas will bring responsibility and duties it is difficult to capture in its entirety, however an illustrative guide is as set out below.

- 1) **“Diocesan Secretary”** – responsibilities associated with leading Church House/the role of Diocesan Secretary

offering appropriate leadership in the Diocese (Facilitating Diocesan Synod, cooperating with Diocesan objectives, engaging with National Church Institutions, working well with Deaneries, Parishes, and Chaplaincies)

- a) Work with parishes and organisations across the Diocese, including the DBE, supporting the mission of the Church in the heart of each community, and setting the tone for our shared life alongside the bishop and other members of the senior team
- b) Oversee the smooth functioning of the Diocesan office in delivering outstanding service provision to licensed ministers (lay and ordained), parishes and chaplaincies in accordance with the vision of the Diocese
- c) Demonstrable commitment to, and consistent appropriate leadership in, the work of safeguarding, including (from the national standards)
 - i) Promote the welfare and voice of children, vulnerable adults, victims, and survivors of abuse, as well as those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse.
 - ii) Improve their own knowledge of current safeguarding matters and promote continuous professional development in this area for those whom they are responsible.
- d) Provide excellent leadership, enabling all key functions of Diocese to work together with third parties/external stakeholders
- e) Report to the trustees of the DBF (through the chair) for governance oversight with regard to the legal, charitable, and financial functionings of the DBF.

- 2) **Executive Functions of the DBF** – responsibilities associated with managing the charity *governance, finance, systems, processes, team leadership*

Line managing Directors (as DBF employees) and enabling them to report to, and work with, the Bishop in ministerial and outward facing matters

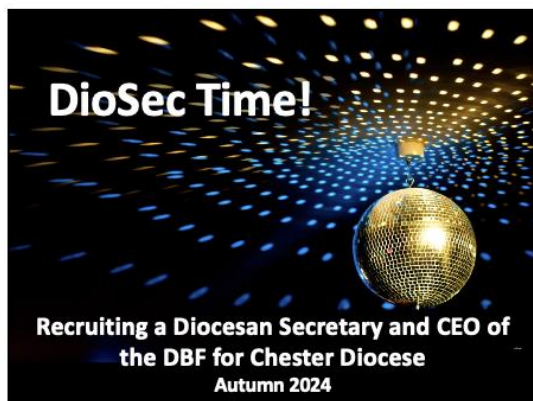
- a) Nurturing, shaping and curating Church House such that excellent and efficient business practice is enabled
- b) Manage diocesan employees and volunteers in accordance with the Christian vision and values of the Diocese and to the highest standards of best practice
- c) Oversee the Diocesan governance structures and statutory reporting, offering challenge where appropriate, enabling it to meet its objectives and legal obligations
- d) Be responsible for the financial performance and sustainability of the Diocese, working with the Director of Finance, Board of Finance and associated governance structures, particularly, but not only, in the areas of
 - i) Budgeting
 - ii) Risk Management
 - iii) Compliance (including Data Management and GDPR requirements)
 - iv) Reporting
- e) Offer apposite leadership in change management
- f) Continuing the development and curation of healthy culture in and around Church House and through all its work.

3) Bishop's Senior Staff: Diocese of Chester

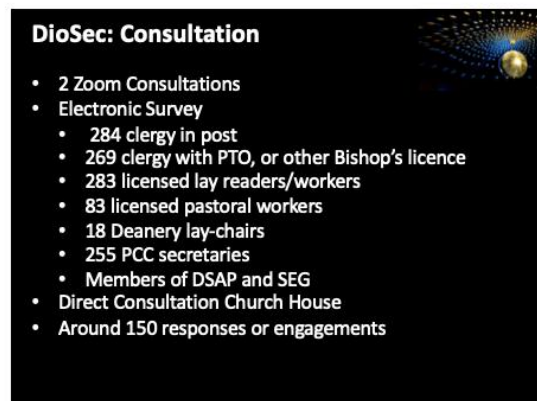
development of vision and strategy, interacting with Archdeacons, Bishops, Dean, Bishop's Chaplain etc, and generally being part of a broad and stretching team

- a) Promote the mission, culture and safeguarding of the Diocese by working as a senior lay officer of the Diocese
- b) Sharing the outward-looking, mission-focused diocesan vision
- c) Playing a full part in the development and effective implementation of the new diocesan strategy
- d) Nurturing, shaping and curating Church House in order that the culture serves the wider Diocese
- e) Invest in healthy working relationships with the Bishops' Senior Staff
- f) Creative collaboration between Bishop's House and Church House
- g) Play an active role in supporting and promoting Diocesan Mission Links
- h) Report to the Bishop for operational oversight

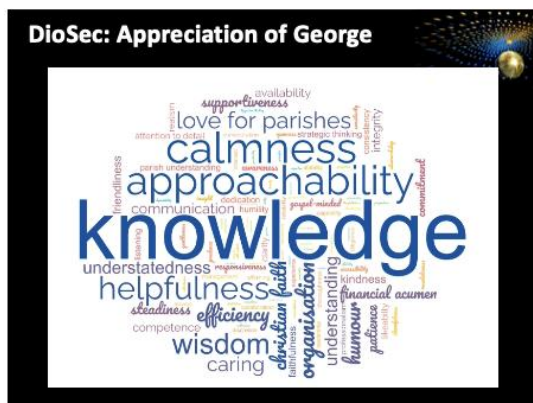
Appendix – Summary of Consultation



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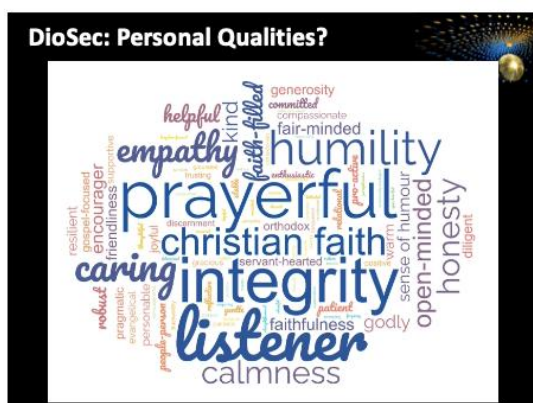
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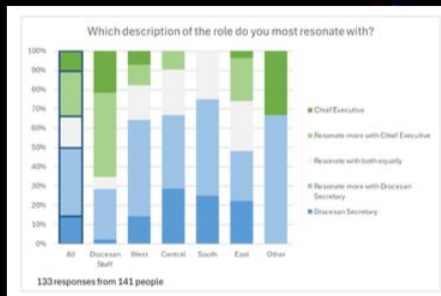


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DioSec: DS or CEO?



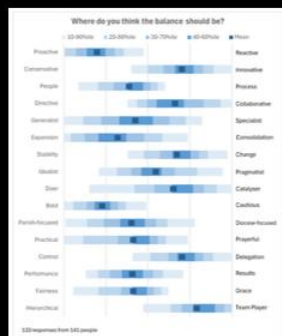
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DioSec: What are we seeking?

- Proactive
- Bold
- Delegating
- Team Player
- Innovative
- Collaborative
- Catalyser
- Focus on people over process, parish over diocese
- Be open to Practical Change and Expansion

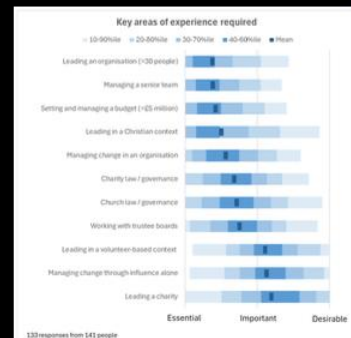
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DioSec: Balance?



9

DioSec: Experience?



10

DioSec: Any fears?

a new DS/CE would come in with more initiatives that require more work for parishes going forwards centrally (this is why I placed 'strategy' low on the list). Not that I am against strategic leadership, I celebrate it and see it in our bishops and others - my fear is that strategy from Church House will lead to an 'everyone's got to' approach with parishes; and that won't help.

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DioSec: Any fears?

There is a move amongst those working in Operations and Admin to misunderstand the diaconal nature of their role. As +Mark's video says, this is a ministry, but it is distinct from ordained ministry and so my fear about the DS/CE role will be that they are someone who doesn't understand the distinct aspects of ordained ministry and the impact on spiritual/emotional/intellectual energy of this unique calling.

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DioSec: Any fears?

the person appointed will be too institutionally and structurally minded in a way that doesn't understand the breadth of churches in the diocese. Not merely tradition & theology, but size dynamics, the workings of a parish of 300+ is substantially different from a smaller parish and the relationship with church house is distinctly different for each, both in terms of what support they need and the channels of communication that work.

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DioSec: What excites you?

- An opportunity for a reset and a fresh start
- A chance to look at things in a new way
- The final piece in the senior team
- An opportunity to bring the vision and strategy together in the new role
- A chance to re-evaluate how Church House, Bishops' House and the parishes work together.
- The opportunity for new leadership
- An opportunity to do new things, and ... be bolder in our actions.

14

DioSec: Hopes?

A change is always an opportunity to bring fresh vision and energy to a role, with new eyes giving the stimulus to ask questions that may need asking, but may not have been 'seen' before.

15

DioSec: Hopes?

This is an opportunity to shape a diocese to grow the kingdom of God.

It is both a leadership role and innovation role. The person will be preparing the diocese to make full use of the talented lay and ordained ministers.

16

DioSec: Hopes?

Change in vision in any organisation needs fresh leadership - see our new Government. Someone new comes in with energy and ideas, without the 'we tried it before and it didn't work' mentality. New eyes see things differently and can discern issues which have been missed before.

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DioSec: Hopes?

The opportunity to recruit someone who is willing to be both BOLD and CREATIVE in: the financial management and facilitation of our resources, both people and buildings, alongside other initiatives; in problem solving where resources are tight and limited; and in driving forward the Vision of the diocese.

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