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VITAL INGREDIENT FOR CHANGE IS YOU

YOU can help shape the future of the Church in our diocese over the next two years.

Changes that may affect the way we live and worship as Christians will be suggested and implemented in 2004 and 2005 - and the input of local parishioners will be crucial.

Ambitious plans to extend the bishop's strategic review process to the whole diocese have now been unveiled. They involve looking at the future of ministry, mission, buildings and clergy deployment in all our 140 parishes.

The four-stage process will start with a roadshow visiting each deanery during Lent 2004. It will give worshippers the chance to hear about some of the problems and opportunities faced by the Church today. Bishop Kenneth will ask parishes to think about the future in prayerful reflection.

The second phase will include a 10-session programme of study and reflection between Easter and July 2004 which aims to provide a theological and spiritual foundation to any process of change.

Groups from each parish will attend weekly sessions and study the principles behind the process. Clergy may have separate sessions. At the end of this phase, deanery-wide conferences will enable all to share their experiences. A diocesan conference to pool all those reflections could also be organised.

The third phase, from July to December 2004, will be a period of research to gain crucial insight into the specific needs of each community and whether those needs are



Clergy listen to the Rt Rev Graham Cray during their Winchester conference

Time for change



already being met by churches of any denomination.

The gifts and skills of clergy and congregation members, existing partnerships between church and community, parishes' financial reserves and the buildings available would all be documented, deanery by deanery. This audit of resources - human, buildings and finance - would be presented to Bishop Kenneth on a visit to each deanery.

At diocesan level, a group chaired by someone from outside the diocese would produce an audit of central diocesan resources and

evaluate the deployment of central diocesan staff and clergy.

In the fourth phase, from January to April 2005, each deanery would draw up a five-year plan for mission, including both evangelism and social engagement, and ministry, including both the deployment of lay people and ordained ministers. The deaneries would then work out how to allocate the resources they have audited to implement those proposals.

The Bishop's Council will be asked to approve the plans put forward by each deanery. And after a major cathedral service to lay the plans before God, each deanery would implement their proposals.

The chairman of the diocese's strategic review group, the Ven Chris Lowson, said: "This is an

ambitious process, but we need to think big and think radically if we are to make sure the Church in this area continues to serve the community within our changed society.

"What is clear is that these changes will have to come from local church members, via a process by which we are all more informed about the problems faced by the Church, the theology of change and the social make-up of the communities we live in. Only then will we be in a position to start drawing up concrete proposals."

Worshippers from our three trial areas - Sandown Bay, inner-city Portsmouth and the Petersfield area - will tell November's meeting of the diocesan synod what they have learnt from the process so far.

'Future ministry will be different'

THE parish system of ministering to sealed-off, geographical communities is dead, clergy were told at their conference last month.

The Bishop of Maidstone, the Rt Rev Graham Cray, said we were now living in a 'Network Society' in which people interacted with different networks via work, social and leisure activities rather than with people who they

lived close to.

It reinforced the message delivered by the strategic review group later in the conference, which was that collaboration between parishes is key to the future.

Clergy also heard from the Bishop of Stockholm, the Bishop of Europe, and Oscar-winning film director Lord David Puttnam at their three-day Winchester conference.

THE TIMETABLE:

- 1. EXPERIENCE**
Lent 2004: roadshow visits each deanery.
- 2. EXPLORATION**
Easter-July 2004: study and prayer in deaneries
- 3. RESEARCH**
July-December 2004: an audit of the needs of our communities and church resources available to meet them
- 4. ACTION**
January-April 2005: each deanery draws up its own plan