

Longer Reads

What is a Deanery Information Officer for?

Penny Elliott has been Deanery Information Officer (DIO) for Poole and North Bournemouth off and on for about 30 years. She writes:

The other day somebody asked me, "Whatever is a DIO?" as I had stupidly referred to myself with those initials. It's amazing how the old BBC habit of referring to everybody by initials hangs on seemingly forever!

I am just one of a number of people in the Diocese who have the fascinating part-time 'job' of Deanery Information Officers.

So what do we do?

To start with officialdom: At each Triennium it is part of the election procedure for a Deanery Synod meeting to elect a Lay Chairman, a Chapter Clerk, a Secretary, Treasurer and also an Information Officer. And these with at least 2 other elected members form the Standing Committee for the Deanery with the Rural Dean, Assistant Rural Dean and Lay Chairman.

On one hand, it is possible to manage perfectly well without an Information Officer, but on the other it may land the Rural Dean, Synod Secretary or some other official with unnecessary extra jobs!

The position is roughly half-way between the Diocese and the Parishes in your Deanery, a sort of middleman (or middlewoman) acting as an intermediary, with information going in both directions. Think 'spider's web' or Clapham Junction.

Each DIO works at their own pace in whatever they want to do, and whatever their talents suit best. Some produce a very basic list of events, some produce a printed leaflet with information, thoughts and reports.

The priority for a DIO ought to be getting to know where their Deanery parishes are, who the incumbents are, what the parishes are doing, and making themselves available to help where they can.

Fortunately, we don't have to deal with such matters as salacious bits of gossip, or act in any way on behalf of the Diocese. That's the job of the Diocesan Communications Office (the latter, that is!).

What are the fun things?

Well, attending inductions or licensings to give a welcome to a new incumbent in an informal way – or even stand in for somebody official! – and see how good their catering arrangements are.

When we hear of something interesting in one of 'our' parishes we can pass on the information to Salisbury Diocesan Office for the newsy Grapevine or 'operational' Working Together. Sending reports of Deanery Synod to local newspapers (being sure to check with the Rural Dean to avoid errors) is another way of making the community know about the existence of our churches.

Some of us provide a handout or email regularly to people like Magazine Editors and PCC Secretaries to keep parishes in the know about other Deanery parishes and their news and events. You can always hope that any parishes that produce a magazine will feel it worth their while to send copies each month to you.

It's helpful to be available to see if you can help a parish desperate to know what to do about free publicity for their fair, concert, flower festival – whatever.

You will probably need to explain to a parish publicity representative the difference between “information” and “news”.

Information is: the date of your next barbecue/ concert/ confirmation.

News is: the organist has run off with a choirgirl, the Rector is running in the London Marathon, the MU leader is 100 years old.

Why does a parish need publicity? It appears to be a fact of life that if a parish keeps its light under a bushel and never approaches the local media, when an unfortunate event happens, they can become front page news. If the parish is already communicating with the local media, any unfortunate occurrence is more likely to be treated with consideration.

Does this 'job' sound like you? If you can write in reasonable English, use a computer, send an email, like to know what's going on in your patch and next door or so – and yes, a car is useful – think about offering your help. Currently most Deaneries have DIOs, and the Salisbury Communications team would encourage the others to do the same.

Penny Elliott has been DIO for Poole and North Bournemouth off and on for about 30 years, and is only trying to give up reluctantly because of 'anno domini'.

Contact the Comms Team [here](#).