

The United Benefice of

# West Wycombe

with Bledlow Ridge, Bradenham and Radnage

## Foreword from the Associate Archdeacon

Robert MacFarlane has composed a beautifully illustrated book exploring the lost words of nature, those names we were once familiar with, but are on the edge of forgetting.

Some places, after a long vacancy, might feel that God has forgotten them and be downcast. This temptation is redoubled when an appointment is made and celebrated, only to be denied through further ill health.

This is empathically not the case in West Wycombe. There is a new altar frontal in one of the churches, commissioned by the PCC to celebrate the life of the church. It is a stunning depiction of the hills and the sky, but most strikingly, of the Bledlow Ridge dove.

Now, to anyone else, they look like a Red Kite - which are very common here - but they are known by the local school children by their local name. So, on the altar frontal for ordinary time, the Holy Spirit is represented by the Bledlow Ridge dove.

This small gesture speaks volumes about the depth of discipleship and the fortitude of faith

that any interim Priest will find here from day one. With the Deanery providing active - paid - provision for any new incumbent as they reach out to the three primary schools in the benefice, you can genuinely start as you mean to go on.

The Diocese has signalled its clear intent that this post has a sustainable future by investing in what might just be the most energy efficient and up to date vicarage in the Diocese.

There is a hard-earned realism in the Benefice about the challenges they face - but that is tempered with recent and extensive experience, that God provides. Might you just be the next evidence of that answered prayer?

As ever, the new Priest will be committed to the diocesan vision of becoming a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's World – contemplative, compassionate and courageousand to model and enable a flourishing ministry, for all, in line with the diocesan work in this area.

I commend this place and profile to you and I would welcome conversations about the role with interested candidates.



Revd Canon Chris Bull, Associate Archdeacon of Buckingham



## A message from the churches of the West Wycombe Benefice:

We are searching for a gifted and inspirational Interim priest to lead us forward over the next three years. The 5+ years in vacancy, whilst a time of uncertainty and challenge, have also provided us with the opportunity to regroup as a Benefice, forge new relationships and develop aspirations for the future.

Our interim priest will provide pastoral care and be a strategic leader of vision and focus, using their skills and experience to help us identify and address our main priorities. Ours is a welcoming Benefice, receptive of fresh and energising ideas and well supported by our dedicated self-supporting priests and the Wycombe Deanery.

The Benefice churchwardens work together well whilst recognising the individual nature and talents of the four parishes. Prayer and shared worship have sustained us during the long vacancy and as we pray for our next priest, we ask that you would also pray for us.



## Our Vacancy Prayer

Loving God

During this time of vacancy, we pray that you
will lead us and guide us:
growing us in faith,
helping us to love and care for others,
uniting us to work together

to see our lives and communities transformed by the love of God.

We pray that you are already preparing for us, in the West Wycombe Benefice, a priest with a deep sense of calling to follow where you lead.

We pray for wisdom and courage for all those involved in the appointment process and all who support us at this time.

We offer you these prayers in Jesus's name and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen** 

## **Our Mission**

To realise God's Kingdom by growing faith and showing love, service and pastoral care for all those in the community, guided by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

We have come a long way together and look forward to the next chapter with you!

## Our location



## The Rectory

The five bedroomed Benefice Rectory is situated at the heart of West Wycombe village. It was built in 1967 and stands at the top of a sloping drive just above St. Paul's Church.

A large, well-appointed building, it has been completely renovated during 2024. This renovation has been carried out as part of the diocesan £10 million program to move the vicarages of the Oxford Diocese towards net zero carbon by 2035. Taking a fabric first approach, the 'retrofit' provides significant improvements to energy efficiency by improving insulation, new windows and doors, and upgrading the overall fabric of the house.

In West Wycombe, the Rectory has solar panels, new triple-glazed windows and an air source heat pump installed. We estimate that this will result in a 70-80% reduction in carbon and therefore, a significant reduction in running costs. There are new bathrooms, kitchen and carpets and it is newly decorated. In addition it has been re-wired and replumbed.

An interesting and easily maintained garden surrounds the house, with a detached double garage and greenhouse.

Next to the front door, there is a study and a toilet. A staircase leads to a good size kitchen and small utility room. There is a medium sized dining room and large sitting room, with a door into the garden. There are folding doors to divide the two rooms if required.

A short staircase leads to a double bedroom and separate shower room with toilet. On the next landing there is a family bathroom, three single bedrooms and a further double bedroom.

The back gate of the Rectory garden leads into Church Lane, and joins West Wycombe Hill Road to climb up to St Lawrence church and the Dashwood Mausoleum. The many local footpaths offer stunning views and are ideal for walkers!



## Who we are.

As a Benefice, we clearly recognise our strengths and challenges.

## Strengths:

- A collaborative Benefice structure has grown organically to support the different parish needs and welcome new ideas.
- A friendly and welcoming environment in which to support the incumbent's community outreach.
- A free monthly magazine, Contact, written by church and village representatives and delivered to every home in the Benefice.
- A gifted Ministry Team of clergy and lay leaders who enjoy working together.
- An experienced and highly efficient paid parttime Parish Administrator.
- A well established and popular pattern of one weekly Eucharist service which rotates around each Parish. We celebrate this fellowship which has given us strength to build a future together. Our Ministry Team also provides well-received occasional festival services and study groups.
- · Regular and talented musicians at our churches.
- Fully compliant safeguarding procedures within the Benefice.
- A well-appointed and centrally-located Rectory, fully renovated in 2024.

## Challenges

- A realistic awareness of the issues which have emerged from the effects of the long vacancy, the pandemic, and the need to renew parish energies.
- A longing to offer children and young people the opportunity to meet Jesus and be inspired by his life, by strengthening links with each of the village schools.
- The desire to encourage and expand our congregations.
- Our firm resolution to achieve financial stability in order to pay the full Parish Share and sustain our Benefice vision.
- The need to develop the Ministry Team with both ordained and lay people.



Mark Humphries Deanery Youth Officer

#### About children ...

The Benefice is looking forward to working with the newly-appointed Deanery Children and Youth Officer both in our churches and the three primary schools in our area.

#### Our officer, Mark, writes...

Employed by the Deanery, my role is to support churches in increasing their outreach and message to young people. Over the past 6 months, I have supported and encouraged the Benefice of West Wycombe and explored the needs of the communities and subsequent resources the Benefice has to offer. Ongoing support for the churches in the West Wycombe Benefice will continue to be offered. We hope that more children and young people will come to know Jesus because of this program.

#### One of our self-supporting priests writes:

We have been greatly encouraged through the appointment of a dedicated Children's and Youth Officer. There was a real feeling amongst all the parishes at the last Churchwardens meeting that this is a step in the right direction. One of the projects is to provide trained coaches from the congregations to go into schools and support one child for one hour, once per week. The Benefits to school, community and church will be exciting to witness. This is very much in the early stages but we hope it will spread to all four parishes in the future. With the right kind of leadership, we feel this is a very positive step for children's ministry within the Benefice.

## Preparing the way for the future -







## We are enthusiastically looking for an interim priest who is -

- Someone who loves Jesus, leads a life of prayer and is outgoing, positive, and enthusiastic about sharing their faith.
- A priest of vision, passionate about making a God-focused difference to our Benefice within the next three years
- Realistic about the challenges faced and the need to work closely with the Benefice group.
- A keen strategist who combines this with deep pastoral awareness



#### Our current team

Our team of experienced and welcoming Churchwardens are a united and happy team who have worked hard during the vacancy to sustain parish life.

Our Ministry Team members are very supportive of each other and the Benefice parishes. Their dedication and commitment in working alongside the Parish Administrator and Churchwardens who have stepped up into leadership roles, have enabled the churches to work more cohesively in a very positive setting.



Our Churchwardens, who enjoy both parish and social engagements together.







We are very fortunate to live in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with stunning countryside which offers a welcome to everyone.

The Benefice is placed between the two market towns of High Wycombe and Princes Risborough. This is a wonderful environment in which to raise a family with excellent selective-system schools, universities, theatre, community choirs, sporting and playground facilities as well as beautiful Chiltern villages with excellent walking and cycling routes. There are excellent transport links to Oxford, London and Heathrow. Two junctions of the M40 are just 15 minutes drive from the rectory which enables travel to London, Oxford and Heathrow, 50, 40 and 30 minutes respectively. A train from the closest station, Saunderton which offers free parking, takes just 40 minutes to London Marylebone.

Our four parish churches are kept open daily with many villagers and visitors enjoying their tranquility and opportunity for prayer and contemplation. The congregations are small but spirited, and church activity extends beyond weekly and occasional services to engage enthusiastically with the local communities. Each church has a hard-working and cohesive PCC whose members have done much to steer the Benefice through recent uncertainty, supported willingly by the self-supporting priests.

We welcome the mission opportunities presented and the Benefice has regular bookings for Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals and Burials of ashes.

Radnage has a church school in the village; Bledlow Ridge and West Wycombe each has a combined, non-faith school and all churches have worked to build up their links and activities. They also work closely with established village organisations for the benefit of the community.

Further details of each village can be found at their websites

www.bradenhamvillage.org.uk. (2021 population 582)

www.radnage.net
(2021 population 701)

#### www.achurchnearyou.com

- Bledlow Ridge (2021 population 959)
- West Wycombe (2021 population 2143)









## Benefice churches

## **Bledlow Ridge**

St Paul's church, Bledlow Ridge was built in 1868, is Grade II listed, and has its own open churchyard. We have a beautiful and unique John Piper window in the west wall which attracts many visitors, especially at sunset.

The building underwent extensive internal renovation in the 1980s, to become a warm and very well-ordered church.

The church activity is widely appreciated and St Paul's church very important to the villagers, although not necessarily on a Sunday. This was exemplified by the 120+ daffodils individually placed on our Easter Cross outside the church gates. It is a popular venue for church meetings as well as the monthly Benefice services.





## Bradenham



St Botolph's church, Bradenham, is an 11th century, Grade II\* listed village church historically linked to the estate of Bradenham Manor. It is a building of special historic and architectural interest, positioned on an extensive green at the centre of the village and facing a well-used cricket pitch

The village and surrounding estate are largely owned by the National Trust. Close to the village is RAF High Wycombe which houses Headquarters Air Command, with service families attending some of the Benefice services.

The PCC is encouraging the use of the church for community events such as school and community concerts and holds a regular Book Club and local history evenings.



## Radnage

St. Mary the Virgin, Radnage is a Grade 1 listed church, with Norman origins and wall paintings representing each subsequent century. The church is well appointed and also owns St Mary's Meadow next to the churchyard, often used for additional parking. Of note, we manage the churchyard with wild areas as well as mown grass and hope to become an Eco-church. The community is very supportive of the church and they share very successful fundraising events throughout the year such as Garden Sunday, Quiz Nights and Snowdrop Teas. We continue to give the collection from the monthly service to charity, rotating between local, national and international charities.

Radnage is a scattered community of about 300 houses, with the main part of the village being quite distant from the church.



Nonetheless, we have a very close relationship with the CofE School (SIAMS - rated excellent). The children walk to church or are dropped off for their special services or fun educational visits on church matters. The Head is an excellent leader, holding wonderful assemblies where he is aided by the year six Worship Leaders. There are very good links between the church and school with a PCC-approved governor and regular visits from our self-supporting priest (wife of the forementioned governor) and other PCC members to help with Religious Education, one on one reading lessons, etc.

Before the vacancy, we ran a very successful Children's Workship in the summer, and occasionally during the Christmas and Easter holidays too.

## West Wycombe

St Paul's church, West Wycombe, was completed in 1875, built by Lady Elizabeth Dashwood to serve the village when St Lawrence church was largely inaccessible in winter months. St Lawrence is an iconic Grade 1 listed church but with needs which cannot be met by the PCC. A group of interested people is now in place and the legal process to establish that group as a formal Trust for St Lawrence's is in progress. At present the group take responsibility for looking after the building and they open the church for concerts and fund raising activities which they organise.

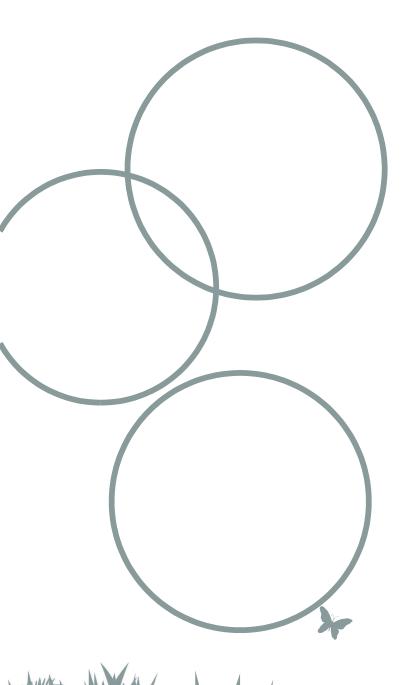
The centre of West Wycombe is a National Trust village within a conservation area.



Adjoining roads make this a well populated and sociable community with the neighboring hamlet of Piddington also part of the parish.

West Wycombe Park is the home of our Patron Sir Edward Dashwood, and the PCC works closely with the Parish Council and Community Association.

We have a well-established congregation and community but also acknowledge the challenges triggered by the vacancy and moving away from St Lawrence.







## Financial summary of the churches

Accounts	Bradenham	Radnage	Bledlow Ridge *1	West Wycombe 2023	
	2023	2023	2023		
	£	£	£	£	
Regular Giving	412	21,685	5,295	4,887	
Collections	2,162	4,207	3,142	789	
Gift Aid	0	6,659	0	1,451	
Donations	7,019	1,624	0	2,337	
Fund Raising	1,876	6,497	0	3,741	
Wedding & Funerals	2,148	2,082	3,779	349	
Other Income	946	11,053	15,000	113,819	
Total	£14,563	£53,807	£27,216	£127,372	
Income	·	·	·	·	
Parish Share	4,235	12,562	12,562	8,375	
Clergy & Service Costs	2,805	2,700	2,993	2,400	
Giving & Mission	156	3,452	906		
Heat, Light & Insurance	4,193	3,114	5,369	8,475	
Building & Churchyard	6,782	16,420	1,979	23,774	
Other Costs	71	1,129	0	1,840	
Total	£18,242	£39,377	£23,809	£44,863	
Expenditure	,	,	,	,	
Closing Reserves	£44,766	£66,369	£493,479	£126,770	

Note \*1 Includes the McMorran Bequest



## Statistics

Description	Bradenham 2023	Radnage 2023	Bledlow Ridge 2023	West Wycombe 2023
Year				
Baptisms	-	4	3	-
Marriages	1	2	-	-
Funerals (Church/Crematorium)	3/0	4/0	3/0	3/0
Internment of Ashes	-	2	2	-
Memorial Services	1	0	-	1
Normal Monthly Services (Adult/	Under 16's)			
No. per Month	1	1	1	1
Average Attendance	24/1	29/3	23/2	30/1
5th Sunday Attendance	-	-	-	20/0
Special Services (Adult/Under 16	o's)			
Candlemass	-	-	-	25/0
Ash Wednesday	20/0	-	-	-
Maundy Thursday	-	-	-	12/0
Good Friday	-	-	18	-
Easter Sunday	13/1	45/10	21/4	41/0
Ascension Day	-	-		8/0
Harvest	-	24/2	20/0	-
Harvest (School)	-	14/74	-	-
All Souls	-	14/4	18	23/0
Remembrance	14/0	-	31	-
Carol Service	90/4	88/6	49	-
Christingle Service	-	-	-	21/33
School Carol Service	-	-	94/125	-
Crib Service	-	44/24	83/24	-
Nursery Crib Service	-	-	39/23	-
Midnight Mass	35/1	-	-	-
Christmas Day	-	24/4	12	26/0
Other	25/3	-	-	-

## **Electoral Roll**

Living in Parish/Outside Parish	15/5	47/10	20/10	31/7



## **Moving into the future** - we are looking for a priest who

- Is keen to develop and lead an enthusiastic and dedicated Benefice team and help progress our Mission.
- Recognises the essential need to increase parish incomes and pay our Parish Share in full within the three year interim period.
- Wishes to engage with our congregations and communities thereby making the most of our lively and supportive villages.
- Is willing to join in with existing Deanery initiatives, serving our three local schools, as a fresh way to engage with our local communities.

This is an interim position that may be extended for a further three years. If all goes well, the successful candidate may apply for the permanent role. The latter depends upon raising sufficient annual income. We will all work together to raise the monies required each year to ensure we have a full-time, permanent and stable situation for the good of all.



## **Wycombe Deanery**

Wycombe Deanery is a family of 35 Anglican churches who - together with our ecumenical friends - serve the 150,000 people living in and around High Wycombe. We believe passionately that God is at work renewing and reforming his church in this country and we are committed to playing out part in this work. To guide us on this journey, we have articulated four principles that we hope will underpin all we do together:

## • Serving our fellowships

The Deanery exists to serve its churches

#### Shaping out future

We take responsibility for leading our churches into growth

## Spurring on our friends

Learning to work better together

#### Sharing the fire

Growing the vision

## To enable this, our key groups are the:

**Deanery Chapter**-a bimonthly gathering of clergy where we gather to pray, to encourage each other and to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit together. We also have a clergy wellbeing group that meets regularly.

**Deanery Synod**- a quarterly gathering of elected leaders from our 35 churches, where we devote at least 50% of our time to focusing on what is inspirational or missional, or both.

Deanery Leadership Teams- our Mission & Pastoral Committee and Standing Committee provide a lead on strategic, operational and financial aspects of Deanery life and consists of lay and clergy representatives from our churches.

The current Wycombe Deanery plan can be found at <a href="https://www.wycombedeanery.com">www.wycombedeanery.com</a>

Area Dean: Dave Bull, Lay Chair: Caroline Sants,

Associate Area Dean: Keith Johnson.





## The Diocese of Oxford and the Archdeaconry of Buckingham

The Diocese of Oxford serves the mission of the Church in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The Diocese comprises more than 600 parishes, with over 800 churches, serving a diverse population of more than 2 million people located in all types of settings

Due to the size and complexity of the Diocese, we have three Area Bishops who exercise considerable strategic and pastoral oversight for their Areas. The Archdeacon of Buckingham is Ven Guy Elsmore who has been in post since 2016. In September 2020, Revd Canon Chris Bull was appointed Associate Archdeacon of Buckingham.

Through prayer, listening and discernment a common vision has emerged for the Diocese of Oxford. The vision is based on the qualities described in The Beatitudes and addresses what kind of church we are called to be:

a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world: contemplative, compassionate, courageous. Our Common Vision continues to emerge as we identify together areas of our common life where we believe God is calling to focus. The diocesan focal areas are not a description of everything we do, but these priorities are being supported centrally by resources, training, conferences, workshops, and much more. The diocese is inviting benefices and their clergy to share a vision rather than demanding a response, motivated by hope not driven by anxiety, and thereby to flourish in their ministry. It is hoped that clergy appointed into the Archdeaconry of Buckingham will want to commit to this vision and encourage their benefice to share in becoming a more Christ-like church for the sake of God's world.





## Appendix A

Provisional Role Description

The following provisional role description will apply from the date of licensing. It will be reviewed by the postholder and the Archdeacon of Buckingham approximately six months after the date of licensing. Amendments will be made where necessary, by agreement.

PROVISIONAL ROLE DESCRIPTION

**SECTION ONE: DETAILS OF POST** 

Role title: Rector

**Type of Role:** 1.0 interim post for three

years (plus house)

Name of benefice: West Wycombe with Bledlow

Ridge, Bradenham and

Radnage

Episcopal area: Buckingham

**Deanery:** Wycombe

**Archdeaconry:** Buckingham

**Conditions:** Please refer to Statements of

Particulars document issued in conjunction with of Service

this role description

**Key contact for** Archdeacon of Buckingham

Clergy Terms of This role falls within the

Clergy Terms of Service formally known as

**Service:** Common Tenure. The

Archdeacon of Buckingham is the designated person by the Bishop of Oxford to issue the Statement of Particulars for

the post holder.

Accountability:

Priests share with the Bishop in the oversight of the Church. Whilst, as an office holder, the individual is expected to lead and prioritise work in line with the purpose of the role, they are encouraged to inform the Archdeacon and Churchwardens about any issues exceptional or otherwise that have the potential to affect ongoing

delivery of ministry

Additional

Responsibility: N/A





#### **SECTION TWO: CONTEXT**

### **Wider Context**

The Diocese of Oxford serves the mission of the Church in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The Diocese comprises more than 600 parishes, with over 800 churches, serving a diverse population of more than 2 million people located in all types of settings.

Our Common Vision is based on the qualities described in The Beatitudes and addresses what kind of church we are called to be:

a more Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world: contemplative, compassionate, courageous.

It is hoped that all clergy appointed into the Archdeaconry of Buckingham will want to commit to the Diocesan Common Vision, to encouraging their benefices to share in becoming a more Christlike church for the sake of God's world and to enabling all to flourish in ministry.

### **Local Context**

The Benefice comprises four villages with five parish churches (four of which hold regular worship), on the north-western side of High Wycombe.

by growing faith and showing service and pastoral care for all in the community by:

- Developing their vision and embracing the changes needed to help them achieve their mission
- Growing and strengthening their Lay Leaders and lay-led services
- · Caring for God's creation
- Growing in faith and numbers, especially amongst families and young people
- Growing even closer together as a Benefice
- Building on links with their village schools
- · Addressing their financial sustainability
- Continuing their much-loved traditional services whilst developing contemporary services to attract new faith-seekers.

For more information, see the parish profile.





## SECTION THREE: ROLE PURPOSE AND KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

#### General:

- A. To exercise the cure of souls shared with the bishop in this benefice in collaboration with colleagues, including the praying of the Daily Office, the administration of the sacraments and preaching
- B. To have regard to the calling and responsibilities of the clergy (as described in the Canons, the Ordinal, the Code of Professional Conduct for the Clergy) and other relevant legislation including
  - bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation and making him known to those in your care
  - instructing the parishioners in the Christian faith
  - preparing candidates for baptism and confirmation
  - diligently visiting the parishioners of the benefice, particularly those who are sick and infirm
  - providing spiritual counsel and advice
  - consulting with the Parochial Church Council on matters of general concern and importance to the benefice
  - bringing the needs of the world before God in intercession
  - calling your hearers to repentance and declaring in Christ's name the absolution and forgiveness of their sins
  - blessing people in God's name
  - preparing people for their death
  - discerning and fostering the gifls of all God's people
  - being faithful in prayer, expectant and watchful for the signs of God's presence, as he reveals his kingdom among us

C. To share in the wider work of the deanery and diocese as appropriate, for the building up of the whole Body of Christ

## Key responsibilities specific to the local situation

The new Priest-in-Charge will challenge, support, encourage, enable, and lead the whole team as it seeks to deliver the benefice Mission (see section 2 - Local Context):

## Other responsibilities

- Participate in the Bishop's Ministerial Development Review scheme and engage in Continuing Ministerial Development
- Carry out any other duties and responsibilities as required in line with the benefice needs.
- Take care of their wellbeing including health and safety and building a good repertoire of spiritual and psychological strategies
- Trustee of the McMorran bequest, in Bledlow Ridge.
- Trustee to the Radnage Poor's land estate charity.
- Radnage Church of England school Governor.





#### SECTION FOUR: BENEFICE SUMMARY

Benefice: West Wycombe

with Bledlow Ridge,

Bradenham and Radnage

Patrons: Oxford Diocese Board

of Patronage, Peache Trustees, Sir Edward Dashwood, The Bishop

of Oxford

PCCs: 4

Churchwardens: 6

Ministers: 2

Benefice paid staff: Administrator (part time)

Benefice unpaid

staff/volunteers: Lay leaders in all parishes

Buildings: 5

Churchyard(s): 5 and 1 burial ground

maintained by the Parish

Council

Church Traditions: Traditional rural

**Anglican** 

Pastoral Reorganisation

proposals: Processes to formally

settle the future of St. Lawrence's church are underway. Agreements passed by PCCs to form a single Benefice Council. No further pastoral reorganisation

envisaged.

For more detailed information, please refer to the Parish Profile.

#### SECTION FIVE: KEY CONTACTS FOR THE ROLE

#### Generic and specific to the role

### **Groups & committees**

- The PCC(s)
- Deanery Chapter
- Deanery Synod
- Deanery Pastoral Committee

#### In the Benefice

- Churchwardens
- Ministerial Colleagues
- Head teacher(s) of local school(s)

### Support structures

- Area Dean
- Area Bishop
- Area Archdeacon
- Spiritual director, work consultant, etc
- Staff at The Diocesan Office with key responsibilities for various aspects of supporting





#### **SECTION SIX: OTHER**

This role description is issued alongside and should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

The Ordinal

The Canons of the Church of England

Guidance for the Professional Conduct of Clergy

Bishop's Licence

Statement of Particulars issued to the office holder on successful appointment

Diocesan Clergy Handbook

Parish Profile

Ministry Action Plans (MAPs)

Any objectives discussed and agreed between the post holder and the supervising minister

Role description signed off by:

The Venerable Guy Elsmore, Archdeacon of Buckingham



