Lay Local Ministers

Role Descriptors

Drawing up a Written Role Descriptor

**Approach**

Under the Bishop’s Regulations for Local Ministry, all people licensed or authorised for local lay or ordained ministry and their incumbents are required to make a written Role Descriptor, which must be endorsed by the PCC, concerning the local minister’s ministry. The descriptor should cover at least the following aspects:

* The particular way(s) in which the ministry is to be expressed.
* The local minister’s role in and/or relationships with other ministers, the local leadership or ministerial team and other local church structures, such as the PCC, Standing Committee, etc.
* The balance between the local minister’s ministerial commitments and the needs of their family, work and leisure.
* The PCC’s expectations of the local minister’s in-service training commitments.
* Arrangements for the reimbursement of expenses incurred through performance of the local minister’s ministerial duties.
* Arrangements for the regular review of the local minister’s ministry as provided for in the Bishop’s Regulations. These stipulate that, at the end of every five-year licence/ authorisation period, the written agreement should be reviewed and, if necessary, amended, with the endorsement of the PCC, before the new licence/commission is applied for; and that, at the mid-point of every five-year licence/ authorisation period, each local minister should review their own ministry and agree on a ministerial development programme. The self-review will take the form of a brief written report which the local minister will discuss with their spiritual director, or their Area Reader Secretary – or any other appropriate person.

**Process**

It is assumed that careful thought will have already been given informally to the questions of the particular expression of the candidate’s ministry, and their relationships with other ministers and structures, before the process of drawing up the written agreement begins.

In practice, it may be best if the process of drawing up the agreement begins with an informal conversation between the candidate and the incumbent, exploring the areas listed above, and reflecting on the common ground that already exists about the candidate’s ministry. In this conversation, things that are both possible and feasible can be noted. Where a number of lay and ordained people work together in ministry (e.g. in a Local Leadership Team), this conversation ought always to include all of them, so that each Role Descriptor can reflect the collaborative context of their ministry. It may be necessary for other existing written agreements to be modified in the light of the introduction of a new member of the team.

Both the incumbent and the candidate should then prepare a draft Role Descriptor. The incumbent and the candidate should meet to compare and discuss the drafts they have prepared, and to negotiate a final version acceptable to both of them. This should then go before the PCC for discussion/formal agreement. The purpose of taking the agreement to the PCC is to clarify the local minister’s role with other leaders in the church, and to enable those who represent the congregation to ‘own’ the local minister’s ministry.

**Issues**

In drafting the Role Descriptor, careful attention should be given to the following issues:

* Expectations – what the parish expects of the local minister and what the local minister can expect of the parish.
* Responsibilities
* Accountability
* Supervision
* Support
* Relationships with local church structures of leadership and decision-making e.g. will the Local Minister be an ex-officio PCC member, etc?
* In the case of Readers, provision for ministry beyond the Reader’s own parish
* Reimbursement of expenses