

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE CHIEF MINISTER
ON THURSDAY 23rd JANUARY 2014**

The office of Chief Minister is responsible for constitutional matters within the executive branch of government. I am making this statement with regard to that responsibility. The Church community in the Island will naturally have their own perspectives on this matter.

Members will have seen the announcement made yesterday by Lambeth Palace that the Bishop of Dover, the Rt Revd Trevor Willmott, is to assume interim episcopal oversight of the work of the Church of England in the Channel Islands on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to whom the Bishop of Winchester has delegated the oversight of the Islands. This transfer of episcopal oversight on an interim basis, which has the full consent and the support of the Bishop of Winchester, is a constructive solution to the present difficulties and is intended to assist the mission of the Church to flourish in the Islands.

Members may recall that the Bishop of Dover is a former Bishop of Basingstoke in the Diocese of Winchester, and is therefore familiar with the Islands. The Bishop also undertook a pastoral visit to Jersey and Guernsey in December last year, accompanied by the Bishop at Lambeth, when they had the opportunity to meet a range of people in the Islands.

Our understanding is that the Archbishop expects that this interim arrangement should be in place shortly. Whilst the complete arrangement is still being worked through, diocesan officers will be considering the details during the coming weeks in order to ensure that the arrangements work effectively and to the satisfaction of the Archbishop, the Bishop of Winchester, the Bishop of Dover and the Deans.

Lambeth Palace has also announced that the reports commissioned by the Bishop of Winchester and being conducted by Dame Heather Steel and Bishop John Gladwin will be completed in due course. We continue to anticipate that the commitments made in the terms of reference of the Steel investigation will be honoured and that, upon receipt of the final report, a copy will be supplied to the Bailiff, the Dean and the Ministry of Justice.

Lastly, Lambeth Palace has announced that the Archbishop intends to appoint a Commission to look at the relationship between the Islands, the Diocese of Winchester and the wider Church of England. There are complex constitutional and ecclesiastical matters which will need to be considered. It is expected that a person of standing is likely to be appointed in due course to head the Commission. Given the complex issues to be considered and the need to consult widely, this Commission is likely to be a lengthy process if it is to arrive at recommendations that will provide a solid foundation for the future.

I will seek to keep Members informed regarding constitutional matters as these evolve and we will provide whatever support we can to the Bishop of Dover in his new role.