

**IN THE MATTER OF THE LATE BISHOP GEORGE BELL**

**AND IN THE MATTER OF AN INVESTIGATION BEFORE THE RIGHT  
WORSHIPFUL TIMOTHY BRIDEN, COMMISSARY OF THE BISHOP OF  
CHICHESTER**

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**REPORT**

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**A. Introduction**

1. On July 30<sup>th</sup> 2018 the Right Reverend Martin Warner, Bishop of Chichester appointed me to act as his commissary for the purpose of inquiring into certain allegations of misconduct made against Bishop George Bell, who was bishop of that diocese from 1929 until 1958. A copy of the instrument of appointment and its accompanying terms of reference appear as Appendix I to this report.
2. The allegations in question had been reported to the Sussex police following the publication on December 15<sup>th</sup> 2017 of the Independent Review by Lord Carlile of Berriew CBE, QC (“the Carlile Review”). Lord Carlile was concerned with the process adopted in the evaluation of a previous complaint against Bishop Bell made by a woman given the pseudonym of “Carol”. In April 2018 the Sussex police issued a statement indicating that they had closed their inquiries into the fresh allegations. The statement included the following passage:

*“The information was assessed and a proportionate investigation has been carried out to clarify the circumstances.... Of course further police investigation or action is not possible as Bishop Bell died 60 years ago.”*

Further details of the police investigation have not been released.

3. Given the inconclusive character of the police inquiry it was appropriate for the Church of England to conduct its own investigation. In accordance with paragraph 49 of the Carlile Review, the civil standard of proof, namely on the balance of probabilities, has been adopted. The burden of proving an allegation to that standard rests on the person making it. It follows from the adoption of the civil standard of proof that the rules of evidence and (at least in general terms) the principles of procedure applied in the civil courts should also be followed. A distinctive feature, however, is the involvement of the Core Group convened under Section 1.6 of *Practice Guidance: Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers* (2017) for the purpose of the oversight and management of the response to the allegations. It has been appropriate to treat the Core Group, chaired by Mr.