

From: Jools Newton
Sent: Tuesday, 28 July 2009 10:32
To: Bishop of Chichester
Cc: Bishop of Lewes
Subject: Cotton/Pritchard Report CONFIDENTIAL
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Dear John,

Wallace has asked me to peruse the report and his response. I have had a brief opportunity to discuss it with him and he has conveyed to me his reaction to it. If I may, there are two aspects that give me cause for concern.

First, the report appears to be based in part on speculation and assumptions, particularly where, in effect, certain imputations, even accusations, are made against Wallace himself. In my view, in certain instances, what is said may amount to actionable defamation and I have accordingly suggested to Wallace that he seek legal advice as soon as possible. With regret, I must say that, to me, the 'flavour' of this report is that it has been written to an agenda and I think it would be difficult for a completely unconnected third party to do other than conclude that its underlying thrust, if not overt purpose, is to discredit principally Wallace himself but also the diocese. Constructive criticism and recommendations are fundamentally important but the tenor of this report blunts what may be entirely appropriate conclusions.

My second concern follows from the foregoing. With every respect to Roger Meekings, I think it is disingenuous that this report is presented as 'independent' in the fullest sense of the word. Mr. Meekings, styling himself 'independent reviewer', has been involved in the ongoing historic cases review for many months, during which time he has had contact with numerous members of the diocesan team but particularly with Shirley Hosgood. No doubt it was thought that, as a result, he had the requisite experience to investigate and report on these two cases but in reality a report prepared by him in such circumstances could not be said to be 'independent', although a 'report' it clearly is. It would have been preferable, and would have had the effect of building confidence in the process, had an independent, unconnected professional been appointed not only to review the facts Roger Meekings has properly sought to establish, and to engage in further inquiry if appropriate, but to offer a truly independent and balanced review and conclusions.

I hesitate to say so, but, in this light, I tend to the view that the report is flawed, even tainted and consideration should be given to rejecting accordingly. We are dealing with matters of such seriousness that there should be no room for doubt as to the basis on which such a report is written and presented. I believe that the facts as set out in the report, and as corrected by Wallace, should be reviewed by an impartial and unconnected third party professional – to do otherwise risks a leaching away of confidence in the diocesan safeguarding policy and process, which are so vital to the health of the diocese.

Forgive me for writing in such strong terms.

Regards,

Philip