

Appointment of the Chairs of the General Synod's Business Committee

Further to the short statement that I made to the Synod on Monday 11 July explaining the position under the Standing Orders following the withdrawal of the Bishop of Dover, I now attach a longer explanatory note. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chairs of the Houses of Clergy and Laity have seen the note and thought that Synod members would find it helpful by way of further background.

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Secretary General

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Appointment of the Chair of the General Synod's Business Committee

The Process so far

1. Under Standing Order 115, the Chair of the Business Committee is appointed by the Archbishops' Council, after consultation with the Appointments Committee, from among the 6 members of the Council directly elected by the General Synod- 2 of them elected from the House of Bishops, 2 from the House of Clergy and 2 from the House of Laity. The appointment and the term of office are both subject to confirmation by resolution of the Synod.
2. In the run up to the February group of sessions the Archbishops' Council delegated to 3 of its members – that is the Archbishop of York, Christine Hardman as Chair of the House of Clergy and Philip Giddings as Chair of the House of Laity (the Group of 3) – the responsibility for considering the suitability of the 6 eligible candidates, consulting the Appointments Committee and identifying the name to be submitted for confirmation by the Synod.
3. The Group of 3 considered all 6 names very carefully and consulted the Appointments Committee. The eligible candidates were the Bishops of Sheffield and Dover, the Revd Robert Cotton and the Revd Mark Ireland, Paul Boyd-Lee and Christina Rees. The Group came to the unanimous conclusion that, while all could be expected to make significant and varied contributions to the Archbishops' Council and the Synod over the next 5 years, the Bishop of Dover was the best qualified for this particular role. In coming to this conclusion the Group noted that he had already served on the Business Committee as an elected member for the whole of the previous Synod and was its acting chair,
4. In reaching that conclusion the Group thought quite carefully about whether a member of the House of Bishops should chair the Business Committee. The Group decided that it had to assume that Synod had made a deliberate decision when it had approved a standing order that limited the field to just 6 candidates of whom 2 were bishops. The Group therefore decided that if the Bishop of Dover was the best qualified, it should not count against him that he came from a different house from recent chairs of the Business Committee.
5. The nomination of the Bishop was presented to the Synod at its February group of sessions in the normal way by the Archbishop of York. In the debate two speakers spoke strongly against the proposition and the Synod passed a motion proposed by a third to adjourn the debate.

6. At its first meeting after February's adjourned Synod debate the Archbishops' Council had a long and careful discussion of possible next steps. The 6 people eligible to be considered as chair of the Business Committee were not present for that discussion but all other members, including both Archbishops, attended.

7. The Council came to 2 conclusions. The first was that there was clearly now a question whether Standing Order 115 was too restrictive. The Council had before it a request from the Standing Committee of the House of Laity that the standing order should be reviewed with a view to widening the field of potential candidates. The Council accepted that proposal and agreed that the review (which would also look at the rules concerning the chair of the Appointments Committee) should start this autumn and involve both the Archbishops' Council and the Standing Orders Committee.

8. The Council recognised that the review, and any subsequent decisions by the Archbishops' Council and Standing Orders Committee to bring to the Synod any changes to the standing orders, would take a little time. Until the standing orders changed the chair had to be chosen in accordance with the present Standing Order 115. The Council's second decision, therefore, was to commend the Bishop of Dover to the Synod as the person best qualified for the role, since he had served as an ordinary member of the Committee for the past 5 years.

9. However, the motion brought to the July Synod was different from the one presented to the Synod in February. The new motion set an end date for the appointment of 31 July 2013, so that the position could be re-considered after whatever changes in the standing orders resulted from the review. There was a paragraph explaining the Council's decision in the Business Committee report.

10. Dr Giddings gave a shortened version of the above account in answer to a Question on the evening of the first day of the York Synod. But as Archbishops' Council's Questions were not reached in the oral session, it was posted on the notice-board and probably not seen by most members. Dr Giddings was intending to give the full account to Synod when moving the motion that the Bishop of Dover's nomination should be approved on Monday morning but the motion was not moved as a result of Bishop Trevor's withdrawal. It is therefore set out here for the information of Synod members.

Widening the Pool

11. After the February Synod the House of Laity Standing Committee, having reflected on the difficulties encountered in this and previous Synods with such appointments, concluded that the current provisions and procedures were

unnecessarily restrictive and inimical to the harmonious working together of the three Houses of the General Synod and the Archbishops' Council.

12. The Standing Committee therefore resolved to invite the Archbishops' Council to initiate the necessary changes to widen significantly the number of persons who could be appointed to the two Chairs. As indicated in paragraph 7 above, the Archbishops' Council accepted this proposal and set the process of review under way.

13. The Committee believed the necessary widening would be best achieved by amending GS Standing Orders and any other relevant legislation to provide that, in future, the Chairs of the GS Appointment and Business Committees should:

(i) Be appointed from the elected members of either the House of Clergy or the House of Laity; and

(ii) Have right of attendance at Archbishops' Council if not an elected member thereof.

14. The Committee's proposal deliberately disconnected appointment of the two Chairs from membership of the Archbishops' Council but provided, through right of attendance, for a direct link with the Council and the opportunity to participate in its deliberations when this is judged appropriate.

15. The Standing Committee acknowledged that there were different views within the House of Laity, and probably also in the Synod as a whole, on whether members of the House of Bishops should be eligible for appointment to either or both of these Chairs. The Committee's proposal was designed to give the General Synod the opportunity to debate the merits of that issue and make provision accordingly.

Next steps

16. In the light of the Bishop of Dover's withdrawal and the general concerns expressed about the process it now falls to the Archbishops' Council to consider the next steps. The Council has already committed itself to reviewing the relevant standing orders and bring proposals to the General Synod for its consideration. The Synod will need to be given the opportunity to debate and decide (among other things) the question whether the pool of persons for consideration for appointment to the chair of the two committees should exclude members of the House of Bishops.

17. Other key questions to be resolved will include:

- The method of appointment: whether to continue with Council nomination and Synod endorsement or adopt the procedure used for appointment of the Synod's chairs – proposals to Presidents of the Synod by the Appointments Committee or adopt direct election, as with the Prolocutors and the Officers of the House of Laity, with the whole Synod as the electorate.
- The relationship of the chairs to the Archbishops' Council: whether they should have right of attendance, as proposed by the House of Laity Standing Committee or should attend by invitation when business directly relevant to the work of their committees is on the Council's agenda

18. The Archbishops' Council will also need to decide whether, pending decisions on a new Standing Order, to seek Synod's approval to the appointment as Chair of the Business Committee of one of its five other members who are eligible to be chair of the Committee under the present Standing Order or to leave the Committee to continue to work for the time being under its Acting Chair.

19. The Council meets on 27 September to consider the way forward. Some members of Synod have already submitted views, as requested by the Secretary General in his short statement of 11 July and any further views submitted will be considered by the Council.