

# **GENERAL SYNOD BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

## **Fringe Meetings and Displays at the General Synod of the Church of England**

### **Introduction from the Chair of the Business Committee**

The way in which arrangements are made for the General Synod are set out in Standing Orders. Under Standing Order 1, the Archbishops, as Presidents, are responsible for all arrangements for General Synod meetings. The Business Committee is responsible for overseeing practical arrangements for the General Synod under powers given to it by Standing Order 125 and as part of this responsibility oversees the operation of fringe meetings and displays at groups of sessions.

The Business Committee understands fringe meetings to be held primarily for the benefit of Synod members to offer opportunities for meeting in different groupings and to inform Synod members of the background to debates and significant issues beyond the limits imposed by the time available and the business permitted by Standing Orders. The presence of a particular fringe meeting or display at the Synod does not indicate the support either of the Presidents or the Business Committee for any views expressed or presented. These are entirely the responsibility of the organisers.

Any decision that the Presidents or the Business Committee may make regarding fringe events and displays is final.

Any concerns that Synod members, staff or visitors may have concerning a fringe event or display should in the first instance be raised directly with those holding the fringe meeting or display. If the matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved with them, those concerns should be raised with the Chair of the Business Committee via the Clerk to the Synod (contact details below).

The Revd Canon Sue Booy

**ON BEHALF OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

**May 2017**

# GENERAL SYNOD BUSINESS COMMITTEE

## EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Business Committee have recently reviewed and revised their policy regarding the arrangements of Fringe and Display meetings at both a London and York group of sessions. This document should be read in conjunction with the policy in Annex I in order to act as a guide to those wishing to organise fringe meetings or displays.

### Introduction

1. Under its Constitution, the Synod must meet at least twice a year. Under its present practice, one of these meetings is held during a working week in February in Church House, Westminster and the other residentially, over a long weekend in July at the University of York. In addition to these two meetings, a date in November is reserved for a shorter group of sessions for use only if there is urgent legislative or other business.
2. During these group of sessions, the Business Committee has allowed for the provision of fringe meetings and displays to take place and organisers will find the current policy attached. (Annex 1).

### Key changes to the fringe and display policy

3. The Business Committee has established a **new set of criteria** permitting certain individuals to apply to hold a fringe meeting and/or display. These can be found in paragraph 1 of Annex 1.
4. Fringe meetings **will no longer be catered** at the York group of sessions. All meals for Synod members will be served in the dining hall which they have been allocated.
5. Fringe meetings in London will still have the option of catering.
6. The timing of the sittings at a York group of sessions has been altered to allow sufficient time for Synod members to eat in the restaurants before (or after) fringe meetings. The revised timings are listed below. It is important to note that the exact times during which fringe meetings can take place may vary at the discretion of the Business Committee.

0730-0845	Breakfast available / fringe meetings
0900-1230	Morning sitting in Central Hall
1230-1430	Lunch available / fringe meetings
1430-1900	Afternoon sitting in Central Hall
1900-2100	Dinner available
1900-2200	Fringe meetings

*There will be no evening sitting of General Synod*

7. The booking form for each group of sessions will give clear details of all the fringe meeting slots which are available.

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### **How can I apply to hold a fringe meeting or display if I don't meet the new criteria?**

8. Paragraph 1 of the revised policy, lists under three groups the individuals or organisations which are permitted to apply for a fringe meeting or display.
9. For clarity, those eligible under Group 1 would include a number of established groups such as the Open Synod Group, the Catholic Group on General Synod, the Evangelical Group on General Synod, the 1990 Group, the General Synod Human Sexuality Group, WATCH Group on General Synod, Archdeacons in Synod, Diocesan Lay Chairs on General Synod to name a few.
10. It may be that individuals or organisations who have arranged fringe meetings or displays in the past will need to reconfigure themselves in order to align with the new criteria –‘consisting solely or mainly of members of the General Synod’, in the same way the groups listed in paragraph 9 currently operate or ask a Synod member, or a group of Synod members, to apply for and organise a fringe meeting or display in which they can then be invited to participate.
11. However, not all will be able to reconfigure themselves in this way and, in that instance, they will not be eligible to apply.
12. In order for a fringe meeting or display to meet the criterion of consisting solely or mainly of members of the General Synod simply requires that the fringe meeting or display are organised by and for Synod members. This does not prohibit the attendance of a limited number of external speakers or guests at the fringe meeting or to be present at a display.
13. However, each fringe meeting and display must fulfil the following requirements:
  - a. They must fit into one of the three groups in paragraph 1 of the revised policy
  - b. The individual Synod member or group of Synod members organising the fringe meeting or display must take full responsibility for arranging the meeting or display in its entirety. Paragraph 4 of the revised policy outlines these requirements in more detail.

### **What is the process for applying to hold a fringe meeting or display?**

14. An email from the Synod office will be sent to Synod members and groups who fall under the three categories ahead of each group of sessions informing them when the booking period for fringe meetings and displays is open.
15. Synod members will be able to access the application form for fringe meetings and displays via a link which will be contained in the email. Applications will be treated strictly on a first-come, first-served basis across all the three categories and only fully completed application forms will be accepted. Therefore, at the application stage, applicants will need to ensure that they list any external speakers or guests.
16. Once the application period has closed, the Synod office will confirm whether the fringe meeting or display has been accepted, along with details of the location

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and, if a fringe meeting, the time the meeting will take place.

17. Fringe meeting organisers will then be given the opportunity to create a flyer advertising their fringe meeting which will be sent out to all Synod members at an agreed date. We suggest that, in order to save any delay, fringe meeting flyers are mostly prepared in advance so the final details just need to be added.
18. When creating a flyer, please ensure it contains the following information:
  - a. the name of the fringe meeting
  - b. the name of the organiser or group responsible for it
  - c. the location, day and time of the meeting
  - d. an email address for members to confirm their attendance (**not** the Synod office).
19. The Synod office no longer requires the names of members attending fringe meetings as under the new arrangements meals will not be provided. However, please ensure we have an accurate number for those attending the meeting by the deadline stated in the booking form so that we can pass this on to the University of York or Church House Conference Centre to comply with their Health and Safety requirements.
20. If you are unclear as to which group your fringe meeting or display might fall into or have any general queries, please be in contact with the Synod office - [synod@churchofengland.org](mailto:synod@churchofengland.org)

### Key dates for July 2017 fringe and display meetings

25 <sup>th</sup> May 2017	E-mail with booking forms for fringe meetings/displays sent out
5 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	Deadline for applications for fringe meetings/displays
7 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	Church House to confirm Fringe meetings/displays
12 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	Fringe meeting flyer to be sent to Church House
13 <sup>th</sup> June 2017	Fringe meeting flyers to be published to Synod members
21 <sup>st</sup> June 2017	Final numbers needed for fringe meetings

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### ANNEX I: POLICY

#### Fringe Meetings and Displays Policy

#### Eligibility to apply for a Fringe Meeting or Display at General Synod

1. The following individuals or organisations with links to the Church of England and General Synod are eligible to apply to hold a fringe meeting or display at meetings of General Synod:

#### **Group 1: Internal applicants:**

- a. Individual members or groups consisting solely or mainly of members of the General Synod
- b. Any of the National Church Institutions (including their committees, boards and councils)
- c. Any body established under the provisions of a Measure or Canon or under the Standing Orders of the General Synod
- d. Any body established by the Archbishops or by the Archbishops' Council

#### **Group 2: Church of England Mission Agencies:**

- e. Any Mission Agency of the Church of England which is an associate or full member of the Partnership for World Mission<sup>1</sup>

#### **Group 3: Church of England Charities etc**

- f. Any charity the purposes of which include furthering the work of the Church of England
- g. Any charity any of whose purposes are required to be carried out in accordance with the tenets of the Church of England (however that requirement is expressed)
- h. Any charity of which the Church of England is a sponsoring or member Church
- i. Any charity whose purposes include the relief of poverty among the clergy of the Church of England

#### Booking Fringe Meetings and Displays

21. An individual, group of individuals or organisation eligible under paragraph 1 to apply to hold a fringe meeting or a display must apply to the Synod office by the time it specifies.
22. Eligible applicants must supply the names of guest speakers and any organisations they intend to invite to participate at fringe meetings and displays and any other information (including details needed for security passes) reasonably required by the Synod Office, within the timetable it specifies.
23. The eligible individual, group of individuals or organisation that applies to hold a fringe meeting or display must take personal responsibility for making all necessary arrangements with the Synod Office. Responsibility cannot be

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<sup>1</sup> The lists of these mission agencies are available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/mission/world-mission/mission-agencies.aspx> and <https://www.churchofengland.org/our-faith/mission/world-mission/associate-agencies.aspx>.

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delegated by the applicant to others (for example, another individual or organisation participating at a fringe meeting). The Synod Office can only deal with the eligible applicant and will hold the eligible applicant responsible for all matters concerning the fringe meeting or display.

24. Space for fringe meetings and displays will, subject to practical considerations as to space, be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis from the time that applications open.

#### **Compliance with other General Synod Policies and Guidelines**

25. Participants and organisers of Fringe Meetings and Displays must abide by all the General Synod's policies, in particular the following:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/general-synod/fringe-meetings-and-displays-at-general-synod.aspx>

- General Synod Security Policy
- General Synod Members Code of Conduct
- House of Bishops Safeguarding Policies
- [In York] The University of York's policies on Freedom of Speech and Equal Opportunities<sup>2</sup>

26. For health and safety reasons, organisers must ensure that their fringe event or display stays within the room or space allocated. No signage or materials should go beyond the allocated area. The Business Committee retains the right to order the immediate discontinuation of any fringe meeting or display stand which does not stay within its allocated space or which poses a risk to health and safety.
27. Where display organisers are unable to be present for the duration of the period for which they have requested a display, they must ensure their stand is left in a tidy and safe state. Any items left unattended are left at the organiser's own risk and are not the responsibility of the Synod Office or the respective Conference teams.
28. Synod members and those participating in, speaking at or organising Synod fringe meetings and displays are required to remain courteous and respectful at all times to Synod members, staff and guests, including those who do not agree with the views being promoted at such meetings or displays. For further information please refer to the General Synod Members Code of Conduct policy (*q.v.*)
29. In the case of groups of sessions held at the University of York, if the fringe meeting or display is considered by the University to contravene its policy on Freedom of Speech and Equal Opportunities the Business Committee reserves

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<sup>2</sup> Please refer to:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance/governance-documents/ordinances-and-regulations/regulation-10/>

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the right without recompense, to cancel the fringe event / order the immediate removal of the display.

#### **Right to Refuse applications for Fringe Meetings and Displays**

30. The **Archbishops** as Presidents of the General Synod reserve the right to refuse space to an organisation for a fringe meeting or display where they judge that:
- a. the subject matter of the fringe meeting or display would be contrary to the ethos of the Church of England or may impact adversely on its reputation;
  - b. the presence or other involvement of any person at the fringe meeting or display may pose risks to the security of the General Synod, its members and visitors;
  - c. the subject matter of the fringe meeting or display, or the presence or other involvement of any person at the fringe meeting or display, would be inconsistent with the guidance issued by the House of Bishops on matters relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults;  
or
31. The Business Committee reserves the right to **refuse any further applications** from organisers for up to **two groups of sessions** if it takes the view that these Guidelines have been infringed.
32. All questions regarding these Guidelines and any concerns regarding Synod fringe meetings or displays should be sent to the Chair of the Business Committee via the Clerk at: [jacqui.philips@churchofengland.org](mailto:jacqui.philips@churchofengland.org)

The Revd Canon Sue Booy  
On behalf of the General Synod Business Committee

May 2017