

GENERAL SYNOD

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

FIFTY-FIRST REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

1. The Standing Orders Committee ('the Committee') presents its 51st Report to the Synod.
2. Our membership for the current quinquennium is as follows:

Appointed members:

Mr Geoffrey Tattersall QC (Manchester) (Chair)
The Revd Canon Sue Booys (Oxford)
The Revd Canon Simon Killwick (Manchester)
Canon Elizabeth Paver (Sheffield)
Mr David Robilliard (Channel Islands)
Mr Clive Scowen (London).

***Ex-officio* members:**

The Ven Christine Hardman (Prolocutor of the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury)
The Ven Cherry Vann (Prolocutor of the Lower House of the Convocation of York)
Dr Philip Giddings (Chair of the House of Laity)
Mr Tim Hind (Vice-Chair of the House of Laity).

PART I: PRE-CONSOLIDATION AMENDMENTS

Items 29 to 44: Questions for answer at groups of sessions

3. At its March 2015 meeting, the Business Committee reviewed the new format for the Synod's 'Question Time' which had been trialled at the February group of sessions. That involved the answers to questions for oral reply being given to all members in writing in advance, so that Question Time was limited in substance to the asking and answering of supplementary questions.
4. The Business Committee considered that the trial had been a success and therefore asked the Standing Orders Committee to propose amendments to the Standing Orders at the July group of sessions to put the arrangements trialled in February onto a permanent basis, including by removing the current requirement for an oral reply of a formal kind ('I refer to my answer set out on the Questions Paper') to be given to every question. The Standing Orders Committee accordingly now brings forward proposed amendments to the Standing Orders to achieve that result.
5. **Items 29 to 44** on the First Notice Paper will give effect to the proposed changes, replacing the current arrangements with ones under which a written reply to every question for answer at a group of sessions must be circulated to members in advance, rather than replies being given orally, so that Question Time is limited to the asking and answering of supplementary questions.

6. As to the time by which written answers will have to be circulated, the Standing Orders Committee considers that members cannot reasonably be expected to read and digest the replies before Question Time unless they are circulated not later than one clear day before the day on which the answers are to be given (ie Saturday if Question Time is held on a Monday and Wednesday if it is held on a Friday). The new Standing Order 106A(a) to be inserted by **item 32** will accordingly require that. The Business Committee is content with that position.
7. Since both committees took the view that provision for a separate category of questions for written reply at a group of sessions will effectively become redundant if the proposed changes are made, the amendments will revoke the provisions that provide for that and make consequential changes.
8. *Items 29 to 44 will be moved in the afternoon sitting on Friday 10th July, to take immediate effect so that they are in place before Question Time takes place in the evening sitting.*
9. Additionally, **item 45** will bring the time for the giving of notice of questions forward, from 5.30pm to 12 noon on the day on which notice currently has to be given (ie the day which falls 7 clear days, excluding Saturdays and Sundays, before the first day of the group of sessions). Though unrelated to the new arrangements trialled in February, the Business Committee asked the Standing Orders Committee to make this change to reduce the pressure on staff (who work to an extremely tight timetable in relation to Synod questions, under which the questions for answer must be circulated on the following day to those responsible for preparing replies). Whilst the other amendments relating to General Synod questions would take immediate effect, this one will not take effect until immediately after this group of sessions, so as to apply from the November 2015 group of sessions onwards. *It will accordingly be moved, with the other pre-consolidation amendments (items 46-49), in the course of the morning sitting on Saturday 11th July (or, if not reached then, in the course of the afternoon sitting that day).*

Items 46 to 48: Standing Order 69 (Procedure for Deeming)

10. Currently, SO 69 only allows the ‘Procedure for Deeming’ for which it provides to apply to instruments made under Measures. But Canons sometimes authorise the making of instruments. Indeed, draft Amending Canon No. 34, which will return to the Synod for Final Approval in July, contains a provision which assumes that the deeming procedure will be available for Regulations made under the new Canon C 30 (‘Of safeguarding’).
11. The Standing Orders Committee has therefore agreed that it should be possible to use the deeming procedure in relation to instruments made under Canon as well as to instruments made under a Measure, where a Canon makes provision for that. **Items 46 to 48** will therefore amend SO 69 accordingly.

Item 49: Standing Order 130A (Circulation of Documents)

12. Currently, SO 130A allows Synod members to elect to receive Synod papers in electronic form, in accordance with arrangements made by the Business Committee. Under that

provision the default position is that, unless a member makes an election to receive papers in that form, he or she will receive all Synod papers in paper form.

13. At its March meeting the Business Committee agreed that the Standing Orders should be changed so as to reverse the default position – ie that members should receive Synod papers in electronic form, unless they opt to receive them in paper form. The Standing Orders Committee proposes the amendment at **item 49** to give effect to that decision.
14. At the request of the Business Committee, the amendment proposed to be made by item 49 will take effect immediately after the July group of sessions, so that the members of the new Synod to be elected in the autumn will all receive papers in electronic form unless they opt to receive them in paper form. The Standing Orders Committee had favoured postponing the coming into force of the change until after the November group of sessions, so as to allow those elected to the new Synod for the first time the opportunity to receive Synod papers in paper form before having to make a choice as to the format in which they receive them. Whilst deferring to the Business Committee's view on the timing, the Standing Orders Committee urges the Business Committee to ensure that new members are provided with sufficient information to enable them to be make a properly informed choice.
15. *Items 46 to 49 will be moved (with item 45), in the course of the morning sitting on Saturday 11th July (or, if not reached then, in the course of the afternoon sitting that day).*

PART II: PROPOSED CONSOLIDATED TEXT OF THE STANDING ORDERS

16. In its 50th Report (GS 1984) the Committee reported that the text of the Synod's Standing Orders has not been the subject of any systematic review or revision for many years. Since such a process last took place, however, the Standing Orders have been amended extensively, but on a piecemeal basis.
17. The Committee therefore considered that the election of a new Synod in 2015 would represent a suitable point for the introduction of a lightly revised and consolidated text of Standing Orders, which is expressed and presented in as simple and straightforward a way as possible and using gender non-specific language whilst not altering the underlying rules of procedure - which generally serve the Synod well and to which its members are accustomed.
18. The Committee and its staff have accordingly now prepared a proposed consolidated text of the Standing Orders which achieves these goals, and places it before the Synod for approval with a view to its being available for use by the new Synod from the November 2015 group of sessions onwards.
19. A number of amendments were put before the Synod for approval in February 2015 to facilitate the consolidation process and were duly approved under the deemed procedure for which provision is made in SO 39(c). Their effect has been incorporated in the revised consolidated text now put before the Synod for approval.
20. Tables showing the destinations of the provisions of the current Standing Orders, and the origins of the provisions of the proposed consolidated text, can be found on the General

Synod website. Hard copies will also be available during the July group of sessions from the Information desk.

21. *The Synod will be invited to adopt the proposed consolidated text by voting on **item 50**, which will be moved in the course of the afternoon sitting on Sunday 12th July.*
22. The proposed consolidated text has been prepared on the assumption that the amendments set out as items 29 to 49 on the First Notice Paper will also have been approved by the Synod before the motion adopting the proposed consolidated text (item 50) is debated by the Synod. If in fact any of items 29 to 49 have been lost, or have been carried in an amended form, the Committee will move amendments to the proposed consolidated text to ensure that the form it takes properly reflects the Standing Orders in the form they take immediately before the Synod is invited to approve the consolidated text.
23. The aim of the Committee in producing the proposed consolidated text has been to prepare a version which is easier to read and better presented than the current text. As the text is a consolidation of the current Standing Orders it has not been open to the Committee to amend the current text save for the purposes of making ‘corrections’ to the current text (‘corrections’ for this purpose including both corrections of textual errors and improvements to the manner in which existing provisions are expressed). Correspondingly, by virtue of SO 39(bb)(ii), it will not be possible for members to move amendments to the proposed consolidated text unless their effect would be to reinstate the current text or make ‘corrections’ in the sense just described.
24. Finally, in the course of its work on the consolidation process the Committee has identified a number of further issues which, for the reason explained in the previous paragraph, it has not been possible to address as part of that process but which are worthy of consideration by the Synod. It therefore hopes that they will be the subject of a further report or reports to the Synod by its successors in in due course. But if members have any suggestions of their own for ways in which the Standing Orders might be further amended in a helpful way, they are invited to put them to the Committee for consideration as part of that process.

On behalf of the Committee:
Geoffrey Tattersall QC
Chair

June 2015