

General Synod

Women in the Episcopate Manchester and Southwark Diocesan Synod Motions Background Note from the Secretary General

1. Since the issue of GS 1854C at least two publications have stated that, if the Manchester DSM were to be passed unamended and if the House of Bishops were then to amend the draft Measure in the way that it proposed, a further reference to the dioceses under Article 8 would follow.
2. One of the publications has subsequently qualified the statement but since there is the potential for some confusion Synod members may find it helpful if I supplement what is said in paragraph 20-21 of my earlier background note.
3. As explained there, the responsibility for determining whether the requirements of the Constitution (including Article 8) have been complied with rests with the 'Group of Six'. Their determination has to be made before the Final Approval Stage. The draft Measure can only come for Final Approval if it or 'the substance of the proposals embodied therein' has first been approved by a majority of the dioceses.
4. If during the Article 7 process the House of Bishops were to have made any amendments to the draft Measure the Group of Six would need to meet. Their task would be to decide, in a quasi-judicial capacity and having taken legal advice, whether the amendments necessitated a further reference of the draft Measure to the dioceses under Article 8 because the 'substance of the proposals embodied' in it had changed since the earlier diocesan reference.
5. The Group of Six has taken no view thus far about the implications of any particular amendments that might be made. So any statements now about what determination it might make are by their nature speculative.
6. Making 'substantial amendments' to the draft Measure does not mean the same thing as changing the 'substance of the proposals' embodied in it, though clearly there is some overlap. A change to the substance of the proposals would necessarily involve a substantial amendment. But whether a particular substantial amendment (such as the one envisaged by the Manchester DSM) constituted a change to the substance of the proposals would depend on the view taken by the Group of Six of what elements of the draft Measure constituted the 'substance of the proposals' embodied in it and whether the amendment in question changed the substance of the proposals.

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