

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

FIFTY FOURTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

1. The Standing Orders Committee ('the Committee') presents its 54th Report to the Synod.
2. Our membership for the current quinquennium is as follows:

Appointed members:

Mr Geoffrey Tattersall QC (Manchester) (Chair)
 The Revd Prebendary Simon Cawdell (Hereford)
 Mr David Coulston (Europe)
 Mrs Mary Durlacher (Chelmsford)
 Mr David Robilliard (Channel Islands)
 Mr Clive Scowen (London).

***Ex-officio* members:**

The Revd Canon Simon Butler (Prolocutor of the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury)
 The Ven. Cherry Vann, Archdeacon of Rochdale (Prolocutor of the Lower House of the Convocation of York)
 Dr Jamie Harrison (Chair of the House of Laity)
 Canon Elizabeth Paver (Vice-Chair of the House of Laity).

PART A: MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS TO THE STANDING ORDERS

Items 23 to 26: Standing Order 113 (Questions: content) and Standing Order 115 (Supplementary questions)

1. The Committee was informed that, as part of its review of the July 2018 group of sessions at its October meeting, the Business Committee had considered the effectiveness of the current arrangements for asking and answering Questions at groups of sessions and that, having done so, it proposed that they be amended in various respects. In particular, it invited the Committee to bring amendments to the Standing Orders for the Synod's approval that would have the effect of:
 - (a) removing the limit on the length of any answer to a supplementary question imposed by SO 116(4) (under which an answer should not normally exceed one minute);
 - (b) imposing a new limit of 150 words on original questions; and
 - (c) amending SO 115(4) so that it read "*A supplementary question must be strictly relevant to the original question or [not and] the answer given*" – thus relaxing the requirement in relation to the relevance of any supplementary question to the answer in respect of which it was asked.
2. Having considered these proposals, the Committee was not minded to support the removal of the current restriction on the length of answers to supplementary questions.

Rather, it took the view that, since the giving of long answers tended to slow down the pace of Question Time, Chairs should be encouraged to enforce the requirement of SO 116(4) in that respect, as that would improve its flow.

3. However, the Committee agreed that there should be a limit of 150 words on original questions, noting that at recent groups of sessions some questions had been unnecessarily long and complex and that as matters stood the Standing Orders did not provide any clear basis for rejecting them simply on account of that. It recognised that there might be exceptional cases which justified a departure from the normal rule and therefore believed that the Chair of the sitting ought to be given a discretion to allow a longer question.
4. **Items 23 and 25** give effect to these proposals.
5. Similarly, the Committee agreed that there was a case for relaxing the rule as regards the degree of relevance required of a supplementary question - for example, so that if an answer introduced new material a supplementary question could be asked which focused entirely on that. The Committee therefore agreed that SO 115(4) be amended so that it need only relate either to the original question or to the answer given.
6. **Item 26** gives effect to this proposal.
7. The Committee also considers that the mechanism for dealing with issues in relation to whether questions are in order, which is contained in SO 113(5), should be brought into line with that proposed for dealing with issues about the length of questions, with an issue of either kind being decided by the member nominated to act as Chair of Question Time, and by the Chair of the Business Committee only if a person has yet to be nominated to act as Chair. That proposal has the support of the Business Committee.
8. **Item 24** gives effect to this proposal.

Item 27: New Standing Order 120A (Representatives of Anglican Communion)

9. The Committee was informed by the Business Committee that difficulties had been encountered, under the Standing Orders in their present form, in giving effect to the Presidents' aim of allowing greater involvement by representatives of the Anglican Communion in the life of the Synod – something which the Presidents considered to be of benefit both to the Synod and the Communion. With a view to promoting such participation, the Presidents had invited four Anglican Primates to address the Synod in February (though in the event only three were able to attend) and again in July. The invitations had had to be given under SO 120, since at the moment that provided the only mechanism under which such invitations could be made.
10. The participation of those invited had been mutually beneficial, but its potential had not been entirely fulfilled, as a result of their not being able to participate in debates. The Presidents accordingly now asked that consideration be given to extending the role that invited representatives from the Anglican Communion could play in the life of the Synod, perhaps by giving them speaking rights of broadly the same kind as those enjoyed by representatives of other Churches under SO 121 (but so that it would be for the Presidents, rather than the Churches concerned, to identify the representatives). The aim would be that there should be a degree of continuity as to the identity of those to whom

invitations were given (not least because that was thought to be desirable from Synod's point of view) but that those invited should change over time.

11. The Committee accepted that SO 121 did not provide a mechanism for achieving the Presidents' objectives, since under that Standing Order responsibility for extending invitations lay with the Business Committee, and it was for the Church concerned to decide who should represent it.
12. However, the Committee considered that in other respects SO 121 provided a helpful template for arrangements of a kind that would achieve the Presidents' objective. In particular, it contained some mutually beneficial safeguards, by imposing certain general restrictions on the type of business on which representatives might speak and also by making their right to speak on any particular item of business dependent upon "prior arrangement" (a mechanism that was intended to avoid the ecumenical embarrassment that could otherwise arise if a representative stood to speak but was not called by the Chair). The Committee considered that if a provision relating to Anglican Communion representatives were drafted along similar lines, that should help to address any concerns about their speaking too often.
13. The Committee also considered it important that, if a new provision were introduced, it should be used in such a way as to ensure that the Synod was enabled to hear the full range of voices that existed within the Communion. However, it was reassured by its understanding that the intention would be to 'rotate' representation amongst the member Churches of the Communion.
14. The Committee therefore prepared a new provision along the lines proposed, under which the Presidents will be able to invite up to four representatives of other member Churches of the Anglican Communion to attend and speak at groups of sessions of the General Synod, with speaking rights corresponding to those enjoyed by ecumenical representatives under SO 121.
15. **Item 27** will give effect to this proposal.

Item 28: Standing Order 125 (Business Committee)

16. The Committee has considered the question of the 'two year rule' in the context of elections from the Synod, which are regulated by SOs 131 to 135.
17. SO 134(7) provides for the filling of casual vacancies occurring within two years of the last ordinary election to be conducted using the voting papers from the previous election. The Committee does not consider that to be appropriate in cases where the election is to a single office, not least since it means that, if there had only been two candidates and the successful candidate vacated the position within two years, the remaining candidate would be automatically elected to fill the vacancy, even if he or she had received no, or very few, votes.
18. The Committee noted that the House of Laity had amended its Standing Orders to exempt the election of its Chair and Vice-Chair from the 'two year rule' under SO 134(7), as had the Convocations of Canterbury and York in relation to elections of the Prolocutors of the Lower Houses.

19. In the light of that the Committee considered it important, given the significance of the role of the Chair of the Business Committee, that the ‘two year rule’ should not apply to any casual vacancy arising in that office. (In taking that view it was fortified by the fact that (by virtue of SO 125(4)) elections to that position are already exempt from the normal rule under SO 134(2) that a casual vacancy is not to be filled if the term of the outgoing office holder has less than 12 months to run.) It therefore proposes that SO 125(4) be amended so as to disapply SO 134(7) in the case of elections to fill a casual vacancy in the office of Chair of the Business Committee.
20. The Business Committee, which has been consulted about the proposal, supports it.
21. **Item 28** will therefore give effect to this proposal.

Item 29: Standing Order 134 (Elections: Casual vacancies)

22. The Committee also considered the application of the ‘two year’ rule in the context of elections by the Synod and its Houses more generally. The Committee can see the case for retaining its application in the case of casual vacancies that arise within two years of an ‘ordinary’ election to a body, since in those circumstances the use of the ballot papers for the ordinary election would give effect to the wishes of the electorate as expressed in relation to a wide range of candidates. However, it does not consider it to be desirable in the case of other casual vacancies, since to use the ballot papers for an election for what might have been a single vacancy, and in which there might have been a very limited number of candidates, might lead to an unrepresentative outcome – a situation which would be avoided if there were a fresh election, in which new candidates might emerge.
23. The Committee therefore proposes that, whilst the ‘two year rule’ should be maintained in relation to casual vacancies that arise within two years of the last ‘ordinary’ election to a body, it should no longer be applied to other casual vacancies. That proposal has the support of both the Elections Review Group and the Business Committee.
24. **Item 29** will therefore give effect to this proposal.

PART B: AMENDMENTS TO THE STANDING ORDERS RELATING TO THE CROWN NOMINATIONS COMMISSION

25. **Items 30 to 38** on the First Notice Paper will make amendments to the Standing Orders relating to the Crown Nominations Commission. They are being brought forward not by the Committee but on behalf of the Commission. The case for those amendments is set out in *Follow up to ‘Discerning in Obedience’: Proposed changes to the Standing Orders relating to the Crown Nominations Commission* (GS [----]).
26. The Committee has been consulted about the amendments and has no comments to make on them.

TIMING

27. If the amendments set out in the First Notice Paper are approved, they will all take effect on 24th February 2019 (ie after the end of the February group of sessions).

On behalf of the Committee:
Geoffrey Tattersall QC
Chair

January 2018