

GENERAL SYNOD**Elections Review Group****Report by the Business Committee****Summary**

This document provides an update on activity by the Elections Review Group of the Business Committee.

Introduction

1. The Elections Review Group of the Business Committee consists of the following members:
 - Mr Clive Scowen (Chair) (London)
 - Mrs Anne Foreman (Exeter)
 - Mr Philip French (Rochester)
 - The Revd Canon Geoffrey Harbord (Sheffield)
 - The Revd Canon Joyce Jones (Leeds)
2. The ERG met once in November 2018 to consider the following items:
 - Overview of online election pilot
 - Church Representation and Ministers Measure Electronic Voting: Special Amendments
 - Draft House of Laity Election Rules
 - By-elections and the two-year rule: reference from the Standing Orders Committee
 - Role of the General Synod Election Scrutineer

Overview of online election pilot

3. The pilot of the online election process was developed by the Electoral Reform Services (ERS). The pilot took place between September and November 2018. The system was piloted in four dioceses: Liverpool, London, Southwell and Nottinghamshire, and Winchester. These four dioceses were selected as they cover a broad range of different conditions; rural, urban, large, small, deprived and affluent which provides a good cross section of the electorate.
4. The pilot tested both the nominations process and the ballot process. There were 14 nominations, three from Liverpool, six from London, three from Southwell & Notts and two from Winchester. 234 people were invited to vote in the election and 153 votes were cast which is 65.38% of the electorate.

5. The feedback from the pilot was positive. The process was very intuitive, and it is expected that there would be limited training or support needed to roll this out across the Church.
6. The Group considered how the online process can replicate the signing of the nomination form by the proposer and seconder. The pilot used a process of implied consent, so the proposer or seconder had to email to decline their consent. This approach is a common process used by other clients and the Group proposed to the Business Committee that this should be used for the future system, meaning that the proposer and seconder would have implied consent and need to actively decline their support.
7. The Group recognised that there was a need for a longer process for engagement with Diocesan Secretaries and Presiding Officers around the online election system for elections to the new quinquennium, and this will be rolled out during 2019.

Review of Legislative Changes

8. The Group reviewed the proposed changes for the Church Representation and Ministers Measure to enable online elections to take place (see GS 2046BB for more details).
9. They considered the Draft House of Laity Election Rules, and they have suggested that the Group be given the additional responsibility of acting as a steering committee for the draft rules.
10. The Group received a reference from the Standing Orders Committee to consider a proposal to amend Standing Orders so that the two-year rule would no longer apply to the results of a by-election, with the consequence that any further casual vacancy within the ensuing two years would be filled by a fresh by-election rather than reusing the voting papers (see GS 2119 for more details).

Role of General Synod Election Scrutineer

11. The Group received a paper from John Allen, the current General Synod Election Scrutineer. He proposed that the role of Scrutineer should end with the current quinquennium. He argued that since the use of eSTV, the role of the Scrutineer has been less critical, and will become even less important with online elections.
12. The Group considered his proposal and agreed to recommend to the Business Committee that the role of the Scrutineer should be disbanded at the end of this quinquennium.

Clive Scowen

Chair of Elections Review Group

January 2019