

Handling of Questions in the Meeting of Synod Members on 11 July

1. The Business Committee has agreed to the following process in respect of the Questions that form part of the designated 'Question Time' sessions in July. Members should note that the usual Standing Orders¹ will still be used as a framework of these questions (even though it is not formally a session of the General Synod). This means that the following ground rules still apply:
 - Questions should be directed at one of the following
 - (a) the Chair of a House of the Synod;
 - (b) the Chair of the Archbishops' Council;
 - (c) the Chair of a committee of the Archbishops' Council to which members of the Synod are elected or appointed;
 - (d) subject to sub-paragraph (f), the Chair of a Church of England body on which the Synod is represented;
 - (e) on a matter concerning the Church Commissioners, one of the Church Estates Commissioners;
 - (f) on a matter concerning the Royal School of Church Music, the representative of the Synod on its Governing Council;
 - (g) the Chair of the Faith and Order Commission;
 - (h) the Chair of the Liturgical Commission;
 - (i) the Chair of the Legal Advisory Commission;
 - (j) the Secretary General;
 - (k) the Clerk.
 - A question to the Chair of a body referred to above must relate to the business of that body; or in the case of the Secretary General or the Clerk to his or her duties.
 - A question or supplementary question must not—
 - (a) contain argument or imputation, or (b) ask for an expression of opinion, including on a question of law, or for the solution of a hypothetical problem.
 - A member can ask up to 2 questions
 - A member can ask one supplementary question relating to his/her original question.
 - If a number of questions have been grouped and given a single Written Answer, then each of the Synod members who asked one of the original questions is entitled to ask one supplementary question to the single Written Answer.
 - Unless the Chair determines otherwise, no more than two supplementary questions may be asked in total in respect of each original question asked, with the exception of those questions which have been grouped and answered together (see above).

¹ SOs 112-116

- The member who asked the original question must have priority in asking the first supplementary question.
 - The same applies to those members who asked an original question which has been grouped into a single answer. In such cases, it is up to the discretion of the Chair which of the supplementary questions from those asking the original questions s/he takes first.
 - A supplementary question must be strictly relevant to the original question or the answer given or it will be ruled out of order by the Chair.
 - A transcript of the Question Times from July 2020 will be published in the usual way afterwards on the CofE website.
2. Questions should be submitted to questions@churchofengland.org by 12 noon on 30 June² - as staff still need the same amount of time to draft and clear answers as they would as if a formal Synod had been starting as previously scheduled on Friday 10 July.
 3. The Questions Notice Paper will be published by 10.00am on Wednesday 8 July.
 4. If a member wishes to ask a supplementary question it would greatly assist the orderly conduct of Question Time if he/she could email their question to questions@churchofengland.org by 10.00am on Friday 10 July. It will still be theoretically possible for supplementary questions to be asked during 'live' Question Time but please bear in mind the practical constraints of the Chair being able to call a questioner from over 400 participants. The Chair will, in any case, seek to give priority to the original questioner in line with the normal ground rules. Whether submitted in advance or not, the question should be no more than a minute in length (approx. 150 words), in order to accommodate as many questions as possible.
 5. Those questioners who go over the time limit when asking questions or who make a speech rather than asking a question will be muted by the Chair using the Zoom software.
 6. In framing their questions members are reminded to ask them in a civil manner, just as those answering are reminded to respect members' right to call various church bodies to account.

Jonathan Neil-Smith
Central Secretariat
9 June 2020

² SO 11 (3): Notice of a question for answer at a group of sessions, other than a question added under SO 4(3), must be delivered to the Clerk no later than 12 noon on the day which falls seven clear days before the first day of that group of sessions ["clear day", except in SO 114(1), does not include a Saturday or Sunday].