

GENERAL SYNOD

February 2021

QUESTIONS & WRITTEN ANSWERS

This paper lists written answers to questions submitted under Standing Orders 112-114 & 117. The Business Committee agreed on this occasion to exercise the provision under S.O. 117 to allow members the opportunity to give notice of questions for written answers between Groups of Sessions. The next Question Time also including a provision for supplementary questions will be at the next scheduled Group of Sessions (not, for the avoidance of doubt, at the webinar for Synod members on 27 February 2021).

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ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL

Mr David Lamming (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

Q1 In answer to a question (Q.23) from me in November 2020, Dr Jamie Harrison, answering on behalf of the Presidents, stated: "all complaints considered by core groups, and those brought under the CDM, are confidential." Please state where, in a Measure, Rules, Code of Practice or otherwise, the authority for this statement can be found.

Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Presidents of the Archbishops' Council:

A The House of Bishops' Practice Guidance: Responding to, assessing, and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers lists "*setting and maintaining boundaries of information sharing and confidentiality*" as one of the responsibilities of a core group (1.6.2). It refers (at 3.92) to confidentiality being required, and states that advice should be sought from the diocesan registrar and the DSA on what can be shared and with whom. The Clergy Discipline Measure (s.18(3)) and Rules (r.40) generally require tribunal hearings to take place in private. The Clergy Discipline Commission has issued statutory guidance (available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/legal-services/clergy-discipline/code-practice-and-other-guidance>) stating that while proceedings are under way they should be confidential (subject to limited exceptions relating to suspension and media attention). The statutory guidance states that penalties that are imposed following an admission or finding of misconduct should, however, be made public.

HOUSE OF BISHOPS

Mr Andrew Presland (Peterborough) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q2 Given the Archbishops' recent reminder in the *Spectator* that each diocese is its own legal and charitable entity and makes its own decisions, and that the implementation of the national vision and strategy will therefore depend in practice upon the extent to which it resonates with dioceses' own visions and strategies, to what extent will the Implementation Group be encouraging dioceses to reflect upon what can be learned about pro-actively engaging with people affected at a local level from past attempts to make organisational changes, such as mergers of Church of England dioceses, local government restructuring and the Beeching rail reforms?

The Archbishop of York to reply as Vice-Chair of the House of Bishops:

A This Vision and Strategy work is all about inviting the whole Church of England at every level to share with us in this work of renewal as we re-centre our lives on Christ, truly working together as the Body of Christ, and of finding the way forward that will best serve our nation. This is why we have included people at the local level throughout our consultation period in developing the vision and strategy. As this work is developed, we are certainly encouraging dioceses to talk and discuss the outcomes at the local level of parish and deanery. From the start we have been clear that this is not a 'top-down' exercise but the invitation is for us all to share together, at every level, in God's work for us in the next ten years.

Mr Andrew Presland (Peterborough) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q3 In what ways is the existing priority of promoting whole-life Christianity through *Setting God's People Free* expected to be taken forward through the development and implementation of the Vision & Strategy?

The Archbishop of York to reply as Vice-Chair of the House of Bishops:

A *Setting God's People Free* is key to the development of a Church of missionary disciples which is one of the three strategic priorities. This will enable a Church where all God's people are set free and empowered and enabled to live the Christian life in and for the world, shaped by the five marks of mission.

The Director of SGPF has been co-chair of the Missionary Disciples sub-group. The plans include enabling every church community to become a place where people are envisioned, trained and equipped for ministry and mission in the whole of their life. So much of this will be about carrying forward the implementation of recommendations in *Setting God's People Free* to empower the whole people of God, to serve the whole mission of God in the whole of life.

Mr Chris Gill (Lichfield) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q4 In recent years the Church of England has taken to establishing a large number of Church Plants and Fresh Expressions in buildings other than those they have owned, often because it is more appropriate accommodation and better placed for mission. Many of these require a certain amount of spend on the building and generally require a long-term commitment. On the other hand, an increasing amount of our own buildings are found to be unsuitable or insufficiently flexible for use in Mission and often are not in the best location for our work. Trying to adapt or sell off buildings for better use, where they are considered to have architectural or historical significance, takes up a considerable amount of resources. What consideration has the House of Bishops given to the way in which they can release the burden of our historical building stock in order to deploy more resources for mission?

The Bishop of Manchester to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The majority of our 16,000 church buildings continue to serve the communities of England as they were designed to do. They are at the heart of being 'A Christian presence in every community'. It is true that some are now in the wrong place or contain features that make mission and worship difficult, and need to close. It is also true that in some places caring for the building places a disproportionate burden on parishes. However in many places historic buildings are part of what is on offer – places of beauty, contemplation and service. The House of Bishops, along with representatives of other NCIs, is considering buildings issues as part of the ongoing work on Emerging Church, including developing a strategic approach to assessing the

potential of buildings, offering new building management approaches, reviewing the Faculty system, and improving closure and pastoral organisation processes to reduce administrative burdens on parishes.

Mr Chris Gill (Lichfield) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q5 Whilst many of our Diocesan functions are run efficiently and effectively and are probably best managed at the “local” level, it has been suggested that there are some functions which could be more effectively managed at a national level and which would provide more consistency across the national Church. Safeguarding has been suggested as one, clergy ministerial review another and maybe there are others. What consideration has the House of Bishops, or other of our bodies and councils, given to whether functions currently managed at a Diocesan level ought to be managed at a different level (National, Regional, Deanery or Parish)?

The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The work on Transforming Effectiveness is part of the Emerging Church of England body of work and therefore is regularly considered by the House of Bishops, Archbishops’ Council and Church Commissioners.

It is focused on the practical ways the Church is organised and gets things done that enable the local church to flourish, interrogating everything using three questions: Does this enable the flourishing of the local church, and/or the networked forms of mission, and/or does this make the Church of England more coherent and effective in its national role?

In our scoping so far a number of areas have been suggested by dioceses that could work better by being done once, and we are just beginning a further piece of scoping work to identify which functions dioceses would most value being done once rather than individually in each diocese.

Dr Mike Lawes (Rochester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q6 In the light of General Synod's decision (GS 2159) to call upon all parts of the Church of England to work to achieve year-on-year reductions in carbon emissions and urgently examine what would be required to reach net zero emissions by 2030 in order that a plan of action can be drawn up to achieve that target; what reduction is estimated to have been achieved by the Church of England during the restrictions on our activities over the last year, and how might this reduction inform the proposed plan of action?

The Bishop of Salisbury to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The reduction in energy use due to COVID-related closures cannot yet be estimated. Figures for 2020 church energy use will be entered into the Energy Footprint Tool throughout spring and summer 2021, and analysed this autumn.

However, the recent analysis of the first year of EFT data shows that in 2019 we had achieved a 12.5% reduction compared to 2006 levels, and that 5% of churches are net zero (generally due to electric heating and a 100% renewable electricity tariff).

It was not in any way the intention of GS 2159 that net zero carbon be achieved by restricting our activities. Instead, we seek ways for churches to thrive whilst being more efficient. Reducing heat loss, swapping to low-carbon heating, and renewable tariffs mean we can fulfil the 5th mark of mission, to care for creation, whilst still fulfilling the other four. See GS Misc 1262.

Mr Richard Denno (Liverpool) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q7 Has the House of Bishops let the UK government know of the House's opposition to making abortion pills by post – brought in during the pandemic – permanent?

The Bishop of Carlisle to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The Mission and Public Affairs Council has submitted a response on behalf of the Church of England to the DHSC consultation on 'Home use of both pills for early medical abortion'.

Mr Richard Denno (Liverpool) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q8 Could the House of Bishops give details of their response to the UK government consultation "Home use of both pills for early medical abortion"?

The Bishop of Carlisle to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A In its response to the DHSC consultation on 'Home use of both pills for early medical abortion', the Mission and Public Affairs Council highlighted concerns with regard to safety, dissemination of accurate information, consent, privacy, potential coercion and safeguarding of vulnerable girls and women as well as potential adverse effects on NHS services, and recommended that the current temporary approval be time limited for two years or end when the temporary provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 expires, whichever is earlier.

The Revd Dr Andrew Atherstone (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q9 What range of practical and legal options concerning the distribution of holy communion in individual cups was considered by the House of Bishops on 19 January 2021? Please give full details.

The Bishop of Lichfield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The result of the discussions at the House is recorded in the press release issued on 19 January. The House considered three propositions in respect of the administration and reception of Holy Communion in individual cups. The first two of these reiterated the existing teaching that Holy Communion received in one kind is sufficient, with the form of simultaneous administration available for those who cannot in good conscience receive in one kind. The third proposition would have signalled the House's intention to introduce the liturgical and legislative business that would have enabled individual cups for Holy Communion to be used lawfully in the longer term. The House did not assent to any of these propositions.

The Revd Dr Andrew Atherstone (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q10 When will the House publish the full response from the Legal Advisory Commission to the Legal Opinion from six barristers concerning individual cups at holy communion, which was circulated to the House of Bishops in August 2020?

The Bishop of Lichfield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The Legal Advisory Commission prepared an Addendum to its existing opinion *Holy Communion: Administration of the Sacrament* (2011) for the benefit of the House of Bishops. While the Addendum touches upon issues raised in the barristers' opinion, it was not intended as a direct response to that opinion. The Commission decides which of its opinions it 'stars' for publication. It has not starred the Addendum.

Mrs Mary Durlacher (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q11 After many months when Holy Communion in one kind only has been the required practice and as churches make plans to reopen when the current lockdown restrictions ease, please would the House of Bishops Recovery Group give an indication of how soon the current period of "*deep reflection on our practices, as all members of the Church seek to respond to changing circumstances and the spiritual needs that emerge from them.*" may translate into action, and let local incumbents in consultation with their PCCs decide the most appropriate method of safe distribution of both bread and wine for Holy Communion, (fulfilling thereby both the *principle* that "exceptional actions may be acceptable in order to preserve a greater principle (Footnote 1, p5 of '**Some Guidance on the Celebration of Holy Communion**') and the *reality* that "Clergy, mindful of the centrality of Holy Communion to the life of the Church, are approaching the present situation in different ways" – as stated in **Different approaches and their implications.**

The Bishop of Lichfield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A Because of the complexity of the issues at stake, the House of Bishops has committed itself to further study before it comments again on these matters. Clergy and PCCs who wish to celebrate Holy Communion at this time do have two options in relation to the safe distribution of the consecrated elements:

- reception under the form of bread alone;
- reception in both kinds by simultaneous administration, for those who cannot in good conscience receive in one kind.

These 'exceptional actions' and 'different ways' allow us to continue receiving the Sacrament, the 'greater principle', until such time as it is safe for us to resume doing so according to the historic practice of the Church of England.

Mrs Andrea Minichiello Williams (Chichester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q12 Given the Revd Graham Roberts' testimony in *Living in Love and Faith* of moving away from same sex temptation, will the House of Bishops withdraw its support of the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy, which this Synod endorsed in July 2017 with the Private Member's Motion GS 2070A, condemning so-called "conversion therapy", including calling on the government to ban it, for those wanting to move away from their same sex desires?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A No, the House of Bishops will not withdraw its support of the Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy. In the words of the LLF book (pages 48-49) the purpose of the LLF story films is to "call us to be courageously honest about the diversity that exists among the people of God in the Church of England." Their purpose is not to use them either as a means of validating a particular way or path of life, or as the sole means by which the Church arrives at a Christian ethic of sexuality. "They can help us to follow the way of Christ, in being truly human in our deliberations and learning and discernment [...] They are there to deepen our desire to be more Christlike in our life together as individuals and as a Church."

Mrs Andrea Minichiello Williams (Chichester) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q13 Has the House of Bishops considered whether a marriage where one party is transgender, and therefore the same birth sex as their partner, is a same sex marriage and therefore unlawful according to Canon Law, specifically Canon B.30?

The Bishop of London to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The House has not discussed this matter.

As a matter of law, a trans person may marry in church on the basis of an ‘acquired gender’ under the Gender Recognition Act 2004, but section 5B of the Marriage Act 1949 provides an opt-out from solemnizing a marriage where the clergy person reasonably believes one of the parties to be of the acquired gender. The House has accordingly left the matter to individual members of the clergy and has not expressed a view or given any guidance on this.

The Pastoral Advisory Group has considered the position if a partner in a heterosexual marriage subsequently transitions and concluded that they could see no circumstances in which the Church would insist that a couple was morally obliged to divorce.

Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q14 What is the House of Bishops’ policy on the eligibility for ordination of candidates who indicate that they seek a change in the doctrine of Marriage, or who do not assent to or affirm the Church’s teaching on human sexuality through their teaching or witness?

The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A All candidates during the discernment process are asked to give assurance that they have read the House of Bishops Statement *Issues in Human Sexuality* and they are willing to live according to its guidelines. This document states in the Preface that it does not claim ‘to be the last word on the subject’. The Living in Love and Faith process invites the whole Church, including clergy, to contribute to and learn from the diversity of views that currently exist in relation to the Church’s teaching on human sexuality and marriage.

Mr Sam Margrave (Coventry) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q15 What percentage of those who are a) recommended for ordained ministry and b) are being ordained; seek to change the doctrine of the church on same sex marriage?

The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A In the Declaration of Assent clergy are required at ordination and every time they take up a new post to declare their 'belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness'. Bishops are responsible for upholding the faith and doctrine of the church. No statistics are gathered on those who seek to change the doctrine of the church on same sex marriage or on any other matter of doctrine.

Mr Adrian Greenwood (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q16 Has the House (and/or College) of Bishops considered in depth the issues surrounding the culture of clericalism which have been identified in several recent Reports including *Setting God's People Free* (GS 2056), *Kingdom Calling* (GS Misc 1254) and those issued by IICSA? If so, what conclusions have been reached and what actions have been agreed to be taken to address these issues? If not, when will the House or College consider these issues?

The Bishop of Gloucester to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The House has considered SGPF and IICSA and continues to hold the recommendations in these reports as priorities for implementation. The Faith and Order Commission report *Kingdom Calling* will continue to be drawn upon in discussions around forming the whole Church as missionary disciples and the role lay ministry plays in this as the Church both gathered and sent. The House has not discussed 'clericalism' as a discrete issue, however, the diagnosis of the problem this poses in the culture of the Church is acknowledged and full support is given to implementing recommendations to address this.

Mr Nigel Bacon (Lincoln) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q17 Has the House of Bishops studied and, if so, what conclusions has it drawn, regarding (a) the prevalence of bullying of clergy by laity and (b) measures to improve the support provided to the victims of such bullying?

The Bishop of Hereford to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A We have not considered it as a House, but I am sure that I speak for my fellow bishops when I say that we are all concerned about the impact on clergy wellbeing of bullying by some lay people and we are aware that bullying of clergy is an issue, even though we do not have figures about its prevalence and compiling reliable figures would be difficult.

We encourage any clergy who feel they are being bullied to contact their diocesan bishop so that they can receive appropriate assistance, support, and advice. An increasing number of dioceses have Employee Assistance Programmes which enable clergy to access confidential counselling and support, if clergy do not wish to involve the Bishop. Many dioceses adopt a Dignity at Work policy, which helps to promote a culture of mutual respect and kindness throughout the diocese.

The Revd Canon David Banting (Chelmsford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q18 In view of the postponement from February to April of the Implementation and Dialogue Group's Report's publication and the House of Bishops' Presentation and debate of its issues and recommendations, what now is the timetable for this Report and debate and for any assistance the House can offer to ensure that its continuing importance is respected and not squeezed or minimised for all those most closely concerned?

The Bishop of Rochester to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A There had been a strong desire for this Report to come to Synod when in-person engagement could be possible. The continued pandemic has made this impossible, but the House of Bishops has continued in discussion about the Report and its dissemination. Those

discussions focus around how the Report can be as useful as possible to the Church, given that some of the original research is now dated and further questions and experience are of course emerging.

The timetable for taking this Report forward will be clearer as these discussions continue in the context of planning for future meetings of Synod.

The Revd Canon Dr Judith Maltby (Universities & TEs) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q19 Would you please provide a comprehensive overview for Synod as to how the Interim Scheme for Victim Restitution is progressing?

The Bishop of Huddersfield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The interim support scheme, approved in outline by the Archbishops' Council in autumn 2020, is designed to enable the Church to improve its response to eligible current and non-current survivors of Church-related abuse where the victim or survivor is known to be in seriously distressed circumstances. The scheme has operated on a pilot basis since October 2020. To date more than 20 survivors have applied to the scheme and more than a dozen have received pastoral and financial support. The Church will continue to learn and develop from experience and will take into account any lessons learned from this support scheme as it develops a wider menu of options for restorative practice working with key stakeholders, including survivors.

The Revd Canon Simon Talbott (Ely) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q20 Are there any guidelines provided to Bishops and clergy about managing their relationships with those whose PTO have been withdrawn for safeguarding reasons, to avoid those of known risk, being held out as safe and endorsed by the Church of England?

The Bishop of Huddersfield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A There are two policy documents relevant to PTO and safeguarding:
1. The HoB Policy on Granting Permission to Officiate, July 2018.

2. The HoB Safeguarding Practice Guidance: Safer Recruitment, Permission to Officiate.

These documents do not address the specific point raised; they do make it clear that when Bishops grant PTO, they must do so in line with safer recruitment principles.

There is a requirement for the Bishop to inform the Archbishops' Council of the withdrawal of PTO so that the National Ministry Register can be updated. Incumbents and priests in charge are not permitted to invite clergy to officiate in their churches unless they have PTO or other authority to officiate. The National Ministry Register should be consulted by incumbents etc. in order to discover whether a particular member of the clergy has the necessary authority to officiate in the Church of England.

Mrs Kat Alldread (Derby) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q21 Can you please provide your best estimate, to date and to finality, of what the abuse of John Smyth QC has cost the Church of England?

The Bishop of Huddersfield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A There is no measure that can estimate the true impact of the horrific abuse conducted by John Smyth on victims/survivors and the Church of England. What is important is that we listen to the findings of the Makin review and ensure we work together to improve our Safeguarding practices across the Church to ensure this cannot happen again. As with any Independent Review, there is always a financial cost, but this has to be balanced with establishing the truth and listening to the voices of victims and survivors.

Mrs Kat Alldread (Derby) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q22 What is the current projected date for the publication of the Makin review into the abuse committed by John Smyth?

The Bishop of Huddersfield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The Makin review into John Smyth has received a considerable amount of new information, both written and verbal, which has all required careful examination and analysis. New sources of information continue to arrive, making any definite estimation as to

the likely completion date of the review difficult to establish. Additionally, the Covid restrictions are meaning that interviews which are very sensitive in their nature and can only be conducted face to face, have been delayed.

An update on timings last year noted that publication had moved 'into 2021', it is now likely that the completion of the report will be mid-summer 2021 at the earliest. Following that, there will be a need to ensure that the report is legally sound and that people who may be directly referenced will have had the opportunity to comment on those references.

The Revd Valerie Plumb (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the House of Bishops:

Q23 Are there any guidelines or protocols which apply to the NST which assist members to determine whether a senior figure is subject to an independent investigation collating all evidence, or simply an administrative review of historic papers and procedures?

The Bishop of Huddersfield to reply on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops:

A The NST applies the House of Bishop Practice Guidance: *Responding to, assessing, and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers* to safeguarding allegations against senior figures as it would with any Church Officer. The guidance states that "the complexity and variety of the lines of enquiry will be determined by the specifics of an individual case", this will be reviewed and determined by the core group. Each allegation is considered on its own merits depending on the specifics but this objective principle, outlined in the guidance, is applied in every case.

SECRETARY GENERAL

Mr Martin Sewell (Rochester) to ask the Secretary General:

Q24 Could you please provide for Synod members the latest position in relation to the complaint about Church CDM processes which was addressed to the Charity Commission by a wide range of signatories in August 2020?

Mr William Nye to reply as the Secretary General:

A The Charity Commission was in touch with me in August 2020 following the open letter of 11 August 2020. A meeting took place between the Charity Commission and Archbishops' Council staff and trustees in the autumn of 2020. As requested, I provided information to the Charity Commission on safeguarding policies and proposed improvements. The Charity Commission was grateful for this information and was reassured by the steps the charity is taking to address the concerns raised in the open letter of 11 August 2020 to the Chair of the Commission. It was agreed that conversations between the Charity Commission and the Archbishops' Council would continue as improvements and changes to safeguarding policies are made.

Mr David Lamming (St Edmundsbury & Ipswich) to ask the Secretary General:

Q25 In answer to a supplementary question from me in July 2020 relating to Q.20, the Bishop of Huddersfield, Dr Jonathan Gibbs, stated "the NST is currently reviewing the functioning of core groups with a view to revising the guidance and clarifying their operation," and in answer to a supplementary question by Mrs Kathryn Tucker (Q.23) he said "it is vitally important that the respondents should be properly represented, they have full understanding of the allegations made against them and they have opportunity to respond to those. That is a basic issue of justice... respondents must be properly represented in order that they have a full chance to respond to any allegations." (Report of Proceedings, July 2020, pages 25-27). Dr Gibbs further stated in answer to a supplementary question from the Revd Canon Rosie Harper, "we are proposing to introduce fairly soon new guidance on the conduct of core groups." (ibid, page 28). Further, in the written answer to a question (Q.79) from Mr Martin Sewell in

November 2020 you stated: “Work to update the core group policy and guidance will include consideration of whether an appeal system, or a dedicated complaint system, should be included.”

In the light of these answers, please inform Synod of the work done (and by whom) since November to update the current core group policy and guidance, stating what (if any) provision has been or is proposed to be included, or is under consideration, to provide respondents with both the right to be represented at all core group meetings by a person of their choice and a right of appeal against core group determinations.

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A Two workstreams are underway:

1. The revision of the *Responding to, assessing and managing safeguarding concerns or allegations against church officers* guidance which sets out the core group’s role. The NST, in consultation with representatives from dioceses and a cathedral, is exploring the questions posed through a series of workshops, involving representatives from dioceses and cathedrals.
2. The undertaking of two workshops involving the Legal Office, the NST and a Bishop’s Chaplain to specifically review the function of core groups in the kinds of cases the NST works with.

We anticipate that draft policy should be ready by summer 2021 for wider consultation. It will address how core groups may better factor in the respondent’s views and concerns taking account of the group’s role.

The policy will make clear that it is the role of core groups to identify, mitigate and manage the risk in any situation; it is not its role to try to establish guilt or innocence.

The Revd Canon Simon Talbott (Ely) to ask the Secretary General:

Q26 Do the contractual retainers of our professional advisors, negotiated with the Church’s professional advisors, contain any provision to ensure ethical behaviour in accordance with the Church’s values and public pronouncements?

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A In July 2018 the National Church Institutions adopted a procurement policy and a supplier code of conduct which apply to the procurement of professional services as well as to other types of procurement. These documents emphasise that staff engaged in procurement must consider the social and economic impact of procurement and that suppliers need to comply with best ethical practice as well as legal requirements. Prospective service providers are given the code of conduct and a questionnaire for completion. Areas that are specifically asked about before a procurement decision is made include health and safety, sustainable procurement, equal opportunities, anti-slavery and human trafficking, compliance with GDPR, payment of a living wage, anti-fraud measures and compliance with the NCIs' Supplier Code of Conduct. The procurement team seek and obtain evidence from suppliers that they operate in accordance with our expectations.

Mr Nigel Bacon (Lincoln) to ask the Secretary General:

Q27 Has consideration been given to changing the interval for elections to General Synod from five to six years, thus allowing the timing to be held in a consistent relationship with that for diocesan synod elections and the six-yearly preparation of new electoral rolls?

Mr William Nye to reply as Secretary General:

A There has not been any consideration of this to date. Section 1(2) of the Church of England Convocations Act 1966 sets out that the Convocations stand dissolved at the expiration of five years from the date on which they are called together unless dissolved by the monarch on an earlier date. The General Synod is automatically dissolved on the dissolution of the Convocations. To extend the lifetime of Synod to six years as a default, the Church of England Convocations Act 1966 would need to be amended.

CLERK TO THE SYNOD

Ms Sophie Mitchell (Church of England Youth Council) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q28 What active efforts are being made to ensure that there will be youth representation in the next quinquennium?

Dr Jacqui Philips to reply as Clerk to the Synod:

A The Business Committee is well aware of the need to increase the youth representation on Synod in the next Quinquennium. Promotional materials encouraging younger people to stand for Synod - including a short film - were being prepared prior to the postponement of the elections to the new Synod in 2020. Work is now underway to revise these materials and to make them ready for release in the summer of 2021. These materials will be made available on the Church of England website and related social media accounts and will also be available for use by dioceses who wish to encourage younger candidates to stand for election in their dioceses.

Dr Mike Lawes (Rochester) to ask the Clerk to the Synod:

Q29 In view of The Corporation of Church House and its subsidiary allowing the use of its premises for activity which advertises and promotes gambling, are steps being taken to distance and dissociate the General Synod from the decision to allow Church House to be used for such purposes?

Dr Jacqui Philips to reply as Clerk to the Synod

A The Corporation of Church House is established by Royal Charter. It is permitted to manage its business as it thinks fit and expedient in order to fulfil its stated purpose of owning and maintaining Church House for the use of the National Church Institutions. The Conference Centre is held to the same Ethical Letting Policy as all other tenants of Church House and the recent boxing booking passed the Ethical Letting Policy as the Hirer (Queensberry Promotions) did not fall foul of any of the conditions in the policy, their main income coming from BT Sport. However, following representations from Synod members, two further boxing matches, to be held under the same conditions as the previous ones, have since been refused by the Corporation.

NATIONAL SOCIETY COUNCIL

Canon Dr Addy Lazz-Onyenobi (Manchester) to ask the Chair of the National Society Council:

Q30 According to the records, one in four primary and one in sixteen secondary schools in the country are Church of England schools and there are more than 47,000 Church of England schools, nationally. How many of Heads of these Church of England Schools are from UKME background?

The Bishop of Durham to reply as Chair of the National Society Council:

A The government's school workforce data shows that:

- 85.7% of all teachers in state-funded schools in England were White British (where ethnicity was known)
- there were around 22,400 headteachers in 2019, and over two-thirds of those (around 15,100) were women
- 96.1% of female headteachers were White (92.6% White British, 1.7% White Irish, and 1.8% White Other)
- 97.0% of male headteachers were White (92.9% White British, 2.1% White Irish, and 2.0% White Other)

There are just under 4,700 Church of England schools. We do not collect any Church school workforce data nationally but are working with the DfE to ascertain the data for Church schools to inform the work we are doing to promote opportunity, justice and equity in teacher recruitment and headship appointments.

MINISTRY COUNCIL

Ms Jayne Ozanne (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q31 What steps have been taken in the recent revision of the discernment process to ensure that those selecting future clergy fully represent the diversity of the Church, especially with respect to gender and sexuality?

The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A The guidance notes sent to all Bishops on appointing Bishops' Advisers for Discernment for the new Shared Discernment Process, in December 2020, emphasised ensuring a diverse cohort of Bishops' Advisers. Bishops were invited to include in their cohort 'A balance of men and women, and those who do not define their gender in binary terms'.

Mrs Sarah Finch (London) to ask the Chair of the Ministry Council:

Q32 Given that at present there is only one place for a lay person on the Council, what steps, if any, is the Council taking to increase the number of places available for lay people on the Council?

The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich to reply as Chair of the Ministry Council:

A There are currently four lay members. In accordance with the Terms of Reference of the Ministry Council these are; one elected from the House of Laity, the Chair of the Archbishops' Council Finance Committee, the Chair of the Ministry Division Finance Panel, and one co-opted member.

In addition, there are two roles which could have lay incumbents but currently do not; a theologian not on the staff of a theological college or course, and a person with significant experience in the area of selection and/or professional development and/or leadership development.

MISSION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Mr Adrian Greenwood (Southwark) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q33 Please could the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council summarise the response by the Church of England to the recent consultation carried out by the Law Commission on possible reforms to the law governing the conduct of weddings, focussing particularly on issues of dignity and solemnity of the ceremony, commensurate with the huge public importance of marriage to the flourishing of society and the nurture of children?

Mr Mark Sheard to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A The Law Commission's on-line consultation posed c.150 questions relating to their 500-page report.

We commented that, by addressing the law around weddings without considering the question of marriage, the proposals were conceptually flawed. The Commission's approach led them to conclude that the state should, in effect, support a deregulated market of wedding celebrants and venues. Consequently, the Commission's stated desire that weddings must be "dignified" would be undermined by its own recommendations.

We noted, *inter alia*, that commercialisation of the wedding ceremony was undesirable; that the public nature of marriage necessitated that weddings should not be held behind closed doors; and that the report's definition of a "religious group" for the purpose of licensing celebrants was inadequate. We suggested that the present ban on all religious content in civil weddings should be eased to permit Christian or other religious references that were, for instance, taken from literature rather than liturgy.

Canon Peter Bruinvels (Guildford) to ask the Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

Q34 After having debated the Armed Forces in General Synod with both Archbishops then signing the Armed Forces Covenant in February 2015 and many Dioceses including Guildford, Lichfield and Portsmouth subsequently signing their own Covenants; when might we have a debate in Synod to celebrate the successful partnership of the Military and the NHS fighting COVID-19 and to review progress to date with the operation of the Armed Forces Covenant?

Mr Mark Sheard to reply as Chair of the Mission and Public Affairs Council:

A Cooperation between the NHS and armed forces (and other agencies) in combating COVID-19 is greatly to be welcomed.

It is encouraging that the General Synod debate in 2015 and the subsequent signing of an Armed Forces Covenant by both Archbishops has led several dioceses, including those mentioned, to sign their own Armed Forces Covenant. A review of this activity when

the dioceses (and the NCIs) have the staff capacity and energy to take on new work might well prove useful in documenting progress and sharing best practice.

Whether or not to hold a Synod debate is, of course, a matter for the Business Committee.

CLERGY DISCIPLINE COMMISSION

Ms Katherine Tucker (Bath & Wells) to ask the Chair of the Clergy Discipline Commission:

Q35 The Church appoints investigators to inquire into CDM complaints. Is there a published national list of those who may be instructed, which contains a CV of those authorised and approved?

Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Clergy Discipline Commission:

A Complaints under the CDM are investigated by the Designated Officer, a barrister or solicitor employed in the Legal Office of the Archbishops' Council. The CDM allows the Designated Officer to delegate his investigation to another individual and this has happened twice since the Measure came into force.

Ms Katherine Tucker (Bath & Wells) to ask the Chair of the Clergy Discipline Commission:

Q36 What mechanism exists to evaluate and review the integrity and competence of those instructed to act as investigators into CDM so that standards may be established and maintained?

Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Clergy Discipline Commission:

A The current Designated Officer is a barrister (as was his predecessor) and holds a practising certificate. Barristers are regulated by the Bar Standards Board and are subject to a code of conduct, continuing professional development requirements, and a professional disciplinary regime. As an employee of the NCI he takes part in a yearly Performance and Development Review.

The Revd Valerie Plumb (Oxford) to ask the Chair of the Clergy Discipline Commission:

Q37 What guidelines, rules or protocols exist to ensure consistency in practice on the issue of determining which respondents to CDM complaints have their cases processed in anonymity until determination, and which are placed in the public domain?

Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Clergy Discipline Commission:

A The Clergy Discipline Commission's statutory guidance (available at <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/legal-services/clergy-discipline/code-practice-and-other-guidance>) sets out the practice that is to be followed in relation to publicity and complaints under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003. The guidance states, "*while a complaint is under way, there is normally no good reason for the Church to disclose publicly the existence or details of a complaint, and the proceedings should be confidential.*" The guidance goes on to say that there are two situations where it should be disclosed that a complaint has been made. One is where a cleric is suspended and an explanation needs to be given to the local congregation. The other is where the media already know a complaint has been made and seek confirmation from the diocese. In the latter case, the details of the complaint should not be made public at that stage.

Mr Martin Sewell (Rochester) to ask the Chair of the Clergy Discipline Commission:

Q38 Pending overall structural reform of disciplinary processes, has any provisional step been taken by way of guidance, protocol, exercise of discretion or alteration of contractual terms, to prevent perceived conflicts of interest on the part of legal and other professional advisers undermining confidence in the Church's disciplinary processes?

Dr Jamie Harrison to reply on behalf of the Chair of the Clergy Discipline Commission.

A The CDM Code of Practice contains guidance on dealing with conflicts of interest amongst those administering the Measure. The Commission is aware of the importance of this issue and will keep the area under review. The ongoing reform of the disciplinary process is wide ranging and will include consideration of conflicts and how they are resolved.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

The Revd Canon Giles Goddard (Southwark) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q39 What evidence is there that the Church Commissioners' engagement with ExxonMobil is producing results, in terms of alignment with the carbon reduction targets agreed in Paris in 2015?

Loretta Minghella to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A We recently escalated our engagement with Exxon, supporting an activist approach led by a new (Environmental, Social and Governance) ESG-focused fund, Engine No.1, in collaboration with US pension fund CalSTRS (California State Teachers' Retirement System). The campaign launched in December, highlighting poor financial performance and capital allocation, refusal to diversify or meaningfully tackle climate change and plans to significantly increase production. The campaign nominated four alternative directors to the board with far greater experience in energy transition and innovation than the existing board, aiming to drive a change in strategy that would see Exxon play its full part in the energy transition.

Since the launch Exxon has:

- set [new emissions targets](#) for 2025 with greater scope and ambition;
- published their scope 3 emissions for the first time;
- announced a new [Low Carbon Solutions](#) division, to commercialise Carbon Capture & Storage; and

- [appointed](#) the ex-CEO of Petronas to the board to provide greater energy and transition expertise.

These developments demonstrate progress, but more is required; we are committed to pushing for further transformation to achieve alignment with the Paris goals.

Ms Kathy Winrow (Oxford) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q40 Given that the board of ExxonMobil blocked resolutions on climate change from the Church Commissioners from being considered at its AGMs in 2019 and 2020, what reasons do the Church Commissioners have for continuing to engage with ExxonMobil, what criteria do they have for deciding when to divest from ExxonMobil, and how much have they now lost by not divesting from ExxonMobil five years ago?

Loretta Minghella to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A Considering Exxon's stance on climate change the Commissioners are supporting an activist approach pushing for a change in board leadership. [The campaign](#) has nominated four [alternate directors](#) with greater willingness to embrace the energy transition and superior energy expertise than current members.

Marrying [concerns](#) over poor returns and strategy with a failure to tackle climate change to highlight the need for a transformation driven by new leadership is an industry first, with positive sector-wide repercussions. (See response to Giles Goddard - Question 39 - for progress.)

As requested by Synod, the NIBs require fossil fuel companies to align with a well below 2 degrees scenario by 2023. A number of energy companies are likely to fail [additional interim criteria](#) this year.

The Commissioners have not had one continuous holding in Exxon over the last five years; our external managers adjust their positions through time, therefore a single return figure cannot be disclosed. The Commissioners' public equity investments, in aggregate, have delivered strong, above benchmark, returns over the last five years despite a volatile market environment.

The Revd Mark Bratton (Coventry) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q41 Given that Shell has announced that, although 2019 was its year of maximum oil production, it is still planning to increase its gas production by more than 20% in the next few years, what plans do each of the NIBs have to engage with Shell and challenge them on this and also ask them what they are doing to help communities in Nigeria that have been devastated by oil spills resulting from their operations?

Loretta Minghella to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The National Investing Bodies (NIBs) have continued to engage robustly with companies on their approach to climate change and it is clear that engagement with Shell has resulted in significant advances in the company response.

The Pensions Board leads for the NIBs on engagement with Shell and will be engaging with the company on its strategy including any increase in gas production. The recent Shell strategy announcement will be independently assessed by the Transition Pathway Initiative (TPI) which underpins the global investor engagement initiative Climate Action 100+ on behalf of which the NIBs' engagement is also undertaken. That assessment will inform any judgment of the latest Net Zero commitment.

The NIBs have previously been part of collaborative engagement by investors with Shell related to Nigeria. We have noted the recent outcome of legal proceedings and are awaiting the outcome of the Bayelsa Commission led by the former Archbishop of York.

Mrs Tina Nay (Chichester) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q42 The Church Commissioners are significant landowners and this, of itself, presents built development opportunities, mainly in the form of new housing. What experience does the Commissioners' team have of creating new, ambitious and genuinely sustainable communities which seek to address this country's housing shortage?

Loretta Minghella to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Commissioners have a well-qualified internal strategic land team and sufficient land at present with the potential to bring forward around 28,500 new homes including 8,600 affordable homes across England.

By way of example of the team's work, in 2020 an extensive programme of stakeholder, council and public engagement, including engagement with the local church and diocese, culminated in the preparation of a framework masterplan for Commissioners' land near Chichester. This new community adjacent to Barnham will ultimately deliver 4,300 homes, including new affordable homes, two new local centres, two primary schools, community halls/library facilities, as well as extensive areas of green open space, and a new sports hub.

The framework masterplan, which sets the overarching sustainable principles for the development will be used to inform and monitor forthcoming planning applications within the site. The masterplan was wholeheartedly and enthusiastically endorsed by Arun District Council members in late 2020.

Mrs Enid Barron (London) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q43 While I welcome the Church Commissioners' involvement with initiatives to improve corporate behaviour, in particular in relation to climate change, I would be interested to know if they have plans to strengthen the focus on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) matters in relation to their property portfolio.

Loretta Minghella to reply as First Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Church Commissioners have committed to achieving a net zero emissions portfolio by 2050, with the first interim emissions reduction target to be set in March 2021. We are establishing a rigorous baseline for our property-related emissions in order to develop net zero strategies for our Commercial, Rural and Residential portfolios. At the same time, we are developing a natural capital approach for our forestry, rural and strategic land to ensure we reach net zero whilst enhancing nature.

In addition, we are developing an ESG framework for our development land holdings. We have completed an important first

stage ESG priorities assessment (summary available on our website) and will continue to develop this work into a measurable strategy for our strategic land holdings in 2021.

The Revd Stephen Trott (Peterborough) to ask the Church

Commissioners:

Q44 How many clergy of incumbent status have been dispossessed in the past two years, and how many schemes including dispossession of office are currently being prepared?

Dr Eve Poole to reply as Third Church Estates Commissioner:

A In 2019-2020, four pastoral schemes were brought forward which would have led to the dispossession of nine clergy of incumbent status. One scheme was rejected, and another person moved on before the scheme was made, leaving six clergy who were actually dispossessed. Of those, two have a new post, one retired and the remaining three have Permission to Officiate but no new office at this time.

There are currently only three pastoral schemes in our caseload which would lead to the dispossession of three incumbents if they are approved, and no new cases pending. We gather from our consultations with dioceses that most are not expecting to use the Mission and Pastoral Measure's processes to manage many immediate clergy reductions.

Mrs Sarah Finch (London) to ask the Church Commissioners:

Q45 Given the recent focus, in the church press, on the long-standing resentment that may be caused when a diocese sells off a parsonage, would the Church Commissioners consider issuing new guidelines to dioceses?

Dr Eve Poole to reply as Third Church Estates Commissioner:

A The Church Commissioners are responsible for providing support to dioceses and parishes on the legal processes for the disposals of parsonages under the Church Property Measure 2018 or the Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011. Incumbents (and Team Vicars occupying a parsonage) can veto a sale, and Patrons and PCCs can make a representation against the disposal to the Commissioners.

The Commissioners have no plans to issue further process guidance as the online Parsonages and Glebe manual was updated in 2020.

Bishops and Diocesan teams are responsible for managing their property portfolios and it is not for the Commissioners to advise them regarding the decision to dispose of a parsonage.

Recent meetings with Diocesan representatives have confirmed that many are retaining parsonages as they are critical to future mission, and those which are making disposals are generally selling corporate property and glebe houses, where that is an appropriate course of action.

PENSIONS BOARD

The Revd Julian Hollywell (Derby) to ask the Chair of the Pensions Board:

Q46 What scrutiny is in place to ensure that the Pensions Board adhere to the usual legalities regarding its relationship with tenants, and, where a sitting tenant is served notice in order to accommodate a retired cleric, what is the required period of notice?

Mr Clive Mather to reply as Chair of the Church of England Pensions Board:

A Oversight of the Pension Board's retirement housing portfolio is carried out by its Housing Committee, which reports to the Board of trustees. Retiring clergy can reserve a suitable property up to five years in advance of their anticipated retirement date. During this time, the property may be let to a private tenant. The relationship with that tenant is within the legal framework of Landlord and Tenant law and the period of notice depends on the tenancy agreement upon which they occupy the property. This is usually a minimum of two months, but in the current pandemic situation was extended to a minimum of six months. Our experience is that most tenants leave at the end of the tenancy's fixed term.

ETHICAL INVESTMENT ADVISORY GROUP

Mrs Valerie Hallard (Carlisle) to ask the Chair of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group:

Q47 Following the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster's letter (12/06/2020) to the then Israeli Ambassador, Mark Regev, and the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, expressing their opposition to any move by the Government of Israel to annex West Bank territory after 1 July 2020; what advice has the EIAG provided to the National Investing Bodies (NIBs)?

The Bishop of Manchester to reply as Vice-Chair of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group:

A The EIAG advises the NIBs to expect all the companies in which they invest to manifest conscientiousness with regard to human rights and sensitivity towards the communities in which they operate. The NIBs have established processes, in line with the recommendations of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises to periodically undertake due diligence analyses aimed at identifying portfolio companies complicit in breaches of international norms and human rights. Following the letter from the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster (12/06/2020), the NIBs procured appropriate research and data in order to evaluate investee companies' business practices for upholding international norms and human rights when operating in disputed territories and will identify any companies deemed unwilling, uncooperative or complicit with human rights violations in Occupied Territories as part of their established due diligence processes.