

APRIL 2021 GROUP OF SESSIONS

Guide to the April 2021 group of sessions:

A report from the General Synod Business Committee

Introduction

1. The Business Committee is charged under Standing Order 4 with settling the agenda for each group of sessions and determining the order in which business is to be taken. Subject to Standing Order 1, it is also responsible for all matters relating to the sessional arrangements of the Synod (Standing Order 125).
2. This is the second time that the General Synod will be meeting remotely on an official basis following the Final Approval of the General Synod (Remote Meetings) (Temporary Standing Orders) Measure at the physical meeting on 24 September 2020.
3. Due to the national lockdown in February 2021, it was not possible for staff and Chairs to access Church House, Westminster, to be able to run a remote Synod. For this reason, the February group of sessions was postponed until April. An informal meeting of Synod members run on an entirely remote basis was held on 27 February 2021.
4. Canon Robert Hammond (Chelmsford) has been elected as Chair of the Business Committee following the resignation of the Revd Canon Sue Booy (Oxford). The current membership of the Committee is set out on page 7.
5. This report falls into four parts:
 - Part I comments on practical arrangements for the April group of sessions. There will be further information on the website and in the Guide for Synod Members which is published separately.
 - Part II comments on general categories of Synod business.
 - Part III comments on the shape of the agenda for the April group of sessions.
 - Part IV reports on other work and recent decisions of the Business Committee.

Part I: Practical Arrangements for the April group of sessions

Sessional Arrangements

6. The General Synod will be meeting virtually via Zoom. The timings of the sessions are as follows:
 - 12.30pm – 7.00pm on Friday 23 April
 - 9.15am – 5.00pm on Saturday 24 April
7. As this is a virtual meeting, regular screen breaks have been built into the agenda to allow members to take a break from the proceedings.

Synod Worship

8. The group of sessions will begin with an act of worship via Zoom. The full details and timings of worship are listed at the start of the agenda and will be available on a notice paper.

Part II: General Categories of Synod Business

Categories of Synod business

9. When constructing agendas, the Business Committee seeks to view the agenda as a whole and to ensure that it covers a balance of subjects. Synod business tends to fall into four main categories as follows.

Standing items

- This includes items such as the debate on the Business Committee Report and Synod Question Time. Following feedback received on the July informal Synod members' meeting and the November official remote meeting of Synod, Question Time will operate slightly differently to take account of the remote meeting conditions and will follow the procedure used in the Houses of Parliament. Further details are in paragraph 12 of this report.

Legislative business

- This can take a variety of forms. Full details of the legislative business for a group of sessions are set out in Special Agenda I.

Ordering the life of the Church

- Business which concerns the way we order our own life together.

The Church and the World

- Particular business which debates current issues and takes account of the way in which the Church relates to our public context.

10. Inevitably, some of the subjects which come under these areas may overlap. The Business Committee is aware that meeting for a long period over Zoom is not optimum and so we have endeavoured to schedule only the most urgent and time critical business on the agenda for this Synod in order to keep the meeting to a manageable length. For this reason, we have decided not to schedule any Diocesan Synod Motions or Private Members Motions at this group of sessions.

Part III: The Shape of the April Agenda

Standing Items of Business

11. The April group of sessions will begin with the debate on the Report from the Business Committee, which offers Synod members the opportunity to comment on the agenda or on the content and conduct of the Synod's business more generally.

Handling of Synod Question Time in April 2021

12. The Business Committee has allocated 75 minutes for Questions. In order to enable the Chair to run the item more smoothly and to take Supplementary Questions in a more orderly manner, members are asked to submit their request to put a Supplementary Question by 10.00am on 23 April, using the Request to Speak Inbox or via the Synod App. Members are not required to state the matter of their Supplementary Question in advance. The Chair of the Questions Item will prepare a Speakers List in advance and will call **only those Synod members who have previously submitted their request to ask a Supplementary Question**. Members who have not given notice of their intention to ask a supplementary question will **not** be called.

Legislative Business in April

13. The General Synod's main role as set out in its constitution is to consider and pass legislation by Measure, Canon and Act of Synod. As the national legislative body of the Church, the Synod's role, powers and constitution are different from that of other Church bodies such as a PCC or a Diocesan Synod.
14. There are five items of legislative business. The Business Committee has determined that two of them are suitable for the deemed approval procedure under SO 71. These items will not be debated unless a member gives due notice by the relevant deadline specified in Special Agenda I that the member wishes any of them to be debated, or wishes – where permissible – to give notice of an amendment. The other three items require debate and have been allocated places in the agenda.
15. The follow legislative items are for debate:
 - a. **Draft Safeguarding (Code of Practice) Measure** – Revision Stage, Final Drafting and Final Approval. The draft Measure replaces duty to have due regard to safeguarding guidance with a safeguarding code of practice
 - b. **Draft Legislative Reform (Church of England Pensions) Order 2021** – Motion for Approval. This item makes miscellaneous changes to legislation relating to the constitution of the Church of England Pensions Board.
 - c. **Clergy Discipline (Amendment) Rules 2021** – Motion for Approval. This item makes miscellaneous improvements to existing CDM processes.
16. The following items will be addressed through the deemed approval procedure:
 - a. **Code of Practice under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003** – This item presents an updated and improved Code of Practice.
 - b. **Payments to the Churches Conservation Trust Order 2020** – Owing to an oversight, the Order that was considered by the Synod in November 2020 had not been made by the Church Commissioners. It is therefore being brought to the Synod in April.

Ordering the Life of the Church

17. During the group of sessions, Synod will be debating the Report of the Standing Orders Committee and will be asked to approve the re-appointment of the Chair of the Pensions Board and appointment of the Chair of the Dioceses Commission.
18. Synod will receive an update on Safeguarding following the debate at the November 2020 group of sessions and the presentation at the informal meeting in February 2021. This update will focus on the work that is currently being undertaken and future priorities for safeguarding.
19. Synod will also be considering a report from the Crown Nominations Commission Elections Review Group on the handling of elections of members to the Commission and Diocesan Vacancy in See Committees, and proposed steps to ensure the diverse representation of views, ages and traditions on those bodies.
20. Finally, the Synod will be asked to reconsider and amend the General Synod Elections 2020: Allocation of Seats Resolution in the light of new information.

The Church and the World

21. On 23 April there will be a debate on International Religious Freedom. This item enables Synod to reflect on, speak to and add contributions to the recent commitments from the Government and the International Religious Freedom Alliance on this important topic which is of vital interest to Anglicans worldwide.

Part IV: Other Work of the Business Committee

Synod App and Email address

22. Additional functions continue to be added to the Synod App. This includes a function to sign Private Members' Motions. The Business Committee has agreed in principle that all members of General Synod should be issued with a standard General Synod email address from the start of the new quinquennium in November 2021. This will enable Synod members and members of the public to contact each other more easily and will also simplify the arrangements for voting and the signature of Private Members' Motions.
23. Work is under way to set up these new arrangements and to prepare information and guidance for Synod members on how to use this address.

Environmental Update

24. The Business Committee considered the suggestions from the Environmental Working Group (EWG), which seek to make care for creation an integral part of Synod's spiritual life, to reduce carbon footprint, and to demonstrate good environmental practice. While some of the EWG's suggestions are already in place, the Business Committee is committed to study and plan the effective implementation other suggestions whenever possible.
25. Under the COVID-19 pandemic, the operation for printing and mailing papers have been suspended for safety reasons. Papers are sent to members by electronic means only unless specifically requested.

Feedback on General Synod groups of sessions

26. The Business Committee has now put in place a regular process of requesting Synod members to complete a post Synod questionnaire to give their feedback on the most recent group of sessions. Some key findings from the questionnaire issued after November 2020 group of sessions are summarised below with the Business Committee's response to the points made:

COMMENT	BUSINESS COMMITTEE RESPONSE
More breaks are needed.	The Committee has taken this into account for the timetable of this official virtual meeting.
The Crystal Interactive voting system needs to work properly.	Staff members are working with Cystal Interactive to analyse the causes and to prevent these issues in the future. The Crystal platform is more secure than Zoom polls and is therefore preferred over Zoom polls for important votes.

Muting and unmuting needs to be faster	Staff members responsible for this have already acted as fast as they could, and it could not have been faster due to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow broadband speed (ie the request taking time to reach the computer of the member) • Time taken to accept the request to unmute • Challenge to get the unmute to activate
Remote Question time is problematic	The Business Committee reviewed a number of proposals, none of which were perfect and have advantages and disadvantages. For this reason, the Committee has chosen a way forward that may be able to accommodate more questions to be answered.

27. Synod members are encouraged to complete the Feedback Questionnaire following each group of sessions so that improvements can continue to be introduced.

Accessibility of Synod Meetings

28. Members are referred to the Business Committee's statement on Accessibility (GS Misc 1201) which may be viewed in the Members' Resources section of the Synod web page at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/GS%20Misc%201201%20.pdf>.

29. The accessibility policy was reviewed by the Business Committee in December 2020. More improvement work is under way to improve members' experience.

30. An accessibility report is due to be completed in July 2021 and staff members have been liaising with a group of Synod members on accessibility issues.

List of Speakers at General Synod meetings

31. In recent groups of sessions, the Business Committee has introduced the practice of publishing the list gathered of all those who spoke in debates and other items on the floor of Synod. This information is already public in the form of the Report of Proceedings and is used by the Panel of Chairs. The Business Committee took the view that it would be helpful for Synod members to have this information available to them in a user-friendly form. The List of Speakers from the November 2020 Special Group of Sessions is circulated as a GS Misc 1274 for information.

Record of Business Done

32. The Legal Office produces a formal record of business transacted at each group of sessions of the General Synod in the form of 'Business Done', which is published on the Synod page of the Church of England website.

33. In addition, the Business Committee publishes a running record of the business transacted at General Synod during the current Quinquennium, with updates on subsequent developments in relation to individual items. For the most recent update, please refer to GS Misc 1273.

Business Committee Policies

34. The Business Committee has a number of policies covering various aspects of Synod's activities. These and other guidance may be viewed on the Members' Resources web page at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/general-synod/synod-members-resources>

35. The Business Committee reviews its policies regularly on a phased basis at its meetings and updates them as necessary. Synod members may wish to offer feedback on any of the policies to the Business Committee in the relevant section of the Feedback Form.

On behalf of the Business Committee, Robert Hammond

Chair of the Business Committee

April 2021

Membership of the Business Committee

April 2020

Chair (elected by General Synod)

Canon Robert Hammond

Elected by the House of Bishops

The Rt Revd Pete Broadbent, Bishop of Willesden

Elected by the House of Clergy

The Revd Canon Graeme Buttery

The Revd Prebendary Simon Cawdell

The Revd Canon Joyce Jones

Elected by the House of Laity

Mrs Anne Foreman

Mr Clive Scowen

Appointed by the Archbishops' Council

Mr Joseph Diwakar

The Secretary to the Committee is the Clerk to the Synod, Dr Jacqui Philips and the Assistant Secretary is Dr Alvin Siu Hei Lee.

Forecast of future General Synod business

July 2021

Legislative Business

- Draft Legislative Reform (Church Commissioners) Order
- Draft Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) (Amendment) Regulations 2021
- Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution (Deanery Synods)
- *Legal Officers (Annual Fees) Order 2021 (deemed business)*
- *Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Officers and Others (Fees) Order 2021 (deemed business)*
- *Administration of Holy Communion (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (regulations under Canon B 12, making amendments consequential on Diocesan Boards of Education Measure) (deemed business)*
- *Church of England Funded Pension Scheme Rules 2021 (deemed business)*
- *Approval of form of electronic service register under Canon F 12 (deemed business)*

Non-Legislative Business

- Housing Commission debate
- Anti-Racism Task Force
- 2022 Budget and Apportionment
- Report of the Standing Orders Committee
- Vision and Strategy
- Mutuality in Finance
- Re-appointment of Chair of AC Finance Committee
- Appointment of Auditors
- Vision for Lay Ministry
- Shared Discernment Process Presentation
- Presentation by Implementation and Dialogue Group
- Clergy Remuneration Review
- Resourcing Ministerial Formation
- Safeguarding
- Green paper on pastoral reorganisation
- White paper on revised Clergy Discipline Measure
- Leeds DSM: Wealth Gap
- Living in Love and Faith
- ARCIC: Walking Together on the Way
- Resolution on Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group

Dr Jacqui Philips
Clerk to the Synod
April 2021