

**JULY 2021 GROUP OF SESSIONS**  
**Guide to the July 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 will be the third time that the General Synod will be meeting virtually since the Remote Meetings Measure was passed in September 2020. It was hoped that General Synod would be able to meet physically at this group of sessions but due to the delay in lifting restrictions related to Covid-19, Synod will need to meet virtually for the final group of sessions for this extended General Synod.
3. As this meeting is now happening remotely rather than physically, as originally intended, the Committee decided that it would necessary to shorten the agenda slightly (so it is now spread over no more than four days). A number of less time sensitive items were therefore removed from this July's agenda. The Committee recognises the disappointment some may feel but judged that it had no alternative, given the overriding need to make some practical adjustments to help engender the highest possible level of participation over the whole group of sessions
4. To help manage the welfare of members, screen breaks have been included on the agenda. Members are reminded that if they need to step away during the meeting for their own welfare, they should do so.

This report falls into four parts:

- Part I comments on practical arrangements for the July group of sessions.
- Part II comments on general categories of Synod business.
- Part III comments on the shape of the agenda for the July group of sessions.
- Part IV reports on other work and recent decisions of the Business Committee.

## **Part I: Practical Arrangements for the July group of sessions**

### **Sessional Arrangements**

5. The General Synod will be meeting virtually. The timings of the sessions are as follows:
  - 12.30pm – 7.15pm on Friday 9 July
  - 9am – 12.45pm and 2pm – 7pm on Saturday 10 July
  - 2.15pm – 7pm on Sunday 11 July
  - 9am – 12.40pm and 1.45pm – 7.00pm on Monday 12 July

## **Synod Worship**

6. The group of sessions will begin with an act of worship and there will be acts of worship throughout the group of sessions. On Monday, the final sitting will conclude with a Service of the Word. The full details and timings of worship are listed at the start of the agenda.

## Part II: General Categories of Synod Business

### Categories of Synod business

7. 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, although inevitably, some of the subjects which come under these areas may overlap.

#### ***Standing items***

This includes items such as the debate on the Business Committee Report and Synod Question Time.

#### ***Legislative business***

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***

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

## Part III: The Shape of the April Agenda

### Standing Items of Business

8. The July group of sessions will begin with a **Presidential Address** by the Archbishop of York. It will be followed by 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.
9. A minimum of 75 minutes has been allocated for **Questions**. As with the April group of sessions, 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 **4pm on Thursday 8 July**, 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 Questioners' List in advance.
10. Under its Standing Orders, General Synod must be invited to approve the Archbishops' Council's **annual budget** and its proposals for the diocesan apportionment. Proposals for the budget and apportionment must be sent to General Synod members by 30 June of the preceding year. This year the on-going Transforming Effectiveness work means that there is a great deal more uncertainty than would usually be the case in the budgetary position. So it is proposed that in November the Council will update the newly elected Synod on how (if at all) its expected income and expenditure for 2022 has changed since June and if there is any impact on the diocesan apportionment.
11. There will also be a presentation and opportunity for questions on the **Archbishops' Council's Annual Report** and financial statements for 2020, and the **Church Commissioners' Annual Report** for 2020.

### Legislative Business in July

12. The General Synod's main role as set out in its constitution is to make legislation.

Synodical legislation takes the form of Measures and Canons ('primary legislation') and orders, regulations and other instruments ('secondary' or 'subordinate legislation'). The Synod also makes provision for matters concerning the Church of England by means of Acts of Synod and other instruments where provision having the force of law is not required.

13. There are seven items of legislative business on the agenda. The Business Committee has determined that three 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 four items have been allocated places for debate in the agenda.

The following legislative items are for debate:

- a. **Draft Legislative Reform (Church Commissioners) Order 2021** – this makes miscellaneous changes to legislation relating to the constitution and powers of the Church Commissioners.
- b. **Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution 2021** – this removes the automatic term limit for lay members of deanery synods and replaces it with a power the APCM to impose a term limit if it considers it appropriate to that parish.
- c. **Draft Ecclesiastical Offices (Terms of Service) (Amendment) Regulations 2021** – these amend provisions relating to terms of service of cathedral clergy; they also enable 'salary sacrifice' arrangements for stipendiary clergy.
- d. **Vacancy in See Committees Amendment Regulation 2021** – this amends the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation to reflect recommendations in Responsible Representation (GS 2202).

The following items are subject to the procedure for deemed approval:

- a. **Trust Deed and Rules of the Church of England Funded Pensions Scheme** – these update the trust deed and consolidate in a single instrument the rules of the Church of England Funded Pension Scheme.
- b. **Legal Officers (Annual Fees) Order 2021 and Ecclesiastical Judges, Legal Officers and Others (Fees) Order 2021** – these are the usual annual orders that prescribe, respectively, the annual retainers payable to diocesan registrars, and the fees payable in respect of proceedings in ecclesiastical courts and tribunals.

14. During the group of sessions, Synod will consider proposed **changes to its legislative processes** as set out in the **57th Report of the Standing Orders Committee** which proposes a number of amendments to Standing Orders, most of which are designed to improve the procedures by which Synod deals with legislation.

### Ordering the Life of the Church

15. There are a number of items relating to the Emerging Church of England being presented at this group of sessions. This includes an update on the **Vision and Strategy**, and the work of **Transforming Effectiveness**.
16. The Synod will be asked to approve a revised **allocation of seats** for the election to General Synod for the next quinquennium. This is required following further interrogation of the process which has highlighted a number of errors.
17. The Synod will be asked to approve the re-appointment of a member of the Archbishops' Council and appointment of the external auditors for the Archbishops' Council.

18. Synod will receive an update on **Safeguarding**. This update will focus on the work that is currently being undertaken and future priorities for safeguarding, ensuring that Synod is kept informed.
19. There will be an opportunity to engage with proposals to **amend the Clergy Discipline Measure** and a presentation on the **nature of ordained public ministry**.
20. Synod will be considering the next steps for implementation of **Responsible Representation**, the Report of the Crown Nominations Commission Elections Review Group on the handling of elections of members to the Commission and Diocesan Vacancy in See Committees. In order to assist members and enable the Synod to reach clear decisions on the main questions of policy that arise from the Review Group's recommendations, a series of propositions will be put to the Synod in turn at Friday's sitting. Amendments to the Standing Orders and to the Vacancy in See Committees Regulation to give effect to the Synod's decisions on those propositions will then be moved on Monday.
21. In making these arrangements, the Business Committee has followed the advice of the Standing Orders Committee as to how this business can most effectively be considered. Relevant amendments to the Standing Orders are set out and commented on in the 58th Report of the Standing Orders Committee which also explains in more detail the reasons for adopting this two-stage approach.
22. It should be noted that the amendments to the Standing Orders that are contained in the annex to the 58th Report of the Standing Orders Committee are the amendments that will be moved if the Synod agrees each of the propositions put to it on Friday. Should the Synod not agree each of the propositions as they appear on the agenda, revised amendments to the Standing Orders will be set out on a Notice Paper in advance of Sunday's sitting. It may also be necessary for amendments to be moved to the Vacancy in See Committees (Amendment) Regulation 2021 when it is taken on Monday afternoon.
23. Synod will be invited to engage with the review of the **Mission and Pastoral Measure 2011**, in advance of the presentation of any legislation.
24. There will be a report from the House of Bishops following the report of the **Implementation and Dialogue Group** for members to engage with.
25. Members will be given a presentation on **Living in Love and Faith**, providing an update on work to date and setting out the plans for the next quinquennium.

## The Church and the World

26. One Private Member's Motion has been included on the agenda. Due to the pandemic and the need to prioritise legislative and other business, it was not possible to schedule any Diocesan Synod Motions on this agenda.
27. There will be a debate on how the Church can respond to the Housing Crisis following the publication of the report by the **Archbishops' Commission on Housing**.
28. The Business Committee was asked to include a presentation from the **Archbishops' Racial Justice Commission** introduced by the new Chair and it will be taking place on Friday 8 July. The Business Committee did not receive any request for space on the agenda to debate the Report 'From Lament to Action, at this group of sessions.
29. Synod will be invited to engage with the work of the **Joint Covenant Advocacy and Monitoring Group** and be asked to approve the establishment of a new body to take forward its work.

## Part IV: Other Work of the Business Committee

### Synod App and Email address

30. The latest update of the Synod App included a new function to enable Synod members to sign Private Members' Motions. The Business Committee has approved further updates to the Synod App being made at a future date. These updates will include new functions such as text search, saving reading progress, annotation, account login and web version of the App. The web version of the App will enable members to access the App and its functions on any device with internet access.
31. The Business Committee approved a plan to implement standard General Synod email addresses for the new quinquennium in 2021. Once in place, the new email address will provide greater security for the signature of Private Members Motions and for the conduct of Synod elections. It will also enable members of the public to contact Synod members, and Synod members to contact each other, more easily.

### Environmental Update

32. 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. The Business Committee acknowledged the EWG's continuous work, including a "Top-tips for Eco Synod" leaflet for the April 2021 remote group of sessions.
33. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the physical printing and postal distribution of papers has been suspended for health and safety reasons. Going forward, to reduce Synod's carbon footprint, papers will be sent to members by electronic means only unless hard copies are specifically requested.
34. As the new Synod App functions will allow members to engage with Synod papers in new ways, the Business Committee strongly urges Synod members who remain in office in the next quinquennium to take up the electronic option of receiving papers and only elect to receive printed papers if absolutely necessary. By doing so, Synod members will be displaying a leadership role in the Church of England's environmental efforts and financial stewardship.

### Feedback on General Synod groups of sessions

35. 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 the April 2021 group of sessions are summarised below with the Business Committee's response to the points made:

COMMENT	BUSINESS COMMITTEE RESPONSE
Use 'simple vote' via Zoom poll for non-controversial motions	The Committee will continue with this option in remote circumstances going forward, and will ask the Synod Office to look into any technical issues experienced by Synod members.
Most issues experienced in November 2020 with remote voting via the Crystal platform have been resolved	Due to some issues with the Crystal Interactive voting platform, it has been decided to use another supplier (Lumi) with whom we have worked previously.

Handling multiple documents on one computer or device can be difficult	The Committee sympathises with this difficulty. It has been suggested that members can vote using their separate computer, tablet or smartphone if they have one in order to reduce the number of tabs on a computer and to replicate the experience of the voting handset in the Chamber. The Committee is considering upgrades to the Synod App to improve the document handling experience.
While some members believed that remote Synod increased accessibility, others would like to return to physical meetings.	The Committee will consider a variety of options (including the option of possibly offering hybrid Synods at a later date) and will consider the lessons learned from this pandemic for the future running of Synod meetings.

36. 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

37. 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>.
38. The accessibility policy was reviewed by the Business Committee in December 2020. More improvement work is under way to improve members' experience. Further work will take place on this and staff will engage with members on accessibility issues.

### List of Speakers at General Synod meetings

39. 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 April 2021 Special Group of Sessions is circulated as a GS Misc 1287 for information.

### Record of Business Done

40. 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.
41. 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

42. 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>

43. 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  
June 2021

## **Membership of the Business Committee June 2021**

### **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

### **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.



## **Forecast of future General Synod business**

**Nov 21**

### **Non-Legislative Business**

- Appointment of Member of the Archbishops' Council
- Report of the Governance Review Group
- 2022 Budget Take Note debate
- Debate on Ethics of Artificial Intelligence
- Debate on Generosity and Diocesan Finances

**Feb 2022**

### **Legislative Business**

- Measure relating to diocesan finances
- New Measure on pastoral reorganisation (1st consideration)
- Safeguarding measure (1st consideration)
- Clergy Discipline Measure (1st consideration)

### **Non-Legislative Business**

TBC

Dr Jacqui Philips Clerk to the Synod  
June 2021