

GENERAL SYNOD
CHURCH REPRESENTATION RULES (AMENDMENT) RESOLUTION 2021
Explanatory notes

The Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution 2021 replaces the two-term limit for lay representatives on deanery synods with provision which allows the annual parochial church meeting to impose a term limit for its representatives if it wishes to do so. It also makes a drafting correction to the form for giving notice of the annual parochial church meeting.

Introduction

1. The Church Representation and Ministers Measure 2019 replaced the previous Church Representation Rules with a new set of Rules.
2. Rule M8(5) to (7) of the new Rules imposes a limit of two consecutive terms of office (i.e. six years in total) for representatives of the laity on deanery synods. Under those provisions, a person who has served two consecutive terms of office as a lay representative is ineligible to be elected again until a further three-year term has elapsed. However, the annual parochial church meeting can pass a resolution so that the two-term limit does not apply to its parish.
3. Concerns were subsequently raised with the Business Committee and its Elections Review Group (ERG) about these provisions. The Business Committee therefore asked the ERG to carry out a consultation. The Business Committee reported the outcome of that consultation to the Synod in February 2020 in GS 2154. Most of those who responded to the consultation favoured reversing the default position so that lay representatives on deanery synods would not be subject to a limitation on the number of consecutive terms of office they could serve unless the annual meeting of parishioners decided to impose one.
4. Having considered the responses to the consultation, the ERG recommended that the position should be reversed in the way the majority of those who responded to the consultation proposed. The ERG further recommended that the Business Committee should bring a Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution to the Synod giving effect to that resolution.
5. At the February 2020 group of sessions, a motion requesting the Business Committee to introduce the Amendment Resolution referred to in the ERG's recommendation was carried following a counted vote by Houses.
6. The Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution 2021 has accordingly been introduced on the instructions of the Business Committee.

Notes on individual provisions

Paragraph 1 Citation and commencement

7. Paragraph 1(1) provides for the citation of the Amendment Resolution (i.e. the way it is to be officially referred to). Paragraph 1(2) provides for the Amendment Resolution to come into force on the day after the day on which it is laid before Parliament.

Paragraph 2 Term limits for laity on deanery synod

8. Paragraph 2 replaces the existing provision in rule M8 of the Church Representation Rules with new provision.
9. New paragraph (5) of rule M8 replaces the existing provision which limits lay representatives on deanery synods to two successive terms of office. In its place it makes provision enabling the annual parochial church meeting to pass a resolution limiting the number of successive terms of office the representatives of the laity for that parish may serve on the deanery synod. Where an annual parochial church meeting passes such a resolution, the resolution will specify the number of successive terms of office a lay representative may serve.
10. Paragraph (6) of rule M8 currently provides that terms of office which began before 1 January 2020 (when the new Church Representation Rules came into force) are not counted in determining whether a person has held two successive terms of office; and that a term of office a person is serving following election to fill a casual vacancy is similarly not counted. The new paragraph (6) makes equivalent provision in respect of a resolution passed by an annual parochial church meeting that limits the number of successive terms of office a person may serve as a representative of the laity on the deanery synod: terms of office which began before 1 January 2020 and terms being served to fill casual vacancies are not counted.
11. New paragraph (7) of rule M8 replaces a provision which enables the annual parochial church meeting to disapply the current two-term limit with provision enabling the annual parochial church meeting to amend or revoke a resolution it has passed under the new paragraph (5) of rule M8 (i.e. a resolution imposing a term limit for the parish's representatives on the deanery synod).

Paragraph 3 Notice of annual church meeting

12. Paragraph three amends Form M1 (notice of annual parochial church meeting) so that it must specify the time (as well as the date) when an annual parochial church meeting is to be held.

The Legal Office
Church House
Westminster

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