

GENERAL SYNOD**Report by the Elections Review Group on behalf of the
Business Committee****Introduction**

1. The Elections Review Group (ERG) which is a sub-committee of the Business Committee was constituted over the summer of 2022. The terms of reference and membership can be found in Annex One for ease of reference.
2. The primary role of the ERG is to review the elections to General Synod in 2021 and to consider any proposals for changes to the Election Rules and the Guidance to Presiding Officers in advance of the elections to General Synod in 2026.
3. In addition, the ERG has also been tasked with consideration of issues related to elections at parish level, and some other matters These include proposals that
 - close relatives should not be permitted to nominate a candidate in an election at an Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) or of a Churchwarden
 - there should be a power to reopen nominations in an uncontested APCM election; and there should be greater powers to require PCC members to be DBS checked and discover whether people are disqualified from serving on PCCs
4. This First Report covers the review of the 2021 elections and consideration of the proposals referred to in paragraph 3 for changes at parish level The ERG has agreed a number of recommendations which are set out in the body of this Report and are also set out in Annex Two.
5. A further report, to be presented to Synod at a future Group of Sessions, will deal with the remaining matters referred to the ERG, which include a review of the qualifications for admission to electoral rolls and for PCC membership, and proposals (i) that there should be automatic provision for postal votes for APCMs, and (ii) relating to reserved business at PCC meetings and the minutes of such business.

Ways of working

6. The ERG invited Synod members, diocesan secretaries and presiding officers to provide feedback on their experiences of the 2021 elections. There were 19 responses from members of Synod, including five from the House of Clergy and 14 from the House of Laity. In terms of Provinces, these responses represented 14 respondents from the Province of Canterbury and five from the Province of York. There were no responses from the special constituencies whose elections are managed centrally, i.e. the Suffragan Bishops, Deans, Religious Communities and Universities/Theological Education Institutes (TEIs).
7. In addition, the ERG met with Civica Election Services (CES) as well as some members of General Synod, and a former member, who were proposing amendments to the Rules.

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Summary of Findings

Elections to General Synod

8. In 2021, the first online elections to General Synod took place, managed by Civica Election Services. Elections were held for:
 - 185 clergy and 193 laity elected across the 42 dioceses, giving 84 separate elections.
 - Nine suffragan bishops: five from Canterbury Province and four from York Province
 - Five Cathedral Deans: three from Canterbury Province and two from York Province
 - Four clergy representing Universities and TElS.
9. Elections from the Religious Communities (two clergy and two lay) and from the Armed Forces (three clergy and three lay) took place at the same time but these were managed directly through Church House rather than by Civica.

Pre-election preparations

10. While the elections formally begin with the dissolution of Synod, which usually occurs at the end of the July group of sessions, there is preparatory work in advance of the elections. This includes setting the number of candidates to be elected from each diocese, which is agreed by General Synod, usually in the 12 months prior to the dissolution of Synod.
11. Dioceses need to confirm the Diocesan Electoral Roll, formed of the clerical and lay members of Deanery Synods, which requires liaison with Deanery Officers to gather that information. This is often a weak point in the system, especially if it coincides with the triennial parochial elections of lay representatives to the Deanery Synod, which can occur up to the end of May, as will be the case in 2026.
12. It was noted that the election rules specified that if an elector had provided an email address, he or she will be required to use the online portal (HC Rule 8(1a)) and HL Rule 5(a)). The ERG reflected that there should be an opportunity to engage with electors to ensure that they are confident in using the online portal. There was concern that some voters, particularly among the laity, may not have fully participated because:
 - They were not comfortable with using the voting system
 - Their email address had been recorded incorrectly
 - Even though their email address was recorded correctly, they did not receive emails relating to the election because they went into spam
 - They did not realise that the norm was now to vote electronically
 - They did not recognise CES as the sender of emails and so deleted or ignored emails because they did not realise they related to the election.
13. The pre-election phase also requires the preparation of information about the election to encourage Church members to stand for election to General Synod. Two short videos “Why You Should Stand for General Synod in 2021” and “What is the General Synod and what does it do?” were released on the Church of England YouTube channel and main website in May 2021. A series of short answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) were also hosted on the C of E website, with links to documents regarding the election. However, there was a significant leap between the brief answers in the FAQs and very detailed and lengthy documents such as the Elections Rules documents and

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the Notes for the Guidance of Dioceses. The C of E website did not host or signpost to a user-friendly guide to the election process that was accessible to new candidates. The Group considers that such a guide should be made available for the next election.

14. Guidance for those seeking election should cover a wide range of areas and include information about who is eligible to stand, the level of commitment that will be needed in terms of time and finance. It should also include a reminder that a principal function of General Synod is to be a legislative body, and so work on legislation will be a central element of their role. It might also be helpful to signpost candidates to the key relevant people with whom they will engage in the diocese, together with an outline of their roles.
15. The staff delivered a consultation day for diocesan secretaries, presiding officers and registrars both in 2020 and 2021. The Group felt that such a consultation should be delivered early in the year of the next election but made more focused, and care should be taken to ensure that the Guidance would be revised in the light of the consultation.

Recommendations relating to pre-election preparations

a. Recommendation – *consider delaying the opening of nominations by a few weeks to allow more time for the Diocesan Electoral Roll Officers to work with Deanery Officers in compiling the diocesan electoral rolls.*

b. Recommendation – *contact all diocesan electors in advance of the elections to explain how the process will work; invite those who have not included an email address to submit one; give electors advice on how to access a paper ballot if they are unable to use the online system; and confirm the email address to be used for the online portal.*

c. Recommendation – *in addition to videos and FAQs aimed at the general audience, a user-friendly document outlining the election process should be created for electors, candidates and those administering the elections. This should include the election timetable, more information on the work of Synod and the commitments involved, the process for nomination and how to use the Civica election portal.*

Harmonising national and local considerations

16. The great majority of the members of the House of Clergy and the House of Laity are elected at local diocese level to a national body. In 2021, elections were run locally but rules were generally set nationally. This led to some inconsistencies in approach, and in the interpretation of the rules across the 42 dioceses; for example, local variation in interpreting a candidate's right to receive contact details of the electorate. Having 42 local election bodies also created responsibilities that were vulnerable to local staffing issues: for example, one diocese had a key member of staff on long-term sick leave across the election period, which placed pressure on other diocesan staff without sufficient preparatory knowledge of the process to step in.
17. Each diocese had their own contract with Civica in 2021. This led to duplication and unnecessary resource being expended at diocesan level. The ERG considers that it would be more effective to have one national contract, as happens in other systems, such as the safeguarding casework management system and Church of England people system.
18. Future elections will need to have a combination of national and local activity,

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but for the sake of consistency and reducing replication there should be more documentation located centrally. This would also simplify the contracting situation with CES.

19. Consideration should be given at national level to providing guidance and good practice examples, such as writing to unsuccessful candidates as a courtesy. There was a suggestion that the names of unsuccessful candidates could be kept as a 'record of expertise' that could be drawn from where appropriate.

Recommendations relating to harmonizing national – local considerations

d. Recommendation – *set up one national contract with Civica.*

e. Recommendation – *those parts of the process that do not have to be managed at diocesan level should be considered for relocation to national level.*

National Timetable

20. The elections were run to locally agreed timetables by each diocese which had to conform to nationally agreed parameters. Under the national timetable, nomination papers were due to be sent out by 30th July 2021, with nominations closing by 8th September. However, diocesan elections closed their nominations any time in the week up to 8th September. This led to widespread confusion. There was feedback that some candidates missed the deadline for nominations, as they were working to the national timetable, rather than their local one. One diocese posted on social media that the deadline for nominations was 8th September, even though they had set theirs locally as 4th September, again creating confusion. The national parameters required ballot papers to be issued by 17th September, with a closing date not later than 8th October; and the count was to take place between 11th and 14th October. Again, local variation caused confusion, with one diocese closing their poll and declaring their results early. Thus an election result was announced before the poll had closed in other elections, which runs counter to best practice.

Recommendation relating to the national timetable

f. Recommendation – *There should be a unified mandatory national timetable which applies to all diocesan elections, and it should be available on the Church of England website and all diocesan websites.*

Nominations

21. The 2021 elections were the first occasion on which electronic nominations and voting were used. This change accompanied an increase in the number of diocesan candidates standing (890 in 2015, 947 in 2021). It also made voting easier, with an increase in turnout among the clergy, from 55% in 2015 to 70% in 2021; and among the laity, from 46% in 2015 to 53% in 2021. However, it was not always made clear that once an elector had provided an email address, they could only use the online portal.
22. The nominations period ran from 30th July up to 8th September, with some local variations. Nomination required two people eligible to vote to agree to propose and second a candidate. The candidate filled in all the information through the CES elections portal and the proposer and seconder were not required to do anything. The elections portal allowed candidates, if they wished, to enter the necessary information and save it without submitting it

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immediately, giving them a chance to make changes before committing to standing. However, that led to some potential candidates believing that they had submitted their nomination, when they had only recorded the relevant information but not pressed the button to submit it. It is necessary for the system to alert candidates to that fact that they had not submitted the nomination. The ERG also agreed that the names of the proposer and seconder should be included on the ballot form to help with transparency, and that lay candidates should include the name of the parish(es) where they are on the electoral roll, and clergy candidates the ecclesiastical office(s) held.

23. A difficulty arose from the timing of the nominations process, running mostly through the peak holiday season of August. This made it harder for candidates to contact people to nominate them, and for diocesan staff to confirm that proposers and seconders were willing to nominate candidates. Unavailability of staff to respond to queries also created problems. The election timetable requires delivery of results in time for the organisation of the Inauguration in November. However, it is recognised that participation in the nomination phase must be made easier for candidates. Hence the nominations period should be further extended into September.
24. The Group considered the nomination of lay candidates who are not themselves electors. There needs to be clearer signposting of the nominations process on Diocesan websites, including contact details and deadlines. A standard template should be provided for this which all Dioceses should use. There needs to be clarity that candidates who are not themselves electors will be able to access the online portal.

Recommendations relating to nominations

g. Recommendation – *electronic voting is beneficial and needs to be maintained as the primary form of participation in the next election. However, more systematic signposting of how candidates and electors can access a paper-based system is needed for those unable to use an online system.*

h. Recommendation – *CES should be asked to place a clear statement on the nominations form that a confirmation email would be sent to the proposer and seconder once the nomination has been submitted. If a nomination form has had information entered but not submitted, the system should also be amended to send reminder emails to potential candidates, so they are aware that their forms have not been successfully submitted.*

i. Recommendation – *the nominations process should stay open for an extra week, extending toward mid-September and pushing back other dates in the election process*

j. Recommendation – *the paper based version of the nomination form for the House of Laity should be made available for download from the Diocesan website.*

k. Recommendation – *clear guidance should be provided to those prospective lay candidates who are not electors: signposting of the nominations process on Diocesan websites, including contact details and deadlines and how such candidates will be able to access the online portal . A standard template should be provided for this which all Dioceses should be required to use.*

Preparation of the ballot and candidates' election addresses

25. Between 8th September and 17th September 2021, diocesan staff processed the

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nominations and prepared the ballot. The CES elections portal also gave candidates some extra time after the close of nominations to finalise and submit their election address. Election addresses were displayed during the voting period on diocesan websites and were also available to electors on the CES platform. Publishing an election statement is one of the key ways in which candidates can present themselves to the electorate, but there is little formal guidance on how to approach this. While it is not for the election staff to offer guidance to candidates on this matter, it would be useful for previous election statements of successful candidates to remain on diocesan websites. These would be available for all candidates to view, so would not give any individual candidate an unfair advantage. An additional benefit of this would be to allow members of Synod to know where fellow Synod members stand on issues pertinent to subsequent elections to committees within Synod.

26. There was a criticism that the ballot forms did not include the name of the Church at which the candidate worshipped or names of the proposers and seconders. The Group felt that a more objectively measurable approach was to include, for laity elections, the names of the electoral roll(s) in the relevant diocese on which the candidate's name is entered, and for clergy elections, the ecclesiastical office by virtue of which the candidate is qualified for election.

Recommendations on preparation of the ballots and candidates' election addresses

***l. Recommendation** – the ballot form/paper should show (a) the names of the proposer and seconder for each candidate and (b) for candidates for election to the House of Laity, the name(s) of the electoral roll(s) in the relevant diocese on which the candidate's name is entered, and (c) for candidates for election to the House of Clergy, the ecclesiastical office by virtue of which the candidate is qualified for election.*

***m. Recommendation** – dioceses will be required to publish the election addresses of all candidates during the election period and maintain the election addresses of all successful candidates on their website for the ensuing quinquennium until a member resigns from Synod.*

Hustings and engagement with the electorate

27. Presiding officers have little control over the dissemination of information from candidates to electors beyond the election addresses (2 sides of A4) which they are required to disseminate on behalf of the candidates. Voters only have the information before them that the candidates wish to present. This may be in the form of an election address, or in further communications which candidates may send using the postal or email addresses of the electors, which the presiding officers are required to supply to candidates. There are very few ways for electors to find out the information they need to make an informed decision.
28. Many dioceses held hustings events to allow voters to scrutinize candidates. Hustings are not required under the Rules, and the format of hustings varied widely and with mixed results. Many dioceses opted for online hustings events, although in some cases the number of candidates standing meant that there was little or even no scope for questions. One clergy election, for example, had 24 candidates, so the hustings event only allowed for each one to make a brief

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statement and no questions were permitted. In other areas, hustings followed a written format, allowing electors to submit questions in advance, with candidates invited to respond up to a given word limit. The questions and answers were then distributed to electors and uploaded to the diocesan website, allowing a greater level of participation and transparency than an online meeting.

29. While the ERG had little appetite for setting any prescriptive rules related to hustings, it was suggested that chairs of the Diocesan Houses of Clergy and Laity could be responsible for any hustings. Further it thought it would be practicable and realistic to recommend each diocese organise a written questions and answers exercise, provided that the candidates would not be required to answer. In the invitation to nominate, voters could be invited to submit questions, prior to the closing date for nominations, which were to be sent to all candidates. A quick turnaround of sending out the questions would mean that very early on in the voting process, voters would have such answers as the candidates chose to give.

Recommendation relating to husting and engagement with the electorate

n. Recommendation - dioceses should be encouraged to offer a written questions process for the next election, with candidates choosing whether to participate. If dioceses chose to offer this, it could be arranged in the timetable to take place prior to the issue of ballots, with questions to be submitted by the same date as nominations for candidates. The answers should be made available before voting opens.

Voting Period

30. In 2021 voting opened in most dioceses on 17th September and ran until 8th October, taking place largely on the CES election platform, with paper ballots available to those who had opted out of the electronic system. Owing to the online nature of voting, CES was able to inform dioceses of electoral turnout during the voting period. This led to some dioceses giving live updates of their electoral returns, which were then reported in the Church Times, during the election period. Such information about the progress of the ballot should not be directly reported while the voting period is still open and the election is still live.
31. Some users expressed difficulty in using the CES election platform, either due to unfamiliarity with the “drag and drop” means of ordering voting preference, or not understanding the STV voting process, or a disability such as visual impairment, leading to struggles with the layout and contrast on their computer screen. Some voters did not understand that a submitted vote was final with no means of subsequent amendment. There were also issues with paper ballots returned to dioceses, which had to be entered into the system before the close of the poll, as it was impossible to add ballots once the portal had closed. Entering paper ballots to the online system during a 24- or 48-hour period after the close of the poll would alleviate some of those pressures.

Recommendations relating to the voting period

o. Recommendation – figures on voter turnout should not be issued while the ballot is open. The online system should be programmed to send out reminders to vote seven days before the close of the poll to those electors who have not yet cast

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their vote.

p. Recommendation – *The ERG should work through the voting interface with Civica. Advice should be sought from the Committee for Ministry of and Among Deaf and Disabled People regarding the accessibility of the system for visually impaired voters.*

q. Recommendation – *the closing date for receipt of paper ballots should be a day or so in advance of that for electronic votes, so that diocesan staff can input any paper ballots.*

r. Recommendation – *a simple youtube tutorial on how to cast your vote should be developed and made available to electors.*

Declaration of Results

32. Once polling closed, CES conducted the count for each election separately over a four day period. Candidates were able, but not obliged, to watch the count process online and directly hear the results. It was then up to the diocese to publicise the results within three working days. While most dioceses informed all candidates of the results within a few hours of the count being completed, some failed to post their results on their website in the specified time and, even when reminded to do so, put up the wrong results files. Delays between results being calculated and publicly declared led to a short-term lack of clarity and leaks: some results reached the public domain before the diocese had formally announced them.

Recommendations relating to Declaration of Results

s. Recommendation – *once results are calculated by CES, they should be posted onto the national website in a consistent format, with both the Form of Return of Election Results and the Single Transferable Voting Report available to download.*

t. Recommendation – *the publicly available results form should only include email addresses as a means of contact for members, rather than home addresses.*

Other election issues

Appeals

33. The 2021 election also saw the introduction of a new appeals system. This was used in both short and long form, but would need more use before its effectiveness could be properly evaluated. One appeal involving a candidate hinged on whether routine communication through diocesan channels, should be counted as “election material” under sections 48 to 57 of the Notes for the Guidance of Dioceses, which ought not to be distributed during the period of the election. The appeal found that the material was not “election material”, but this was not clear from the guidance and should be clarified.

Recommendation relating to Appeals

u. Recommendation – *include a clarification in the rules on what constitutes election material: for example, material involving a candidate which makes reference to the election, that a given person is a candidate, or encourages people to vote for a specific candidate.*

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Proposals to amend the Election Rules

36. The Group has considered changes to the Church Representation Rules and the Election Rules for each of the Houses to give effect to the recommendations in this report. It is proposed that a complete new set of Election Rules be prepared as the proposed changes bring a number of associated amendments and a fresh set of Rules will ensure clear and consistent numbering and cross-referencing.

Further work

37. Two constituencies often seen as under-represented in the Synod are Global Majority Heritage (GMH) Christians and younger lay people. The perceived under-representation of GMH people was tackled following the 2021 elections, as recommended in *'From Lament to Action'*, by co-opting five clergy and five laity to redress the balance. Increasing representation of GMH members for the quinquennium in this way goes some way to making Synod more ethnically diverse, and give experience to co-opted GMH members in the hope that they will wish to stand for election in the next quinquennium or mentor someone else to stand. If GMH representation does not improve at the next elections, it is recommended that co-option be used again.
38. For younger lay people, the question of representation has been exacerbated by the ending of the Church of England Youth Council which used to elect four participant observers to Synod. The 2021 results showed 17% of the House of Laity were under 40, and just 6% (13 members) under 30. Where younger candidates did stand, they often stood a good chance of election, so rather than amending electoral processes it would be more effective to encourage more young people to stand. However, the Synod Standing Orders still provide for the election of young participant observers and Synod needs to resolve the principle of whether a new mechanism should be found to elect such.
39. The under-representation of other constituencies, such as disabled people and people from low-income backgrounds is difficult to assess due to a lack of data and visibility, as well as difficulties in defining these terms. It is recognised that Synod is less diverse than the church which it serves. That issue should be tackled by how we encourage people to think about standing and through the advice available from the national church.

Recommendations relating to further work

v. Recommendation – *the effect of GMH co-options on the diversity of representation should be evaluated after the next election. If there is no improvement there should be consideration of repeating the co- option process*

w. Recommendation – *Synod should resolve the question of whether it wishes to develop a new system to enable young participant observers to be elected.*

x. Recommendation – *materials to promote the General Synod elections and to encourage people to stand should include a diverse range of people representative of the Church of England. There should also be accessible advice available on the national website, on how to be a candidate, and that should be well signposted by dioceses.*

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Matters relating to Parochial Elections and APCMs

40. Three Synod members made written and/or oral representations to the ERG relating to parochial elections and APCMs, some of them matters already referred to it by Synod in a resolution passed in July 2021.
41. **Mrs Amanda Robbie** made representations on 3 issues: (a) disqualifying close relatives from nominating a candidate for election to a PCC or as a churchwarden; (b) reopening nominations where a PCC election is uncontested; and (c) disqualification and DBS checks in relations to PCC members.
42. Point (a). Mrs Robbie explained that her point arose from family members nominating an unsuitable individual, who was unopposed, for election to her church's PCC.
43. Point (b). Mrs Robbie commented that although initially people might not want to put themselves forward for posts, but they might be persuaded to do so when they see who has been nominated, thus avoiding unsuitable candidates being elected unopposed.
44. Point (c). It is not possible currently to impose requirements for people to have DBS checks in church law (as opposed to secular law). Mrs Robbie suggested that there be a second step (as for churchwardens) - the giving of a self-declaration to say you have not been convicted of any offence and that you will do your best in the role. Mrs Robbie further suggested that more work should be done into how elected members could be disqualified after they have taken up office, and on making it mandatory for PCC members to be DBS checked.
45. The Group discussed the three proposals and concluded, in respect of points (a) and (b), that it would be very difficult to establish a satisfactory definition of "close relative", and such an approach could cause problems with very small congregations where many were related to each other, making it difficult to elect a PCC; and that it was not clear that merely reopening nominations would solve the presenting problem given that nominations could in any event be made at the meeting at the last minute. However the Group accepted that there was a real problem which needed to be addressed, and agreed to propose that the Church Representation Rules (CRRs) be amended to provide for any member to move at the APCM that, in respect of a particular election in which there were insufficient candidates to require a poll, a confirmatory vote be held in respect of each candidate. In respect of point (c) the Group noted that, if someone lied on the self-declaration, there was not much that could be done about it, but nevertheless agreed to propose a further amendment to the CRRs so that in order to be eligible for election each candidate should be required to complete a declaration that he or she had not been convicted of any relevant offence, and was not debarred from office. In addition the Group agreed to raise with the National Safeguarding Team (NST) whether more could be done to ensure that people who represented safeguarding risks could not serve on PCCs and require DBS checks for members.
46. **Mr Mark Williams** pointed out that there is an inconsistency in the CRRs, with rule M5(1)(d) referring to the annual fabric report under section 50 of the 2018 Measure and Form M1 referring to a report on "the fabric, goods and ornaments", and suggested that, in order to align the two, Form M1's wording should be changed to "annual report on the fabric of the church and all articles appertaining to it". The Group agreed.
47. **Mr Clive Billenness** proposed that CRR rule M11 be amended to give all people on the church electoral roll a postal vote without that first having to be

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agreed at the APCM, in respect of both elections and all other matters on which the APCM was required to vote.

48. The Group felt that Mr Billenness had raised an important point of principle with which the Synod should be invited to engage, but that more preparatory work was required before that happened. Consideration of that issue will therefore be included in the next tranche of the Group's work and included in a report later in this quinquennium.

Recommendations relating to Parochial Elections and APCMs

The Group therefore proposes three further changes to the Church Representation Rules

1. *to provide for any member to move at the APCM that, in respect of a particular election in which there were insufficient candidates to require a poll, a confirmatory vote be held in respect of each candidate*
2. *to provide that in order to be eligible for election as a member of a PCC each candidate should be required to complete a declaration that he or she had not been convicted of any relevant offence, and was not debarred from office*
3. *to amend Form M1's so that its title read "Annual report on the fabric of the church and all articles appertaining to it".*

Conclusion

49. Synod is invited to take note of this Report.

Clive Scowen
Chair, Elections Review Group

GENERAL SYNOD**Annex One****Election Review Group
Terms of Reference***Functions*

1. The Elections Review Group is a sub-committee of the General Synod Business Committee which has responsibility, to:
 - a) Review the process for the 2021 General Synod elections, including engagement with stakeholders such as dioceses and Synod members and Civica
 - b) Put forward proposals for amendments to the election rules for the next General Synod elections
 - c) Act as steering committee for amendments to the Church Representation Rules, and other rules pertaining to the election of members of the General Synod
 - d) Advise the Business Committee on any other changes related to elections.
 - e) Produce a report to the Business Committee for consideration by General Synod.
 - f) Consider submissions made by former synod member Michael Stallybrass and bring forward such proposals as it considers appropriate to amend the Church Representation Rules relating to proceedings of parochial church councils
 - g) Undertake such other tasks as Business Committee may from time to time assign to it.

Membership

2. The Elections Review Group will be constituted as follows:
 - a) Three members of the Business Committee appointed by that committee, one of whom shall be appointed by the committee as Chair
 - b) Three other members of General Synod appointed by the Appointments Committee
 - c) One representative from Diocesan Secretaries appointed by the Appointments Committee
 - d) One external member with experience of elections appointed by the Appointments Committee

Members will be appointed for the term of the quinquennium. Additional members may be co-opted by the Group with the consent of the Business Committee.

3. Business and procedure

- a) The Group shall report to each meeting of the Business Committee and provide regular updates to General Synod.
- b) The Group may meet in person or remotely.
- c) The Group shall have power to regulate its own business and procedure.
- d) All decisions shall be made by a majority of members present and voting shall be by show of hands.

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ELECTIONS REVIEW
GROUP**

List of members

From the Business Committee:

- Mr Clive Scowen, Chair (London)
- Fr Paul Cartwright (Leeds)
- Mr Nic Tall (Bath & Wells)

Appointed by the Appointments Committee:

- Miss Prudence Dailey (Oxford)
- Mrs Catherine Stephenson (Leeds)
- Mr Peter Warry, Diocesan Secretary (York)

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Annex Two

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations relating to pre-election preparations

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i. Recommendation – *the nominations process should stay open for an extra week, extending toward mid-September and pushing back other dates in the election process*

j. Recommendation – *the paper based version of the nomination form for the House of Laity should be made available for download from the Diocesan website.*

k. Recommendation – *clear guidance should be provided to those prospective lay candidates who are not electors: signposting of the nominations process on Diocesan websites, including contact details and deadlines and how such candidates will be able to access the online portal. A standard template should be provided for this which all Dioceses should be required to use.*

Recommendations on preparation of the ballots and candidates' election addresses

l. Recommendation – *the ballot form/paper should show (a) the names of the proposer and seconder for each candidate and (b) for candidates for election to the*

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House of Laity, the name(s) of the electoral roll(s) in the relevant diocese on which the candidate's name is entered, and (c) for candidates for election to the House of Clergy, the ecclesiastical office by virtue of which the candidate is qualified for election.

m. Recommendation – *dioceses will be required to publish the election addresses of all candidates during the election period and maintain the election addresses of all successful candidates on their website for the ensuing quinquennium until a member resigns from Synod.*

Recommendation relating to hustings and engagement with the electorate

n. Recommendation - *dioceses should be encouraged to offer a written questions process for the next election, with candidates choosing whether to participate. If dioceses chose to offer this, it could be arranged in the timetable to take place prior to the issue of ballots, with questions to be submitted by the same date as nominations for candidates. Candidates would then have 7 days to submit any responses, which would be then made available to voters through direct email and to the general public by publication on the diocesan website.*

Recommendations relating to the voting period

o. Recommendation – *figures on voter turnout should not be issued while the ballot is open. The online system should be programmed to send out reminders to vote seven days before the close of the poll to those electors who have not yet cast their vote.*

p. Recommendation – *The ERG should work through the voting interface with Civica. Advice should be sought from the Committee for Ministry of and Among Deaf and Disabled People regarding the accessibility of the system for visually impaired voters.*

q. Recommendation – *the closing date for receipt of paper ballots should be a day or so in advance of that for electronic votes, so that diocesan staff can input any paper ballots.*

r. Recommendation – *a simple youtube tutorial on how to cast your vote should be developed and made available to electors.*

Recommendations relating to Declaration of Results

s. Recommendation – *once results are calculated by CES, they should be posted onto the national website in a consistent format, with both the Form of Return of Election Results and the Single Transferable Voting Report available to download.*

t. Recommendation – *the publicly available results form should only include email addresses as a means of contact for members, rather than home addresses*

Recommendation relating to Appeals

u. Recommendation – *include a clarification in the rules on what constitutes election material: for example, material involving a candidate which makes reference to the election, that a given person is a candidate, or encourages people to vote for a specific candidate.*

Recommendations relating to further work

v. Recommendation – *the effect of GMH co-options on the diversity of representation should be evaluated after the next election. If there is no improvement there should be consideration of repeating the co- option process*

w. Recommendation – *Synod should resolve the question of whether it wishes to develop a new system to enable young participant observers to be elected.*

x. Recommendation – *materials to promote the General Synod elections and to encourage people to stand should include a diverse range of people representative of the Church of England. There should also be accessible advice available on the*

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national website, on how to be a candidate, and that should be well signposted by dioceses.

Recommendations relating to Parochial Elections and APCMs

The Group proposes three further changes to the Church Representation Rules

- 1. to provide for any member to move at the APCM that, in respect of a particular election in which there were insufficient candidates to require a poll, a confirmatory vote be held in respect of each candidate*
- 2. to provide that in order to be eligible for election as a member of a PCC each candidate should be required to complete a declaration that he or she had not been convicted of any relevant offence, and was not debarred from office*
- 3. to amend Form M1's so that its title read "Annual report on the fabric of the church and all articles appertaining to it".*