

GENERAL SYNOD
CHURCH REPRESENTATION RULES (AMENDMENT)
RESOLUTION 2023

Explanatory Notes

The draft Church Representation Rules (Amendment) Resolution 2023 makes amendments to aspects of the elections of parochial representatives of the laity and also removes a minor drafting inconsistency.

Background

1. The amendments in this draft Resolution are proposed by the Elections Review Group, a sub-committee of the Business Committee constituted in summer 2022. While the primary role of the Group is to review the 2021 elections to the General Synod, it also considers matters relating to other Church elections.
2. The Resolution is to be made by the General Synod under section 7 of the Synodical Government Measure 9, which requires there to be a majority in favour in each House of at least two-thirds of those present and voting.

Commentary on the Resolution

Paragraph 1 – Citation, commencement and interpretation

3. This paragraph makes standard technical provision. It provides for the Resolution to come into force on the day after that on which it is laid before Parliament.

Paragraph 2 – Uncontested election of parochial representatives of laity

4. This paragraph would amend Rule M9 of the Church Representation Rules, which deals with the conduct of elections of parochial representatives of the laity.
5. The amendment would apply where, at an annual parochial church meeting, the number of candidates for the election of parochial representatives does not exceed the number of places to fill. Any person entitled to attend the meeting would also be entitled to propose that a vote be held to confirm the election of each candidate. Such a proposal would require a simple majority and, if it were carried, a separate vote would have to be held for each candidate on whether that candidate should be elected. Any person on the parish roll would be entitled to take part in the vote.

Paragraph 3 – Declaration as to disqualifications

6. This paragraph would insert a new Rule M12A into Part 9 of the Church Representation Rules, which sets out the model rules for parish governance.

7. The new Rule M12A would require a person elected as a parochial representative of the laity to a deanery synod or a parochial church council to make a declaration that the person is not disqualified under the Church Representation Rules. A person is automatically disqualified under those Rules if that person is an employee of the National Church Institutions, included in a barred list under the Safeguarding and Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 or convicted of a violent offence against a child. In the case of a person elected to a parochial church council, the declaration must also state that the person is not disqualified as a charity trustee, since parochial church councils are charities.
8. This paragraph would also amend Rule 12(2) of the Church Representation Rules so as to include the new Rule M12A in the list of provisions of the Church Representation Rules which cannot be displaced or suspended by a scheme to vary the model rules. Accordingly, the new Rule M12A would be entrenched in any such scheme.

Paragraph 4 (annual fabric report)

9. This amendment would make a minor drafting amendment to Form M1 in the Church Representation Rules, which sets out the form of the notice of the annual parochial church meeting.
10. Form M1 currently refers to “the annual report on the fabric, goods and ornaments of the church”. Rule M5(1)(d) of the Rules requires the annual meeting to have before it “the annual fabric report under section 50 of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018”. Section 50 of that Measure defines that report as a report “on the fabric of the church and all articles appertaining to the church”.
11. There is therefore a slight inconsistency of terminology between Rule M5(1)(d) and Form M1. The amendment would remove the inconsistency by amending Form M1 so that it also refers to the annual fabric report under section 50 of the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018.

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June 2023