



DIOCESAN SYNOD
SYNOD QUESTIONS NOTICE PAPER
With supplementary questions following the meeting

Question 1

Q Ian Wilson (Kingston Deanery)

What instructions have been issued to parish clergy regarding DBS checks for PCC members; and what is the position of elected and ex-officio members who have no contact whatsoever with children or vulnerable adults and who, as a matter of principle, are unable to accede to such a check?

A The Diocesan Secretary

Parish clergy are referred to [A Safe Church](#) as the basis of the Diocese's policy on safeguarding matters, including DBS checks. Parish clergy should also have undertaken Safer Recruitment and People Management course as well as Safeguarding Leadership Training.

It is the Diocese's recommendation that DBS checks are undertaken for all trustees on a PCC, irrespective of their engagement in 'regulated activity' (as defined) with children or vulnerable adults, as a matter of best practice. This is in conjunction with the [Fit and Proper Persons' form](#) of self-declaration for trustees of the PCC in respect of disqualification as a trustee.

As trustees of a charity PCC members are eligible for a basic DBS check. The Charity Commission states that "whenever there is a legal entitlement to obtain a DBS check in respect of such a trustee, a check should be carried out".

There is, however, no legal obligation to undertake a DBS check and PCC members cannot be removed for refusing to apply for a DBS check unless they are working with children or vulnerable adults.

S Supplementary Question

No supplementary question was asked.

Question 2

Q Revd Michelle Edmonds (Tandridge Deanery)

There is an on-line Church of England dashboard tool for Safeguarding called Parishdashboards.org.uk. I was made aware of this by my new colleague from a different Diocese who was used to using it and who couldn't understand why I knew nothing about it. She found it a really good tool to help with the administration in safeguarding, ensuring things were kept upto date. When we investigated only four Dioceses don't use it - Southwark being one. Is there a reason why we are not part of this? Are there plans to join it?

A The Diocesan Secretary

The Dashboards were developed by Clearly Simpler Limited and based on Church of England safeguarding policies and procedures, the dashboards enable users to see their status of compliance.

The National Safeguarding Team (NST) have partnered with the Safeguarding Dashboards provider and are currently piloting the integration of the National Safeguarding Standards.

The Diocesan Safeguarding Team are also engaged with the provider however the NST have requested that Southwark await the outcome of their pilot before proceeding.

Later in 2024 - 2025, if endorsed by the NST, Southwark Diocese will seek to adopt Safeguarding Dashboards, across all parishes.

S Supplementary Question

As the *pilot* has been used by other dioceses since 2020, with new additions and direct access to the dashboards for training and safer recruitment why have we not been involved?

A The Diocesan Secretary

There were many queries surrounding the use of data including GDPR, server locations and security when the pilot was released which the Diocese agreed would not be suitable until resolved. The NST have now advised those who were on the pilot to remain using the system, but others not to join. Once the endorsement of the system has been received by the NST, the Diocese will seek to adopt it.

Question 3

Q Revd Erica Wooff (Lambeth North Deanery)

In Lambeth North Deanery we had five clergy places and two lay places for the recent elections to Diocesan Synod 2024-27. The disparity of numbers between clergy and laity is not a good optic within the call of the Southwark Vision for younger and more diverse representation at Diocesan Synod. I recognise and understand that the number of places for the laity is set nationally, on the basis of parish and deanery statistics, and so cannot be changed for local purposes. But, given the falling rolls in some parishes in my and other deaneries due to high rents and slow recovery from the pandemic, might there be local possibilities, e.g. Bishops' appointment, to help alleviate the problem and make the overall elected lay members more representative within our diverse Diocese?

A The Diocesan Secretary

The number of elected places for laity and clergy on Diocesan Synod were approved at the November 2023 Synod, in preparation for the triennial elections.

The Synod approved the formula in which the calculations of number of representatives were to be elected. This followed the same formula as the previous triennium which were changed in order to allow for greater parity between clergy and laity, given the fall in electoral roll numbers (which is the basis of the calculations).

Although there is a decline in electoral roll numbers across all deaneries, there is also a compounded issue because the Diocese is not in receipt of many parishes' Electoral Roll forms. This can, and does, have a big impact on the number of lay representatives that can be elected.

Bishop Christopher, in November 2023, noted that he would use, as in the previous triennium, his personal nominations to ensure that there would be a balance of lay and clergy members of Diocesan Synod. There will also be, as we have each triennium, a review and vote on the number of elected places on Diocesan Synod in November 2026.

S Supplementary Question

No supplementary question was asked.

Question 4

Q Revd David Ruddick (Merton Deanery)

Please provide an estimate of the...

- a) Impact of the introduction of the Prayers of Love and Faith upon Parish Support Fund income for 2024;
- b) Total money which will not be received into the Parish Support Fund in 2024, because parishes have opted not to make a formal pledge and not to pay anything to the PSF (based on the pledges of those parishes as things stand);
- c) Total money to come in 2024 from parishes which have made a pledge to the PSF, whilst indicating that this may change;
- d) Total money to come in 2024 from parishes which have opted not to make a formal pledge to the PSF for 2024, but have instead given an indicative maximum figure which they are intending to pay as things stand;
- e) Total money to come in 2024 from parishes which have opted to pay this money through the Church of England Evangelical Council's Ephesian Fund (so that it will be used to fund parishes which support the CEEC), or other alternative payment mechanisms, such as the Good Stewards Trust.

A The Diocesan Secretary

- a) The introduction of the Prayers of Love and Faith upon Parish Support Fund income for 2024 resulted in a reduction of pledges compared to 2023 pledge payments received of approximately £59,000.
- b) There are now no parishes which have opted not to make a formal pledge and not to pay anything to the PSF (based on the pledges of those parishes as things stand) due to their views on PLF.
- c) Parishes with approximately £236,500 in pledges have said that their pledge or gifts may change due to the PLF. However, please note that this figure has increased since the March Synod due to parishes increasing their pledge contributions rather than more parishes indicating that their pledges may change.
- d) One parish which has chosen not to make a formal pledge has given an indicative maximum figure of £168,130 which they are intending to pay as things stand.
- e) Total money to come in 2024 from parishes which have opted to pay their 2024 contributions and pledges through the Church of England Evangelical Council's Ephesian Fund, or similar organisations is expected to amount to £316,000.

In April we were grateful to receive a further payment of approximately £57,000 relating to part of a pledge withheld in 2023 paid via the Ephesian Fund.

S Supplementary Question

No supplementary question was asked.

Question 5

Q Revd David Ruddick (Merton Deanery)

My deanery has not filled the allocated places for clergy or lay reps for the next triennium of Diocesan Synod. What is the procedure for filling these vacancies, if candidates should come forward expressing a wish to do so?

A The Diocesan Secretary

Vacancies that occur either following an election, or those for unfilled places, follow the guidance set in the Church Representation Rules 2022 for Casual Vacancies ([CRR 45\(1\)](#)) to be conducted, so far is possible, within 6 months. If deaneries need help with elections they can email governance@southwark.anglican.org and we will support you in any way that we can.

“Casual vacancies

45 (1) A casual vacancy* among the members of a diocesan synod elected by either house of a deanery synod may be filled by the election by that house of the deanery synod of a person qualified to be elected as such (as to which, see [Rule 36](#)).

(2) An election to fill a casual vacancy of that kind is to take place at a meeting of the members of that house of the deanery synod, unless the bishop of the diocese -

(a) directs that the election is to be conducted in accordance with [Rules 38 to 42](#), and

(b) fixes the timetable and date for the election accordingly and ensures that the secretary of the deanery synod is informed.

(3) An election to fill a casual vacancy of that kind is to be completed, so far as possible, within six months of the occurrence of the vacancy (subject to [Rule 74](#)).

(4) Where an election to fill a casual vacancy of that kind is to take place at a meeting under paragraph (2) but is not completed within six months of the occurrence of the vacancy, the bishop must give directions (which may include directions for the election to be conducted in accordance with [Rules 38 to 42](#)).

(5) Where an election to fill a casual vacancy is to take place by virtue of a direction of the bishop under paragraph (2)(a) or (4), [Rules 38 to 42](#) have effect, but as if a reference to the timetable fixed under [Rule 35\(2\)\(a\)](#) were a reference to the timetable fixed under paragraph (2)(b) or by virtue of paragraph (4) of this Rule.

(6) Where the period for holding a general election to either house of a diocesan synod is due to begin within nine months of the occurrence of the vacancy, it is not to be filled unless the members of the bishop’s council and standing committee who are from the house concerned direct otherwise.

Notes

* A person whose name is on the roll of a guild church in the City of London is treated for this purpose as if his or her name is also on the roll of the parish in which the guild church is situated: see [Rule 83\(7\)](#) and [\(8\)](#).

* ‘Casual vacancy’ includes the case where there is a vacancy because not enough candidates were nominated to fill the places available: see [Rule 83\(9\)](#).

*** i.e. i.e. the Synodical Government Measure 1969 of which these Rules form part.”*

S Supplementary Question

No supplementary question was asked.