The Diocese of Southwark

DIOCESAN SYNOD
Lay Representation on Deanery Synods for Elections in 2026

The Diocesan Synod is required to determine the number of lay representatives from each parish that may be elected to deanery synods in 2026.

> The Chair of the House of Laity, Rebecca Chapman, to move that:
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> "This synod approves the proposed table of the number of lay representatives per parish/church to be elected to deanery synods at the annual parochial church meetings in 2026 as set out in appendix A.

Background

1. A deanery is a designated geographical area consisting of the Church of England parishes within it and forms an important bridge between parishes and the wider church. Deanery synods are the formal meetings of a deanery which focus on mission and ministry in the area and also share information with each other while contributing to the wider work of the Diocese and supporting Diocesan initiatives in our Diocesan Southwark Vision.

2. Deanery synods are re-formed triennially (three yearly) and consist both of all beneficed and licensed clergy in the deanery on the one hand, and lay people elected from the churches/parishes on the other. They are jointly chaired by the area dean and a lay chair.

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3. Under the Church Representation Rules 2025 the Diocesan Synod must pass a resolution to determine what numbers of lay people each parish may elect (at the annual parochial church meeting/annual general meeting) to the deanery synod in the year before the election.

4. The Church Representation Rules require diocesan synods to use electoral rolls as the means of allocating numbers of representation. The figures for electoral rolls at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM/AGM) for 2025 must be used as 2025 is the year preceding the 2026 election. There is an added requirement that any church with fewer than 26 persons on its electoral roll may not be allocated more than one lay representative. The Diocesan Synod previously adopted an approach that recognised the existence of multi-church parishes. Consequently, team ministries, for example, elect their lay representatives separately by church according to the size of their respective electoral rolls.

5. The table at Appendix A shows the allocation of lay representatives for each church/parishes electoral roll. There has been no change to this allocation formula, and it has remained standard for quite some time.

6. Out of an expected return of Electoral Roll forms of 330, this formula would allocate the following number of representatives per deanery (including clergy) and ex-officio members as:

Deanery	Elected Laity & Clergy	Ex-Officio Diocesan Synod Laity	Ex-Officio General Synod Laity	Total
Battersea	47	2		49
Bermondsey & Rotherhithe	31	2	1	34
Camberwell	48	2		50
Charlton	55	2	1	58
Croydon Addington	38	2		40
Croydon Central	57	3	2	62
Croydon North	53	2		55
Croydon South	39	2		41
Deptford	38	2		40
Dulwich	42	2		44
East Lewisham	70	2		72
Eltham & Mottingham	31	2		33
Kingston	88	4		92
Lambeth North	98	2	2	102
Lambeth South	61	2		63
Merton	111	5		116
Plumstead	49	2		51
Reigate	106	5		111
Richmond & Barnes	61	2		63
Southwark & Newington	68	2		70
Sutton	82	3		85
Tandridge	96	4	1	101
Tooting	60	2	1	63
Wandsworth	62	3	1	66
West Lewisham	34	2		36

7. It can be seen there is a considerable variation in the number of representatives per deanery in the table above, which reflects the significant differences in size between some of our deaneries. This means that (as has almost certainly been the case previously) there will be a number of Deanery Synods where the total membership (that is all the laity & clergy combined) is less than 50 people.

8. In the Church Representation Rules (Section 21(1)(b)) it states that the Diocesan Synod should attempt to ensure "as far as practicable" that the total membership of any deanery is no less than 50, but that it should definitively be no more than 150. Taking account of the size differentials between deaneries there is not a logical and appropriate scheme of representation for us at present which satisfies both of these limits. Accordingly, this

proposal recognises it will be recommending a formula which results in some deaneries having a smaller total membership than would be ideal, but that this is a natural consequence of our current deanery structure. The structure seeks to encourage adequate and achievable representation for parishes of all sizes. Were the current structure simply to be scaled up (so that, for example, every tier had one additional representative) our modelling suggests that larger deanery synods would exceed the absolute maximum size of 150. If more representation were added to parishes of certain sizes only, the policy intent of the current structure would be lost, with the effect that some parishes may either feel under-represented or may struggle to recruit sufficient volunteers.

9. Due to a considerable amount of effort in collecting the full revision forms this year, we have achieved a 95% return rate. Parishes who do not return forms are allocated one place as standard. This data is particularly important for next year's General Synod's quinquennial elections, as Deanery Synod members form the electorate for those elections. Parishes will be asked to provide the names and details of their Deanery Synod members as soon as practically possible as voters' details are frozen when the General Synod is promulged and cannot be updated. Full details of this will be sent to Area Deans, Lay Chairs and Deanery Secretaries in the new year. Please encourage your electoral roll officers to complete the appropriate forms and send them as directed as soon as they are able following the APCM.

10. Once approved by the Diocesan Synod, the Diocesan Secretary will then include the specified number of lay representatives in the letters to PCC Secretaries that will be sent out in January ahead of the APCMs.

Appendix A

Total Electoral Roll Numbers for a parish or individual church electoral roll numbers for multi-church parish at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting 2025	Number of lay representatives to deanery synod
25 or fewer	1
26-75	2
76-125	3
126-200	4
201-300	5
301-400	6
401-600	7
601 upwards	8