



Diocesan Synod Elections (including election timetable)

Background

This paper provides a summary of the timetable and steps to be taken regarding elections to Diocesan Synod. Note this paper does not include details regarding subsequent committee elections which are required to take place following the reconstitution of Diocesan Synod every three years or six years.

Constitution and Governing documents

Diocesan Synods are constituted under the Synodical Government Measure 1969, Part 4 of the Church Representation Rules (CRR), and the Diocesan Synod Standing Orders, which also set out the rules relating to their procedure and conduct. The Standing Orders were last updated in November 2023.

Purpose

The Diocesan Synod considers the affairs of the Diocese as they arise (a) nationally, from General Synod;(b) locally, from parishes and deaneries; and (c) internally, regarding policy and finance. It consists of elected, nominated, co-opted and ex-officio members of three houses: Bishops, Clergy and Laity. The Bishop presides and will share the chair with the Vice-Presidents, i.e. the Chair of the House of Clergy and the Chair of the House of Laity.

Diocesan Synod has the following statutory functions:

- To consider matters concerning the Church of England and to make provision for such matters in relation to the Diocese, and to consider and express their opinion on any other matters of religious or public interest (not including doctrinal matters);
- To advise the Bishop on any matters on which they may consult Synod; and
- To consider and express their opinion on any matters referred to them by the General Synod, and in particular to approve or disapprove provisions referred to them by the General Synod under Article 8 of the Constitution.

It is important to note that these roles are strategic; more detailed decisions fall under the responsibility of the Bishop's Council and other diocesan committees which submit papers to Diocesan Synod for discussion and decision.

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Members of Diocesan Synod form the electorate which is entitled to vote in elections to Diocesan Boards and Committees including Bishop's Council, the Diocesan Board of Education, the Diocesan Advisory Committee and the Vacancy in See Committee. Members of the Diocesan Synod are also members (but not Directors/Trustees, unless they are also members of the Bishop's Council) of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance, the legal charity and company that manages the affairs of the Diocese. This is set out in the BDBF's Articles of Association.

Composition and Membership

The membership of Diocesan Synod is set out in CRR 29-34 and the Diocesan Synod Standing Orders. There are three Houses: Bishops, Clergy and Laity; members are either elected by Deanery Synods, nominated by the Bishop, co-opted by Diocesan Synod or are members ex-officio. The Diocesan Secretary is Secretary to the Diocesan Synod. Other staff members may be in attendance at meetings as appropriate and relevant to the business under discussion.

Elected members hold office for a three-year term, which runs from 1 August. The last elections took place in 2021, so the next will be due in 2024.

Elections for Diocesan Synod are held within each Deanery. The electorate are the Houses of Clergy and Laity of each deanery (except for co-opted members). The Bishop's Council and Standing Committee of Diocesan Synod must appoint a Diocesan Electoral Registration Officer (EO) to manage and oversee the administration of elections to itself and other Diocesan bodies (CRR 27(1)). On 20 February 2024, Bishop's Council appointed Richard Leaman (CEO and Diocesan Secretary) as the EO.

Ex-officio members CRR 30-32

House of Bishops

- The Diocesan Bishop
- The Suffragan Bishop
- Such other persons in episcopal orders who work in the diocese as the bishop of the diocese may nominate with the agreement of the archbishop of the province.

House of Clergy

- The dean of the cathedral church of the diocese or, where the diocese has more than one cathedral church, the dean of each of them;
- The archdeacon of each archdeaconry in the diocese;
- each proctor elected from the diocese or from a university or theological education institution in the diocese to the Lower House of Convocation of the province;
- any other member of the Lower House of Convocation of the province who resides in the diocese, being either an ex officio or co-opted member of that House or a person chosen by and from the clerical members of the religious communities in the province;
- the chancellor of the diocese (if in Holy Orders);
- the chair of the diocesan board of finance (if in Holy Orders);
- the chair of the diocesan board of education (if in Holy Orders); and
- the chair of the diocesan advisory committee (if in Holy Orders).

The other members of the house of clergy of a diocesan synod are –

- any clerk in Holy Orders nominated by the bishop under Rule 33;

- each person elected by the house of clergy of each deanery synod in the diocese in accordance with Rules 35 to 42; and
- no more than five other persons, each of whom must be a clerk in Holy Orders and co-opted as a member by the house of clergy of the diocesan synod.

House of Laity

The ex officio members of the house of laity of a diocesan synod are –

- each person elected from the diocese as a member of the House of Laity of the General Synod;
- any other member of the House of Laity of the General Synod who resides in the diocese, being either an ex officio or co-opted member of that House or a lay person chosen by and from the religious communities in the province;
- the chancellor of the diocese (if not in Holy Orders),
- the chair of the diocesan board of finance (if not in Holy Orders);
- the chair of the diocesan board of education (if not in Holy Orders); and
- the chair of the diocesan advisory committee (if not in Holy Orders).

The other members of the house of laity of a diocesan synod are –

- any lay person nominated by the bishop under Rule 33,
- each person elected by the house of laity of each deanery synod in the diocese in accordance with Rules 35 to 42; and
- no more than five other persons, each of whom must be an actual communicant aged 16 or over and co-opted as a member by the house of laity of the diocesan synod.

Meetings

Diocesan Synod meets three times a year, usually in March, June and November. It meets on a Saturday, at various locations. Members are warmly encouraged to actively and positively report back to their PCCs and Deanery Synods, strengthening communication within the Diocese.

Timetable for elections

Deadline	Steps to be taken	CRR ref
1 June 2023	EO to ask Deanery Secretaries to certify the number of the members of the house of clergy of their deanery synod as at 31 May.	37 (4)
31 December 2023 (at November Synod)	EO to ask Diocesan Synod to confirm number or formula to be used for elections of deanery synod representatives, both lay and clergy	37 (1)
By 30 March 2024	EO to have liaised with Bishop's Office to appoint Presiding Officer and agree timetable. EO to write to PO and Deanery Secretary setting out timetable and instructions. A register of electors for checking, and a Notice of	38 39 (3)

	Election, confirming the number of seats to be filled will also be sent from the EO to each PO and Deanery Secretary	
8 April 2024 (at least 7 days after register of electors is sent to Deanery Secretaries)	Deanery Secretaries must provide the EO with a certificate stating the names and addresses of the electors are correct or a notification in writing of the corrections required.	39(4)
The register of clerical electors and the register of lay electors must be available for inspection at the diocesan office during the period beginning with the issue of nomination papers under Rule 39 and ending with the close of nominations.		39 (6)
22 April 2024 (at least 21 days after list of electors sent to Deanery Secretaries)	EO to send Deanery Secretaries the Nomination Forms to be distributed to all qualified electors (i.e. the elected members of deanery synods – not including co-options) (Forms 4 and 5)	39 (2)
13 May 2024	Nominations close. Nominating paper; nominated by two qualified electors and statement signed by candidate must be submitted by this date. PO to check and forward to EO for scrutiny.	40 (6)
If the number of candidates for an election to a diocesan synod does not exceed the number of seats to be filled, each candidate is declared elected; and the presiding officer must inform each candidate and the secretary of the diocesan synod. Otherwise proceed to voting.		41 (1)
7 June 2024	PO must ensure that each qualified elector is given a voting paper in Form 6, or is given a voting paper in Form 7, showing the name of each candidate; and the voting paper must be accompanied by a written explanation of the right of appeal under Rule 58(2) against the ruling that the nomination of a candidate is valid and of the right of appeal under Rule 58A against the result of the election.	42(1)
24 June 2024 (at least 14 days after voting papers are sent out)	Election end	42 (4) (c)
5 July 2024	EO to advise Diocesan Secretary and candidates of results.	42 (10)

1 August 2024	Ex-officio, nominated and elected members of the new Synod take office (NOT co-opted members – they need to be co-opted by the appropriate House at the first meeting of the new Synod)	35(3) An elected member holds office for a term of three years beginning with the next 1 August following the election.
Before the first meeting of new Synod	Prepare Register of Members (Diocesan Synod members are also corporate members of the BDBF) – ex-officio, elected, etc. This will be ongoing until the new Synod has met, and it should be kept up to date at all times – this represents the corporate membership of Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance	
	Liaise with Diocesan Secretary and Bishop's Office regarding candidates to be nominated by the Bishop (max 10) under CRR or co-opted by the Houses and ensure that candidates are asked to signify their willingness to serve.	32 (2) (c) 33 (1)
9 August	Nomination forms for House Chair elections to be sent out to all qualified electors with a list of eligible candidates (i.e. all elected members of the relevant House of Diocesan Synod)	
At first meeting of synod	Houses to respectively co-opt members as advised by Bishop and Diocesan Secretary – must be on agenda.	Only the Houses of the Diocesan Synod can co-opt additional members per CRR 31(2)(c) and CRR 32(2)(c) so you have to wait for the first meeting of that DS to do the co-opting.
After Synod has met	Update Diocesan Synod membership	
After Synod has met and before 31 December	Administer elections to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bishop's Council and Standing Committee • Diocesan Board of Education; • Vacancy-in-see committee 	