

## CHURCH REPRESENTATION RULES - COMPREHENSIVE REVISION

GS 2046 – contains a serious flaw affecting lay people

BRIEFING from Adrian Greenwood, Southwark 411

1. The comprehensive revision (and in many cases re-writing) of the Church Representation Rules (CRRs) comes back to General Synod for final approval in Feb 2019. It has been a major undertaking and as such is to be welcomed, recognising that such a task is unlikely to be repeated for some time to come. Piecemeal amendments will be possible by resolution under the Synodical Government Measure 1969 (see para 12 below), but not via the use of Legislative Reform Orders. So what we approve will be around for some time to come.
2. 2019 also marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first creation of the House of Laity within the newly formed Church Assembly. And there are now Houses of Laity at Diocesan and Deanery level. Meanwhile, we strive to make progress with the **twin culture changes** sought through Setting God's People Free (approved in 2017) one of which calls for **mutual esteem between laity and clergy based on their mutual baptism in Christ**.
3. I am therefore very concerned that the new CRRs contain a provision which **explicitly treats lay people differently from clergy within the synodical structures** – specifically at Deanery level. **Proposed new Rule M 8 (5) will restrict a lay member of Deanery Synod to serving 2 consecutive terms of three years**. There is no such restriction for clergy and no such restriction at Diocesan & General Synod levels (although licensed clergy are subject to a retirement age which does not apply to lay people).
4. For Churchwardens, there is a 'statutory' limit of 6 continuous years, although the APCM can vote to dis-apply this Rule. And, similarly, the APCM may impose a restriction on the number of terms served by PCC members. In the latter situation, the initiative and power, lies with the APCM – the CRRs are permissive.
5. What the Steering & Revision Committees have done is opted to follow the Churchwarden route, allowing an APCM to vote to dis-apply the new Rule M 8 (5), rather than the PCC route, giving the APCM power to introduce a limit on the number of terms if it chooses to. Churchwardens are of course exclusively lay, and work week-in, week-out on their duties at parish level. Indeed, my original submission to the Revision Committee proposed that the 'PCC solution' be extended to Deanery Synod members. Lay Deanery Synod members perform a representative role – and have a key role as electors – see 8 below.
6. I fully accept that there is an issue with Deanery Synod members (lay and clergy) going on and on and blocking new life and growth, but I am concerned that the solution now on offer is **seriously flawed**. It is a **very blunt instrument** – '2 terms and you're off'.
7. First, because it is **wrong in principle**, in a comprehensive review of the CRRs, such as this, to propose that only the lay people submit to this restriction and only at Deanery level. If term limits are considered a good thing, this is a missed opportunity.
8. Second, **because the elected lay members of Deanery Synod are the electors for Diocesan & General Synods, this is a huge intervention in the whole electoral processes affecting only the laity**. (This point was only finally clarified during the process of the Measure and I think the Steering & Revision Committee have completely overlooked it).
9. Thirdly, I don't believe that the Revision Committee consulted with the National Deaneries Group in making this change, which they did at Revision Stage (it was not in the original draft).
10. In the debate on the Revision Stage, Clive Scowen moved an amendment to delete these clauses (then known as M 6 (5) and M 6 (6)), which the Steering Committee resisted. 40

members stood so the matter was debated. 3 lay members supported Clive – Mike Todd (now Diocesan Lay Chair of Truro); Brian Wilson (Southwark) and Deborah McIsaac (a Deanery Lay Chair from Salisbury). One clergyperson spoke against - Simon Taylor, an Area Dean from Derby, who spoke of the need for fresh blood; and the Archbishop of York also spoke against, citing Rule M6 (6) – which allows the APCM to dis-apply – as the answer to the concerns. After a call for the closure of debate by Simon Butler (the Prolocutor of Canterbury), Clive’s amendment was defeated on a show of hands. It is important to remember that this was the last of several amendments by Clive, in quite a long list of amendments during a long and sometimes tedious afternoon. And because this item had been the subject of a specific debate and vote at Revision Stage, the Standing Orders prohibit the Steering Committee from re-visiting the issue.

11. And finally, restricting all lay elected Deanery Synod reps to 2 terms of 3 years will, I fear, pose **huge practical problems** for the successful operation of Deanery Synods and the successful progressing of new blood up the synodical ladder. Having a compulsory flow through of new lay people will imbalance the operation of Synod vis a vis the clergy who are there by right and for as long as they are in post (even if they don’t want to be.) It will impact on the election of Officers (notably Lay Chairs) and Steering Committee members if lay people can only serve two terms. Will effective lay Deanery Synod members be able to gain sufficient experience at Deanery level to be elected to Diocesan and/or General Synod? And/or to become effective leaders in their Deanery? Yes, if their APCM votes to dis-apply – but not otherwise!
12. It is the case that, assuming the Measure is passed and comes into force with effect from 2020, the first Deanery Synod elections it will affect (unless the APCM resolves to dis-apply) will be in 2026 and the first General Synod elections that will be impacted will be in 2030, so from a practical point of view, there is time (a) to persuade every APCM of the merits of dis-applying and (b) to consider ways to amend the provisions. But amendments will require a **two thirds majority in all 3 Houses** (Bishops, Clergy and Laity) – see para 1 above.
13. Because of the points of principle at stake (paras 7 and 8 above) and because I intend to take action as described in para 12 (a) and (b) above, **I feel that the only honourable course of action for me to follow is to speak and vote against the Measure at Final Approval Stage.**
14. That is my current intention. In the meantime, I would be very keen to gauge (a) how many lay people feel the same way ; (b) how many lay members of Synod would be willing to vote against the Measure; and (c) how much support there might be for a PMM to delete M 8 (5) and (7) from the new Rules.
15. NB – to pass, the Measure will require a simple majority in all 3 Houses, **so it would take half of the House of laity voting against to halt the process and cause a re-think.**
16. PS - From 2012 – 2018, I chaired 2 Working Groups for the Bishop of Southwark looking at ways to ‘breathe new life into deaneries’. As part of that process, we produced new Model Rules for Deanery Synods. These restricted Officers (excluding the Area Dean) to no more than 3 terms of 3 years in the same role and put in writing an encouragement to elected Deanery Synod members to *consider* stepping aside after 9 years. It was this that led me to suggest to the Revision Committee that the APCM be given the power locally to impose a restrictions – para 5 above. Between 2012 and 2015, I was also a member of another Working Group, chaired by Jane Steen, looking at governance at Diocesan level, which brought together the DBF, Parsonages Board, DM&PC and Bishops Council in a single body accountable to Diocesan Synod. This introduced a rule of a maximum of 3 terms of 3 years for Trustees, with a norm of two terms.