

THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL SYNOD
CONSULTATION ON TERM LIMITS FOR DEANERY SYNOD MEMBERS

Final Draft February 2019

1. The draft Church Representation and Ministers Measure was presented to General Synod in February 2019 for final approval. During the course of the debate, there were a number of speakers who raised concerns about the inclusion in the new Church Representation Rules of a provision which would limit parochial lay representatives on deanery synods to two consecutive terms of three years, although the Annual Parochial Church Meeting (APCM) would be able to disapply that limit.
2. Such a limit cannot apply to members of the House of Clergy of deanery synods.
3. The provision can be found in rule M8(5) of the new Rules, which states:

A person who serves as a parochial representative of the laity on the deanery synod for the whole or any part of each of two successive terms of office may not be nominated for election under Rule M6(1)(a) to serve as such for the whole or any part of the term of office immediately following the second of those terms.

Rule M8(6) gives the APCM power to disapply rule M8(5).

4. In response to the disquiet raised during the debate, the Chair of the Business Committee announced that she would refer that provision to the Elections Review Group (ERG) for further consideration.
5. The ERG met on 1 April 2019 and agreed to consult widely on a number of different options. This document outlines the consultation proposal and process.

CONSULTATION PROPOSAL

6. The ERG is circulating this consultation document to members of General Synod, Diocesan Secretaries, Parochial Church Council Secretaries, Lay Chairs of Diocesan Synods, Lay Chairs of Deanery Synods, Area and Rural Deans, and the National Deaneries Network.
7. The ERG proposes seven options for consideration by respondents. Each of these will be outlined further below. In each case “terms” refers to terms of office served as an elected parochial representative of the laity on a deanery synod:
 - a. The limit on successive terms as provided for in the new Rules
 - b. Reversing the default position so that there would be no limit on successive terms unless the APCM resolved to impose it
 - c. Increasing the number of successive terms which could be served, and what the new number should be
 - d. Giving the APCM power to specify what the limit on successive terms should be in that parish
 - e. Giving deanery synods power to impose a deanery-wide limit on

- successive terms
- f. Giving diocesan synods power to impose a diocesan-wide limit on successive terms.
 - g. No term limit.

Option one: The term limit as provided for in the new Rules

- 8. This option reflects the limit on successive terms as provided for in the new Rules given final approval by General Synod in February 2019. It provides a limit of two successive terms of three years, so a member can have a maximum of six consecutive years as an elected parochial representative of the laity before being required to stand down. The APCM will have the power to disapply that limit. Since the limit is not retrospective it applies only to terms of office served after the new Rules come into force, so that the earliest a person could be required to stand down as a result of its application would be 2026.
- 9. The term limit as provided for in the new Rules would enforce changes in deanery synod representation which might not otherwise occur, which in turn, it is argued, could lead to innovation and better engagement at deanery synod level.
- 10. Limited terms of office could support better succession planning by building in the requirement for recruitment of new members.
- 11. This proposal reflects the rules relating to Churchwardens, who are limited to six consecutive annual terms of office, subject to the APCM's power to disapply that limit.
- 12. The introduction of term limits could impact on elections for diocesan synod and General Synod, as Lay Members of the deanery synod form the electorate.
- 13. The introduction of term limits, some contend, could make it difficult to find experienced people to act as lay chairs of deanery synods and lay members for deanery standing committees.

Option two: Reversing the default position so that there would be no term limit unless the APCM resolved to impose it

- 14. This option would give the APCM the power to impose a term limit if it considered it appropriate for the local situation.
- 15. This proposal reflects the rules relating to representatives of the laity on the PCC, where the default position is that there is no term limit but the APCM has power to impose one.
- 16. Clearly under this proposal the APCM would need to act only if it felt that a term limit was necessary in its particular circumstances.

Option three: Increasing the number of consecutive terms which could be served, and what the new number should be

- 17. This would reflect the proposal in the Church Representation and Ministers Measure but would give the option of additional terms of office.
- 18. This could support APCMs to build into their planning more effective recruitment of new members for deanery synods and provide the option for terms of office to be staggered more appropriately.
- 19. The maximum number of consecutive terms would still apply nationally, with no local discretion other than to disapply the term limit in its entirety. If this

approach were adopted it would also need to be agreed nationally what the maximum number of terms should be.

Option four: Giving the APCM power to specify what the term limit should be in that parish

20. This option would enable the APCM to consider what is appropriate for the parish or benefice and to provide a term limit which reflects that.

Option five: Giving deanery synods power to impose a deanery-wide term limit

21. This option would enable the deanery synod to reflect the needs of the deanery and to set a term limit as appropriate.

Option six: Giving diocesan synods power to impose a diocesan-wide term limit

22. This option would give the power to the diocesan synods to set a term limit applicable throughout the diocese.

Option seven: No term limit

23. This option reflects the current position under the old rules and maintains parity with clergy members of deanery synods for whom no term limit is possible.

24. This option can lead to the same lay members remaining on deanery synod for many years, restricting the turnover of lay members.

25. The challenge to find new members could be addressed by not having limited terms of office, which can particularly be a concern for rural parishes.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

26. The ERG has prepared a consultation form which is appended to this document and is also available on <https://www.churchofengland.org/simplification>. The consultation will close on **Wednesday 10 July 2019**.

27. The ERG would welcome comments on this issue from anyone who has a view on the matter. The consultation form provides the opportunity for respondents

- (i) to say in respect of each option whether they regard it as acceptable,
- (ii) to rank the options in order of preference, and
- (iii) to give longer comments if they so wish.

28. In order to compare like with like, the consultation documents also invites each respondent to state to which category or categories of consultee he or she belongs.

29. The ERG will consider the responses and will report to the Business Committee in due course, with an aim to providing an update to General Synod in February 2020 and bringing final proposals for change (if any) to Synod no later than July 2020.

30. Responses can be sent by email to clerk@churchofengland.org or by post to Jenny Jacobs, Central Secretariat, Church House, Great Smith Street, London, SW1P 3AZ.

Consultation options

1. Please state your name and email address or postal address:
2. Please indicate to which category or categories of consultee you belong (tick all which apply to you):
 - member of General Synod
 - Diocesan Secretary
 - PCC secretary
 - lay chair of a diocesan Synod
 - lay chair of a deanery synod
 - area or rural dean
 - National Deaneries Network
 - other (please specify)
3. On the following table please:
 - (i) indicate with a Y or an N whether you consider whether a particular proposal is acceptable, AND
 - (ii) rank the proposals in order of preference.

To indicate your numerical preference, enter “1” against your first preference, “2” against your second preference, and so on until you can no longer determine an order of preference amongst the options.

Option	Acceptable?	Rank
ONE. No more than two consecutive terms of three years		
TWO. Reversing the default position to that there would be no limit on successive terms unless the APCM resolved to impose it		
THREE. Increasing the number of consecutive terms which could be served (If you consider option three acceptable, please indicate what you consider the maximum number of consecutive terms should be)		
FOUR. Giving the APCM power to specify what the limit on successive terms should be in that parish		
FIVE. Giving deanery synods the power to impose a deanery-wide limit on successive terms		
SIX. Giving Diocesan synods the power to impose a diocesan-wide limit on successive terms		
SEVEN. No term limit		

4. Please record any further comments in the box below:

Further Comments

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