

## Summary of main features of the new Rules

The new Church Representation Rules implement a range of reforms. These include the elimination of various procedural requirements relating to parish governance, the provision of a separate Part of the Rules for model Rules relating to parish governance, provision enabling parishes to make their own Rules (with the agreement of the bishop's council), provision enabling connected parishes to establish joint councils in place of their separate PCCs, and updating the forms. We have selected some of the principal reforms as outlined in the following paragraphs.

### Revision of church electoral roll and preparation of new roll

The provisions relating to the revision of church electoral rolls and the preparation of new rolls in **Part 1** have been simplified. Names no longer need to be removed from the roll during the course of the year; they only need to be added: see [Rule 2](#). Names are still removed, as appropriate, at the annual revision: see [Rule 4](#). Provision has been made to avoid a person's name incorrectly being removed from a roll: see [Rule 4\(8\)](#).

Rolls may be published electronically instead of in paper form. The roll as published must include every name entered on the roll but not other personal data (e.g. addresses). see [Rule 5](#).

### Annual meeting

The annual parochial church meeting must now be held between 1 January and 31 May (rather than 30 April): see [Rule M1](#).

The annual meeting no longer appoints sidesmen; they are now appointed by the PCC: see [Rule M6\(6\)](#).

A person who is elected in 2020 or subsequently to serve as a lay member of a deanery synod is limited to **two successive terms of office**. Having served two successive terms, the person is ineligible for election for the next three-year term before becoming eligible again. But the annual meeting may pass a resolution disapplying the limit on the number of terms which may be served by lay members elected by the parish to the deanery synod. The term limit does not apply to any term of office which began before 2020 and will therefore not restrict anyone continuing until the deanery synod elections in 2026. see [Rule M8\(5\) to \(7\)](#).

### Parochial church councils – ensuring lay majority

Lay members of a PCC cannot be outnumbered by clerical members: see [Rule M15\(2\)](#). A meeting of the PCC is quorate only if the majority of members present are lay: see [Rule M27\(2\)](#).

### **Parochial church councils – meetings**

The Rules no longer specify a minimum number of PCC meetings which must be held each year. Instead, the PCC is required to hold a sufficient number of meetings to enable the efficient transaction of its business: see [Rule M23\(1\)](#).

The Rules now expressly state who is entitled to attend a PCC meeting. A PCC may invite other persons to attend its meetings as it wishes. see [Rule M24](#).

### **Parochial church councils – conduct of business by correspondence**

Provision is now made in the Rules to enable PCCs to conduct business by correspondence (whether on paper or by email) where the chair of the PCC decides that particular business can properly be conducted in that way: see [Rule M29](#).

### **Joint councils**

The Rules enable the annual meetings of ‘connected parishes’ to make schemes establishing a joint council: see [Section C](#) of Part 9. Parishes are ‘connected’ if they belong to the same benefice, if they belong to benefices held in plurality or if they are in the area of the same group ministry. A scheme establishing a joint council can transfer all the property, rights, liabilities and functions of the individual PCCs to the joint council. If a scheme does that, the individual PCCs go into abeyance and no separate PCC meetings are held: the joint council does everything. Alternatively, a scheme establishing a joint council may transfer only certain property, rights, liabilities and functions – as specified in the scheme – of the individual PCCs to the joint council. If a scheme does that, the individual PCCs continue to function alongside the joint council, with the joint council exercising only the functions that are transferred to it and the other functions remaining with the individual PCCs.

### **House of Laity of the General Synod**

The apportionment of the number of members of the House of Laity between the provinces of Canterbury and York is no longer required to be 70:30 if the General Synod passes a resolution specifying some other proportion.

### **Electronic communication**

The Rules now make comprehensive provision for the use of communication by email: see [Rule 76](#). Providing an email address is optional; but if one is provided, any communication under the Rules may be sent to that email address. An email will satisfy any requirements in the Rules for a communication to be in writing. Where in the past there was an obligation to pass on addresses (e.g. by the PCC secretary to the secretary of the deanery synod), any email address given by a person must also be passed on.

### **Electronic voting in elections**

The Rules now facilitate the use of electronic voting methods in elections to diocesan synods and to the General Synod: see [Rule 42\(5\)](#) and [Rule 56](#).

## **Data protection**

The Rules take account of recent changes to the law contained in the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. The Rules have been designed to avoid any need to obtain consent from individuals for processing their personal data for the purposes of the Rules. Instead, personal data can be processed in the ways required by the Rules on the basis (i) that doing so 'is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation' (as the Rules have the force of law); and (ii) so far as data includes 'special category personal data' because it reveals a person's religious beliefs, that the processing is carried out internally in the course of the Church of England's legitimate activities. Personal data contained in the published version of the electoral roll is data which 'is manifestly made public by the data subject' when he or she applies to have his or her name included on the roll and is covered on that basis.

A person who holds personal data for the purposes of the Rules must ensure that the data is held securely: see [Rule 72](#).

Further information and guidance about data protection for parishes is available on the Parish Resources website.