

BILL 3 – Commentary (August 2026)

Diocesan Synod Statute

Members of Synod, tēnā koutou,

This document is an updated version of the one I provided for you back in April when the Synod Review Working Group shared the first draft of this Bill for consultation. The two footnotes draw attention to the significant changes that came from the consultation.

The intent of this documents remains unchanged. I seek to guide you, as best I can, through Bill 3 which will be discussed this coming session of Synod. The ‘working document’ of the Synod Review Working Group remains a more detailed history and overview of the work that has been done these past years and may also be of use to jog your memories.

I appreciate that Bill 3 is long, but the words on these pages cover every aspect of our Synod’s gathering, so it is important that we all understand the changes proposed.

I look forward to seeing you at Synod.

The Reverend Michael Berry – August 2026

OVERVIEW

The Bill is in three sections, which are unpacked in more detail below:

- The **Bill** ‘proper’. This directs the mechanical changes that are to take place, including the repeal (deleting) of the current arrangements and the enacting (creation) of the new arrangements that are then attached as the two schedules.
- **Schedule 1 – New Statute.** This is the new Diocesan Synod Statute 2026 that will cover the high level of how Synod will function.
- **Schedule 2 – New Standing Orders.** These are the new Standing Orders – the detailed rules that direct the conduct of Synod.

THE BILL

found on pages 5 – 6 of the Synod Business Book

This directs the mechanical changes that are to take place.

Clause 3 (Repeal)

The current provisions are captured in three Statutes and the current Standing Orders. These are all repealed (deleted).

Clause 4 (Enactment)

New provisions are enacted (created) in the form of one Statute (that will cover the areas previously covered by those three statutes) and new Standing Orders. This clause also covers continuity provisions maintaining the current members of Synod (our lay representatives, for example, mostly have one year of term left) and current standing resolutions are kept

Clause 5¹

The effect of clauses 5.2 – 5.3 are to move the date on which new members of Diocesan Council take office, from an ‘immediate’ effect, to now being 1 January after Synod. This will remove pressure around election timing and allow the new council to begin its work with the New Year.

Clauses 5 – 8 (Changes to other Statutes)

Changes to other statutes so that they refer to the new statute in place of the statute(s) being repealed.

SCHEDULE 1 (NEW STATUTE)

found on pages 7 – 14 of the Synod Business Book

This is the new Diocesan Synod Statute 2026 that will cover the high level of how Synod will function.

Part 1 (General Provisions)

Why and when Synod meets. This includes the purpose statements agreed by Synod in 2024, and the explicit provision to meet online if it is desired (as agreed in consultation).

Part 2 (Membership)

Who is a member and how they are elected. The key changes in this section include:

- The removal of the provision for clergy without a license (who are not listed as voting members) to have the right to speak but not to vote. People in this group often attend as observers and will still be able to do so.
- The Mother’s Union and Association of Anglican Women are given only one seat in line with representatives of other organisations (as listed in clause 5i).

Part 3 (Order of Synod)

Key provisions for how Synod are to meet, make decisions and set rules (Standing Orders). These provisions are essentially unchanged.

Part 4 (Elections)

The method and manner in which elections are to be held. This is an area of significant change in line with consultation (see working document).

Changes include:

- Change to a Single Transferable Voting (STV) system. While the broad parameters of STV are outlined, Diocesan Council will be tasked with the details of the election. This is because STV is highly technical making it difficult to fully regulate in our statute without introducing further regulations. There are some variations depending on the system used.
- Nominations will close during Synod but the election will take place after Synod has concluded. STV allows for this to happen as a satisfactory result can be determined from one ballot.
- Elections can be conducted fully online and are likely to do so. This will likely mean an email with a link to a professional voting provider making the process more streamlined and accurate.
- In line with elections to General Synod Te Hinota Whanui, elections to Diocesan Council and Pool of Nominators will also be conducted ‘in houses’ (clergy vote for clergy and lay people vote for lay people) rather than requiring a majority ‘in both houses’ (where both houses vote for all candidates). This is in part for consistency, and in part due to the nature of STV.

Other provision are essentially unchanged.

¹ This change was added following the consultation period to further support changes around new electoral processes.

Part 5 (Standing Resolutions)

These are much simplified provisions from the existing Standing Resolutions and Standing Order Statute 1968. Clause 71 captures the definition of a standing resolution that the Legal Business Committee have been working with in recent years.

SCHEDULE 2 (NEW STANDING ORDERS)

found on pages 15 – 29 of the Synod Business Book

These are the new Standing Orders – the detailed rules that direct the conduct of Synod. These rules are not a statute so are more easily changed by Synod, either temporarily by ‘leave’, or permanently by motion.

Part 1 (General Provisions)

The list of definitions in Part 1A is updated to reflect other changes, but terminology is largely unchanged. Provisions around the operation of the standing orders in Part 1B are essentially unchanged.

Part 2 (Appointments)

These are the people and bodies elected to support the running of Synod.

Changes include:

- Removal of the committee clerks (who are secretaries for Synod in committee) in favour of the secretaries (who are the secretaries for Synod in ordinary session) providing that function regardless of how Synod is meeting. This is in part due to the anticipated reduction of committee work when Synod meets.
- The broadening of the responsibilities of the Legal Business Committee (LBC), captured in Standing Order 18 and further in Standing Orders 24 and 25. This sees LBC take responsibility for ensuring matters for discussion are properly categorised (see Part 3). Other responsibilities are essentially unchanged.
- A renaming and broadening of the Order Paper Committee to become the Synodal Committee. This committee will take more responsibility for forming and following processes to effectively discern the agenda of Synod.

The provisions for Select Committees and Commissions have been removed. These provisions have not been used in some time. Synod would still be able to set up a bespoke group like this if needed.

Part 3 (Business)

This is perhaps the core of changes following consultation in recent years.

Business will take one of four forms:

- *Part 3B (Bills)* – New provisions formally establish consultation stages for Bills as these have proven useful in recent years. The purpose of the consultation is to provide space for final drafting to take place based on feedback. The committee stage at Synod is no longer mandated but only provided where members see a need for it.²
- *Part 3C (Dialogue)* – The addition and promotion of synodal ‘dialogue’ is a new method of business. This allows Synod to discuss themes, as opposed to debating already formed motions. See the working document for further information.

• ² *The initial draft of the Bill, circulated for consultation in April, gave more power to the consultation stage and provided for detail discussion at Synod in only special circumstances. This proved to be unworkable, and so was changed – proving the worth of consultation!*

- *Part 3D (Motions)* – Whilst unchanged in nature, the purpose of a motion is defined as a means of distinguishing from discussions that should be either dialogue or presentation.
- *Part 3E (Presentation)* – The more formal inclusion of presentations to inform Synod of relevant matters.

These forms are all defined in the first clause of their respective part.

Part 3A outlines the process for business, which will be:

- Members submit one of the above by the existing 60-day deadline.
- LBC review and ensure business has been properly categorised. If material is more suited to another category, they are able to change it as is appropriate (eg. if someone submits a motion would be more appropriate as a presentation).
- LBC then process the Bills and Motions accordingly.
- The Synodal Committee undertake a process to select and prioritise dialogue and presentations, and also form the Order Paper (agenda) of Synod.

These provisions do not include any 'General Debate' due to the broadening of presentations as a formal form of business.

Part 4 (Proceedings)

Technical details of the order and proceeding of Synod overall. This remains essentially unchanged.

Parts 5 – 7

Synod is able to meet in a variety of 'modes'. The purpose of this is to allow for different rules to better suit the style of business or discussion. These remain unchanged.

Part 5 (General Conduct of Synod in Ordinary Session)

This is the default or main mode of Synod, hence this section being the longest. Provisions remain essentially unchanged.

Part 6 (Synod in Conference)

This is the mode in which Synod will address matters of Dialogue.

Part 7 (Synod in Committee)

Part 8 (Voting)

These provisions do not include what was previously the third and final means of deciding a vote – 'division'. Division is the process by which the names of all members are called out individually for each member to formally record their vote on a matter. It has not been used in many decades.

Voting on matters will be conducted by two means:

- 'on voices and hands' – commonly used now, the President determines the outcome by gauging the response of voices. The President can, if they choose, ask for a show of hands.
- by 'counting votes' – this method has been the more common method for counting close or controversial votes – members stand in their place to be counted.

Part 9 (Formal Matters)

The collection and publication of the proceedings (minutes) of Synod. This remains essentially unchanged.