

**HANDBOOK FOR MEMBERS OF
BLACKBURN DIOCESAN SYNOD**

Welcome to Diocesan Synod.



The purpose of any Synodical body is to listen. The primary purpose of Diocesan Synod is worship because, in our worship, we listen to God. And then, in our deliberations and discussions we make space to listen to each other. Our purpose is not to win arguments or score points. It is to listen to God in our midst and discern our will for this Diocese which is part of his body.

Rooted in that listening, as a member of Synod you have a key role in the Diocese of Blackburn and can be an instrument of change and development that can see the Kingdom of God flourish across the county. I hope you will take a full and active part, seeking to work through committees and in full synod meetings to help us grow a Diocese of healthy churches that can transform their communities to the glory of God.

Bishop Philip North

Welcome from the Synod Business Group

We are delighted you are giving of your time to serve the mission of our wider family of the Diocese of Blackburn in Lancashire. We hope it will be a fulfilling experience to listen together to God and to each other and together to discern strategic ways forward.

To that end, Synod has agreed Terms of Engagement based on four postures:

- Gentleness
- Humility
- Faith
- Courage

Induction of new members is vital to enable confidence, belonging and diversity of voices, and we are very grateful to Stephen Whittaker and all those who have road-tested and contributed to this handbook.

The first Synod was called in response to a missional imperative. “The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them” (Acts 15.12). It is our aim that all our business is focused outwards on enabling the gospel of Jesus Christ to reach the people of Lancashire and towards the growth of flourishing communities of joy of all ages, stages, and backgrounds.

We are always keen to receive feedback and input.

Jill Duff, Bishop of Lancaster Chair of The Synod Business Group

Introduction

This guide seeks to explain the systems and processes used in Diocesan Synod and acts as an amplification of the Standing Orders for Synod to allow all people to fully participate. The Standing Orders for Synod are the rules under which the business of synod is conducted, they include who can be elected and how, and how debates and questions take place. A copy of the current rules can be found on the website here: <https://www.blackburn.anglican.org/diocesan-synod>

The Purpose of Synod

The Diocesan Synod is the main decision-making body for the Church of England in the Blackburn Diocese. Synod considers major strategic decisions, policy and governance changes and agrees the budget for the Diocese. It is where debate occurs to set an agreed directions of travel for the work of the Diocese. The officers of the DBF, Archdeacons, Bishops, clergy and parishes are all accountable to Synod.

Traveling and Parking

We try to arrange it so that the Synod meets in a venue central to the Diocese and with easy access. An address and postcode for the venue will be issued for travel and parking and will be included with the agenda for each meeting.

Badges

Members will be provided with a badge for the meeting which will indicate that they are members of Synod. This will be issued at registration before each meeting and collected after. Members are requested to wear their badge during the meeting to show voting eligibility.

Key Officer Contacts

If you wish to seek advice, ask a question, or discuss detail of Diocesan policy on particular matters, please contact one of the following officers as appropriate:

For any questions relating to synod processes, motions and questions for Synod along with any matters that have no obvious place for direction:



Diocesan Secretary
diocesan.secretary@blackburn.anglican.org

For questions about meeting and organisations:



Synod Administration
jenny.harborne@blackburn.anglican.org

For questions regarding governance and finance:



Head of Finance and Deputy
Diocesan Secretary
ruth.mcgaughey@blackburn.anglican.org

For questions regarding Vision and Strategy:



Director of Vision Delivery and Deputy
Diocesan Secretary
carolyn.barton@blackburn.anglican.org

[How to contact Deanery representatives](#)

The names of the elected Deanery Representatives are held by the Deanery Synod secretaries. Contact with a Deanery Synod secretary can be achieved via the Diocesan offices or through the Area Dean.

[The Diocese of Blackburn Structure](#)

When people refer to 'The Diocese' - what do they mean? There are many answers to this question....

A) **The Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF)** at Clayton House exists to support the c. 235 parishes (each of which are themselves independent charities) through:

- paying clergy stipends,
- providing and maintaining clergy houses,
- supporting ordinands and curates in training,
- supporting and training people in lay ministries,
- providing advice on church buildings,
- providing training and support to parishes on implementing the themes of Vision 2026 in their context,
- providing safeguarding advice and training,
- providing support and advice on parish finance, governance and administration,

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February 2024

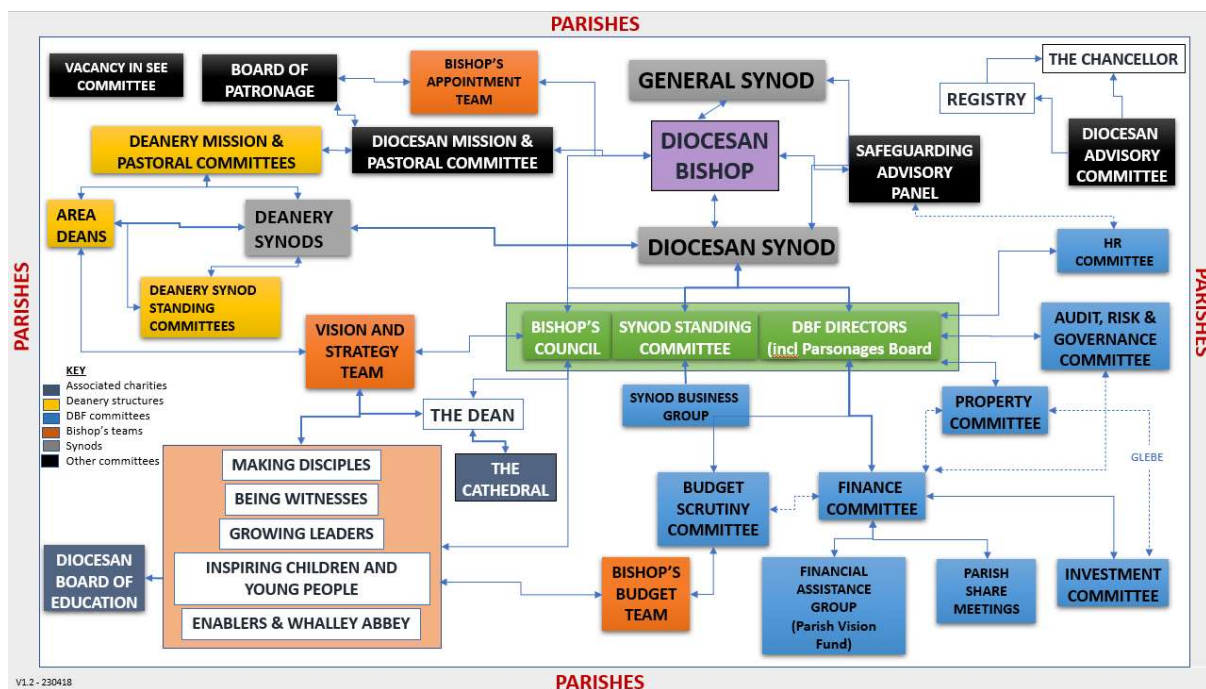
- providing a Retreat House (Whalley Abbey).

B) **The Bishops and Archdeacons** are independent 'office holders' (not employees of the Diocesan Board of Finance). Their role is to support both clergy and lay parish leaders in pastoral, parish vacancy, administration and governance matters. The Bishops also confirm candidates at services held across the Diocese.

C) **Blackburn Cathedral** is a separate charity to the DBF and is led by The Dean supported by its own governance arrangements. NB The Dean is an ex-officio Director of the DBF.

D) **The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE)** is a separate charity to the DBF and is led by the Director of Education who is accountable to a board of directors. The DBF currently provides a financial grant to the DBE to fund parish-focused children/young people work.

Diocesan Committee



The committees of the Diocesan Board of Finance are:

Committees of the Diocesan Board of Finance:	Other Diocesan Committees:
Finance Committee	Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee
Investment Committee	Property Committee (Parsonages Board)

HR Committee	Board of Patronage
Synod Business Group	Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel
Budget Scrutiny Group	Diocesan Advisory Committee
Audit, Risk and Governance Committee	Vacancy in See Committee
Bishop's Budget Team	

If you wish to enquire about the work of the committees or ask questions about how they operate, please contact jenny.harborne@blackburn.anglican.org

Membership of each committee that exists in the Diocese is published on the Diocesan website along with a summary of the work each committee does.

<https://www.blackburn.anglican.org/diocesan-synod-committees>

Elections to Diocesan Synod

Every three years beginning with 2021, the House of Clergy and the House of Laity of each Deanery Synod in a Diocese must elect the members of the Diocesan Synod.

A Diocesan Synod must, no later than 31 December in the year before an election of its members, determine for each House of each Deanery Synod in the Diocese the number of members to be elected by that House.

A candidate for election to either the House of Clergy or House of Laity of a Diocesan Synod must be nominated by two qualified electors, each of whom is a member of the relevant house of the Deanery Synod to which the candidate belongs.

A clerk in Holy Orders who is a member of a Deanery Synod is qualified for election by the House of Clergy of that Deanery Synod as a member of the Diocesan Synod.

A lay person is qualified for election by the House of Laity of a Deanery Synod as a member of the Diocesan Synod if the person is an actual communicant aged 16 or over –

- a) whose name is on the roll of a parish in the Deanery,
- b) whose name is on the community roll of a cathedral church in the Deanery which is not a parish church,
- c) who is declared by the leader of a mission initiative in the Deanery to be part of the worshipping community involved in the initiative.

Once the Diocesan Synod is elected, elections are run for the DBF Board and Bishop's Council and other Diocesan committees. Each committee sets out in its terms of reference who can be appointed or elected to serve.

The approximate timetable for the Diocesan Synod elections is:

Date	Event	Action By
Year Prior to Diocesan Synod Elections		
June	Request sent to Deanery Secretaries asking them to confirm the number of members of the House of Clergy and Laity of the Deanery Synod by category of membership	Diocesan Office and Deanery Synod Secretaries
June	PCC Secretaries are chased up for outstanding Electoral Roll figures	Diocesan Office and PCC Secretaries
October	Diocesan Synod determines the number of members to be elected to Diocesan Synod by each Deanery Synod	Diocesan Synod
December	Secretary to Diocesan Synod advises Area Deans of the number of members to be elected to Diocesan Synod	Diocesan Office
Year of Diocesan Synod Elections		
Early spring	The names and addresses recorded in the Register of Clerical Electors and in the Register of Lay Electors is sent to the Deanery Synod Secretary	Diocesan Offices and Deanery Synod Secretaries
Early spring	Deanery Synod Secretary certifies that the names and addresses in the registers are	Deanery Synod Secretary

	correct and provides any corrections	
Late March	Deanery Secretaries and Chapter Clerks of Deanery Synods are notified that they are the presiding officers for the election and of the election timetable	Diocesan Offices
Mid/end April	Nomination and ballot papers are sent to Deanery Secretaries and Chapter Clerks	Diocesan Office
Early May	Issue of nomination papers by Deanery Presiding Officer	Deanery Presiding Officer
Mid/end May	Return of nomination papers to Deanery Presiding Officer	Candidates
End May/early June	Issue of ballot papers by Deanery Presiding Officer	Deanery Presiding Officer
Mid June	Return of ballot papers to Deanery Presiding Officer	Electorate
Mid/End June	Counting of Votes	Deanery Presiding Officer
Mid/End June	Deanery Presiding Officer sends result to the Secretary of the Diocesan Synod and candidates	Deanery Presiding Officer
August/September	The newly elected Synod elects the Chair and Vice Chair of the Houses of Clergy and Laity	Diocesan Presiding Officer and Diocesan Synod

The approximate timetable for committee elections is:

Date	Event	Action By
Early October	Nomination forms issued by the Diocesan Presiding Officer	Diocesan Office
Late October	Submission of completed nomination forms and election addresses to the Diocesan Presiding Officer	Candidates
Early November	Issue of ballot papers by Diocesan Presiding Officer	Diocesan Office
Late November	Return of ballot papers to Diocesan Presiding Officer	Electorate
Late November/early December	Counting of votes	Diocesan Office
Late November/early December	Results sent to Diocesan Synod, Bishop's Council and Directors	Diocesan Office

[Induction to new members](#)

Each new triennium new members of the Synod and any other members who wish to attend are offered a welcome evening which includes refreshments and an opportunity to meet other members. The evening will also explain what to expect from the role, help people to understand how they can have a voice, incorporating a mock debate, and to explore how they might serve the Diocese on committees and Bishop's Council. This induction meeting takes place after elections to Synod and before elections to the committees of the Diocese to allow fuller participation.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I get onto Synod?

There are four ways in which you can become a synod member. You can be ex-officio, co-opted, nominated or elected.

Ex Officio Members

These are set out in section 1 of standing orders.

Co-opted Members

Up to five members can be co-opted by the respective house (Clergy or Laity). Houses would need to vote for a co-option based on the skills and abilities of the individual and an explanation of need.

Nominated Members

The Bishop of the Diocese may nominate five additional Clerks in Holy Orders or adult communicants.

Elected Members

Members can be elected by the House of Clergy or Laity of the Deanery Synods in the Diocese in accordance with the Church Representation Rules found [here](#). These elections are held every three years.

Can other people attend a Synod meeting?

Visitors may attend with the permission of the Chair and by invitation of the President (The Bishop of Blackburn). They may be asked to speak, but cannot vote or move any motion or amendment.

Who Chairs a Synod Meeting?

The Bishop of Blackburn is automatically the Chair unless he delegates this role to a Vice-President who are the Chair of the House of Laity and the Chair of the House of Clergy or the Vice-Chairs of these houses. Those holding these roles are listed [here](#).

Why does it matter who the Chair is?

The Chair of the Synod has powers to determine the procedures of Synod, decide the order of speeches, rule on points of order, lengthen or shorten the time for speeches, divide motions into sections, adjourn or close debates at the time allocated and consent to procedural motions. The Chair is responsible for the smooth operation of Synod and has significant power to manage debates.

How do you become the Chair or Vice-Chair of the House of Laity or Clergy?

Following the election to the Synod in each triennium, the Houses run a formal election to appoint the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the respective Houses.

When does Synod meet and how are these times agreed?

Synod must meet formally at least twice per year. Bishop's Council agree the dates and venues for these meetings. The Synod Business Group may suggest times, dates and places to the Bishop's Council. Additional meetings can be called by either a resolution from Bishop's Council or by a request signed by at least 30 members of Synod.

How much notice of a meeting is needed?

Practically the date, time and venue should be notified as soon as possible but no later than 6 weeks before the date. Emergency meetings are exceptional and have different notice and quorum rules.

Do the Houses of Laity and Clergy meet separately?

Sometimes. There are times under Standing Orders that allow this, but mainly this happens if the Chair of the House says so, Synod votes to or the House votes to. The only reason for doing this would be if members of that House felt the open discussion would be unhelpful in business. It is rarely used.

Why do we have three houses?

For a decision to be carried the assent of bishops, ordained and lay members is needed to ensure a representative view.

How does a decision get made?

In most cases a simple vote on a show of hands will make a decision. Providing a clear majority is evident then Synod assumes the Houses agree. On some matters the President (Bishop of Blackburn) or where any ten members require it, a vote can be taken in separate Houses. When this happens, a majority is needed in each House for the decision to carry. In the event of an equal vote in the House of Bishops the president has the casting vote. No one else has a casting vote.

When it is unclear that there is a majority, the hands of members will be counted. A show of hands and count of hands is the only method of voting.

How does the agenda for Synod get agreed?

The Bishop's Council agrees the items of business on advice from the Synod Business Group. This business can be drawn from matters referred to Synod from General Synod, items referred to Synod from Deanery Synods and resolutions of Synod to discuss items. There may also be items of interest for the wider Diocese, to share information and good practice. The priority of business is set out in the Standing Orders.

Bishop's Council delegate the scheduling of time slots for the meeting to the Synod Business Group. Once the content of a meeting is agreed upon, only the Bishop can add urgent business to a meeting.

Who is on the Synod Business Group?

The membership of the Synod Business Group is as follows:

- Chair (appointed by the Bishop for the triennium)
- Secretary to Synod (Diocesan Secretary/Deputy Diocesan Secretary)
- Chair of the House of Clergy
- Vice-Chair of the House of Clergy
- Chair of the House of Laity
- Vice-Chair of the House of Laity
- Up to 3 Co-opted members appointed by Bishop's Council.

Co-options will be used to ensure the group are representative of the breadth of the Diocese as far as possible in terms of theology, tradition, gender and ethnicity. Bishop's Council will assess the need for co-options and appoint the relevant people.

How much information do I get about a meeting and how can I engage?

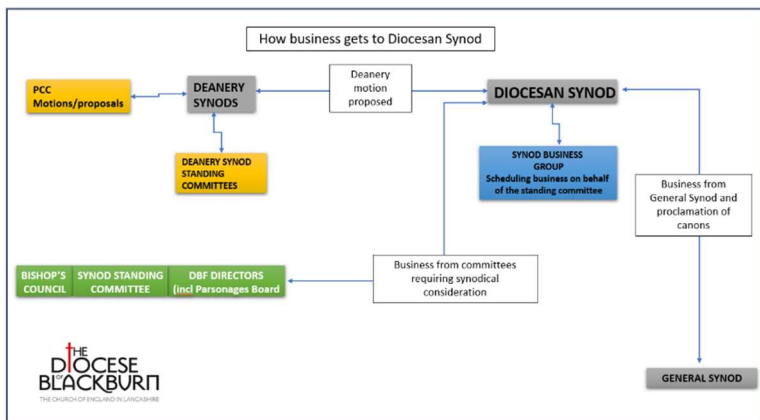
Standing Orders state that papers for the Synod must be circulated at least 14 days prior to a meeting and motions or amendments arising from the agenda or any questions at least 7 days prior. However, to allow Synod sufficient time to consider business on the agenda, the following timetable is applied in practice:

21 days prior to a meeting	Agenda and papers circulated to Synod members
14 days prior to a meeting	Any motions, proposed amendments arising from the agenda to be submitted (only matters arising from the agenda can be raised)
14 days prior to the meeting	Any questions to be submitted
7 days prior to the meeting	Answers to questions, copies of proposed amendments to motions or proposed motions to be circulated to Synod members

How is information shared?

All communication and papers for meetings are shared via email with Synod members. This allows speed of communication and also allows those with additional needs to use technology to assist with access to documents and papers. Members needing additional assistance should contact the Synod Administrator.

How do I bring to Synod a matter that is on my heart?



Matters of concern to individuals should progress through the church governance structure. An individual should raise an issue for their PCC to debate. Should they agree, they should take this to the Deanery Synod for approval.

The Deanery Synod may then propose a motion for Diocesan Synod to address this issue.

Any new business needs to be notified to Diocesan Synod 35 days prior to meeting. Therefore, any business brought by a Deanery to be considered for a meeting must be submitted for consideration to the Diocesan Synod Business Group acting on behalf of Bishop's Council prior to the Synod. In practical terms, this means that the Diocesan Synod Business Group should receive this the quarter before the Synod meeting.

Items proposed through the Deanery are scheduled for business by the Diocesan Business Synod Group on behalf of the Bishop's Council.

Where a Deanery Synod is unable to meet or transact business as it should, a PCC may submit a motion for consideration directly. However, this will only be considered by the Synod Business Group on the prior agreement of the Area Dean and Lay Chair.

What is the difference between a question and a motion?

A question can be about anything relating to the work of the Diocese where information is needed but no action is required. A motion is required if you wish Synod to decide something or act.

Who do questions, motions and other enquiries about Synod be sent?

All communication relating to Synod should go to the Diocesan Secretary diocesan.secretary@blackburn.anglican.org

How do I ask a question of Diocesan Synod?

Blackburn Diocesan Synod

Question

Questions should be submitted to the Diocesan Secretary to arrive no later than three weeks prior to the Diocesan Synod meeting.

Date of Meeting:
Name of Diocesan Synod member asking the question:
Deanery:
Name of person who the question is directed to:
Question:

Questions can be submitted in writing by any member 14 days prior to the meeting. Questions will be answered in writing prior to the meeting and time will be allocated to allow the person opportunity to ask a verbal supplementary question at Synod should they wish. Any person may ask up to two original questions. Questions should be directed to a Diocesan officer, office holder, committee or representative body. Questions should be relevant to the officer/committee role and should not seek an opinion. Any member can ask a supplementary question at Synod arising from each question asked.

There is a form to submit a question.

What happens if the Synod does not have a Quorum?

For a Synod meeting one-third of the members of each House should be present. If they are not, the meeting may move to an open meeting which can discuss issues but not make any decision. A meeting may be rescheduled if the required two meetings a year have not occurred.

When you address Synod, what must you be aware of?

You should always address the Chair and should make points that have not previously been made. Speeches or comments should be respectful of others. The Chair can intervene on any of these issues. Each person can only speak once on a matter so it is worth considering carefully when to speak. The Chair will ask if there are any questions or comments and members should indicate by raising their hand. When speaking, a person should provide their name and Deanery name, and address the Chair. For example, name, Deanery, Chair, "I wish to raise concerns about the rise in Parish Share which is being expected of churches this year."

Can I interrupt someone who is speaking?

In certain circumstances, yes. If you wish to correct an important misunderstanding of fact or declare an interest or explain a personal concern. The Chair can decide whether the interruption is appropriate. If they feel it isn't, the Chair can prevent the person from speaking again on the matter.

How do you indicate your desire to speak to the Chair?

To indicate the desire to speak members should raise their hand. If interrupting it may be necessary to stand up to indicate the desire to speak.

What is a motion?

A motion is simply a question or proposal designed to elicit a decision from the Diocesan Synod. They can ask the Synod to do something, order something to be done or express a view or opinion on a matter for the Synod to align with.

How do I submit a motion?

When the agenda is circulated, there may be presentations on a matter for Synod. Anyone may submit a motion on receipt of the agenda related to items on the agenda. For example, if the Synod is discussing the merits of helicopter pads at each church site, a member may submit a motion that asserts something related, ie. "This Synod agrees that helicopters are of missional importance and the Diocese should create a campaign to increase awareness of the missional opportunities of allowing millionaires to land on the site". This motion would be submitted according to the timelines above and circulated to all members in readiness for the meeting.

What do I do if I don't agree with a motion?

Any member of Synod can indicate that they wish to speak to a motion. Sometimes this is in support, other times it is in opposition. Sometimes, a member may agree with most of the motion but be unhappy with the wording of the motion. Any member can propose (move) an amendment to a motion with the Chair's consent. This can be done in written communication in the lead up to the meeting but can also be done at Synod. Amendments must be relevant and usually involve deleting or inserting words rather than substantial changes.

Proposers of a motion usually have a right to respond.

Who acts on a decision made on a motion?

Usually, an officer (the Diocesan Secretary) will be tasked with ensuring that the decision made is acted upon. They would liaise with any other people necessary to enact the decision.

Having thought about my motion and heard debate, can I change it or withdraw it?

Yes. The person who proposed the motion may request its withdrawal. However, if more than 5 people object the motion is not removed.

What other kinds of motions can be used in Synod?

There are a number of procedural motions that can be moved with consent of the Chair. Motions to end the debate, adjourn it, move to next business are all possible. Members should indicate their desire to speak to the Chair but not during a speech. The Synod will vote on the motion and act accordingly. There are conditions for the use of these motions and they are listed in the Standing Orders. The following motions can be moved:

- 'That the Synod do pass to the next business' ('next business')
- 'That the Synod do now adjourn' ('adjournment of the Synod')
- 'That the debate be now adjourned' ('adjournment of debate')
- 'That the debate be now closed' ('closure')
- 'That further speeches on this question be limited to minutes' ('speech limit')
- A motion to vary the order of business
- A motion to suspend a Standing Order

How long can someone speak for?

The Chair of Synod basically controls this and therefore has a key role in ensuring balanced voices are heard. No speech is permitted to exceed 10 minutes or where a report is introduced, 15 minutes. The Chair can change these times for any special reason (of which the Chair is the sole judge). Sometimes for longer presentations or for discussion the Standing Orders may be suspended to allow a fuller participation or explanation. The process of suspending Standing Orders allows greater freedom in presenting on subjects but no decision can be made without the Standing Orders in place at which point members can challenge, question and respond in accordance with the Orders.

What is suspending Standing Orders?

Suspending Standing Orders means that the conditions on speech interruption and questioning do not apply. It mainly is used to allow group discussion and feedback on matters but does not allow decision to be made. Standing Orders must resume for a decision. With the consent of the Chair the motion to suspend can be moved and three quarters of the members present need to agree for it to happen.

What happens if someone's conduct is unbecoming during Synod?

It is the role of the Chair to manage the conduct in Synod. However, any Synod member may interrupt to seek a procedural motion to end the debate or adjourn with the consent of the Chair.

What does a typical Synod look like? (Eg Eucharist/Prayers, minutes of last meeting, presentation of new information on a project, etc etc...)

Synod usually follows a set pattern. This begins with worship (including a Eucharist when the president requires) and then moves through the notified agenda items. These are given strict time allocations which will be monitored by the Chair. Items may include information sharing on Diocesan projects, discussion on certain matters, motions or business relating to the legal structures of the Diocese. For lengthy information items,

Standing Orders may be suspended to allow a speaker greater time to share without the time constraints and to prevent interruptions during a presentation. No decisions can be made without the reinstatement of Standing Orders.

Is the business of Synod confidential?

The Diocesan Synod is a public meeting of the Diocese and therefore the minutes are public record. Papers for Synod should not be shared with non-Synod members as decisions and discussion are for Synod members only who are appointed or elected to office. Non-Synod members cannot vote or speak at meetings.

How do you prepare for a Synod?

The best way to prepare for a meeting is to read the papers when they are issued. This may raise questions or where motions are proposed may lead to consideration of whether or not a motion causes concern. Any questions relating to items or general questions can be submitted within the timescales above for consideration along with suggested changes to motions. Questions will be answered 7 days prior to Synod in writing and amendments to motions will be shared 7 days prior. When these are received they should be read and any further thoughts saved until the meeting where supplementary questions and comments can be made.

If I am an elected representative of the Deanery, do I speak on their behalf?

No. Although elected by the Deanery as a representative you speak on your own conscience not as a collective voice of the Deanery. Where matters relate to Deanery business you may wish to discuss this with the Deanery but should seek to share your personal view rather than that of the Deanery.

What do I do if I can't make a meeting, or want to resign from Synod?

If you can't make a meeting, you should give your apologies to the secretary to Synod (the Diocesan Secretary) via Jenny Harborne. (email above).

To resign from Synod you should resign to the body that appointed you and inform to the Secretary to Synod (the Diocesan Secretary).

How long does a Synod meeting take? What happens if we run over?

A Synod meeting usually begins at 9.30am and ends by 1pm. The Chair will seek to keep to time and will adjourn items or limit time for speeches or debate to enable the meeting to stay on time.

Who is on Bishop's Council? How are Bishop's Council chosen/appointed?

Bishop's Council are elected each triennium. Some members of the council have ex-officio positions by virtue of their office or role in the Diocese. These are set out in the Standing Orders.

Blackburn Diocesan Synod

Question

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Date of Meeting:

Name of Diocesan Synod member asking the question:

Deanery:

Name of person who the question is directed to:

Question:

Blackburn Diocesan Synod

Motion

Motions should be submitted to the Diocesan Secretary to arrive no later than three weeks prior to the Diocesan Synod meeting.

Date of Meeting:

Name:

Deanery:

This is a motion arising from:

- an item of business on the Diocesan Synod agenda*
- a Deanery Synod meeting*

(*please indicate the correct statement)

Motion: