



## Dorset County Association of Church Bell Ringers

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Dorset County Association of Church Bell Ringers  
Bell Restoration Fund is a registered charity. Charity number 294239

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### Administration of DCA General Meeting Voting System

The following explains how voting at DCA General Meetings is conducted. It has been prepared to give clear guidance to DCA Members and the Committee, drawing on the DCA Rules, DCA Standing Orders, the Central Council's Code for Ringing, and generally accepted procedures for not-for-profit organisations.

#### Introduction

The DCA uses a hybrid voting system that combines in-person voting at meetings with electronic voting for those unable to attend. This approach was agreed at the DCA Committee Meeting in October 2023 and is now incorporated into both the DCA Rules and Standing Orders. It ensures that all members can exercise their democratic rights regardless of where they live in the UK, recognising that life members may move outside the Dorset area or have other commitments.

#### Basic Rules as applied

##### Who can vote

Any person listed on the official DCA Membership List is eligible to vote at General Meetings.

##### Voting options

Members can vote in one of two ways:

- **Electronically:**  
If you cannot attend, you can vote online. Submitting an electronic vote also records your apologies for not attending.
- **In person:**  
If you attend the meeting, you vote at the meeting itself.

##### Electronic voting

Electronic voting is currently carried out using Google Forms.

- It is free to use and supported by a major, secure IT platform.
- Members do not need to pre-register to vote.
- Because the link could be shared, each vote is checked manually to confirm that the name and email match the DCA Membership List and that no duplicate votes are submitted.

##### Meeting timetable

The Rules set minimum time periods for each stage of the voting process, but not fixed dates.

- For each General Meeting, the Secretary is responsible for publishing the exact timetable at least two months in advance.
- These dates apply only to that specific meeting.
- Once the dates have been published, they are fixed and cannot be changed by anyone. Failure to meet a deadline means that the submission cannot be accepted.

## Quorum and decisions

- A minimum of **10 members** must take part in a vote for it to be valid.
  - This includes members attending in person and those voting electronically.
- Votes can be **For, Against, or Abstain**.
- Decisions are made by a **simple majority** (more **For** than **Against**).
- There is **no casting vote**.

## Returning Officers

The Secretary and Assistant Secretary act as Returning Officers. They are responsible for verifying voter eligibility and counting the votes.

If either of them is unavailable for a particular meeting or vote, the Committee will appoint an alternative so that there are always two Returning Officers in place.

## What you will be voting on

When the formal agenda for a General Meeting is published, it will include a clear list of the items being put to a vote. These may include:

- Reports
- Motions
- Officer elections (where relevant)

## Motions

Each motion should have:

1. **Clear title or heading**

So everyone knows what the motion is about (e.g. *“Motion to Approve Annual Accounts”*).

2. **Precise wording of the proposal**

It must be written so members can vote yes or no without confusion.

A good test is: *“If this passes, do we know exactly what happens next?”*

Common phrasing includes:

- *“That the members approve ...”*
- *“That the association resolves to ...”*
- *“That the directors be authorised to ...”*

3. **Name of the proposer and seconder**

These must be submitted either by emails<sup>1</sup> sent directly from the proposer and seconder, or via a signed written submission signed by both the proposer and seconder.

4. **Compliance with notice requirements**

The motion must be:

- Submitted in the correct form
- Submitted by the deadline set out in the Standing Orders and notified via the Notification to Members
- Included in the AGM notice or agenda, if required

5. **Within the powers of the AGM**

The motion must deal with something the AGM is actually authorised to decide.

A motion will be invalid if it:

- Attempts to override the Rules or Standing Orders without a special resolution to change those Rules or Standing Orders
- Conflicts with law or governing documents

6. **No duplication of subject matter**

A motion must not duplicate or substantially overlap with the subject matter of any motion already properly submitted for consideration at the AGM.

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<sup>1</sup> “Email” includes electronic written communications sent directly between individuals, including one-to-one encrypted messaging services such as WhatsApp.



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### Nominations for elections

For each person standing in an election, a formal nomination must be submitted.

A valid nomination must include:

- Confirmation from the nominee that they are willing to stand for election
- A proposer
- A seconder

These three elements must be submitted either:

- by separate emails<sup>1</sup> sent directly from the nominee, proposer, and seconder, or
- via a single written submission signed by all three individuals.

### Member statements

After the Meeting Agenda has been published, there will be a set period during which members can submit statements relating to any item being voted on.

These statements may support or oppose a report, motion, or election. They are shared with members to help everyone make an informed decision before voting, whether in person or electronically. These statements are limited to 600 words per member per agenda item.

### Standards for member statements

Member statements are intended to help inform voting. To ensure they are fair, relevant, and appropriate, the following standards apply:

- **Relevant to the item:**  
Statements must relate directly to the report, motion, or election being considered and stay focused on the issue.
- **Respectful tone:**  
Statements should be written in a constructive and professional manner, even where they express disagreement.
- **No personal attacks:**  
Statements must not contain malicious, defamatory, or unsubstantiated comments about any individual, **including the proposer or seconder of a motion**. However, the proposer or seconder is protected if making a disclosure in accordance with whistleblowing provisions.
- **Protecting the Association's reputation:**  
Content must not bring, or risk bringing, the Association into disrepute.
- **Legal responsibility:**  
Statements must not include material that could be considered libellous or otherwise unlawful.
- **Fact vs opinion:**  
Members may express opinions, but factual claims should be accurate and, where appropriate, capable of being supported.
- **Editorial oversight:**  
To ensure compliance with these standards, the Returning Officers (or designated officers) are empowered and required to refuse publication, redact content, or require amendments to any statement that falls short of them.

This provision ensures that written debate remains open and democratic, while requiring that all contributions are conducted lawfully, fairly, and remain strictly relevant to the decisions before the membership.

## Publishing the meeting papers

Following the close of the statement submission period, a complete set of meeting papers (the “**Voting Pack**”) shall be issued to all members eligible to vote. The Voting Pack shall include.

- A communication outlining the purpose of the meeting, relevant timelines, and submission deadlines.
- Any reports required for consideration at the meeting.
- All motions, together with any supporting statements that fully comply with the standards set out above.
- Details of officer elections, including any supporting statements that comply with the standards set out above, where applicable.
- A link to the electronic voting form for members unable to attend the meeting in person.

The Returning Officers (or designated officers) are **obliged to ensure** that all statements and supporting materials comply with the standards set out above. They have the authority to refuse to publish, redact, or require amendments to any material that fails to meet these standards.

Apologies for non-attendance will only be recognised upon registration of a valid vote, and failure to register a vote shall constitute non-participation.

## The voting form / ballot paper

All voting forms/ballot papers will include voter identification so that membership can be verified and to ensure that individuals do not vote multiple times. This information will be treated as highly confidential and will be made available only to the Returning Officers.

For each Motion, Report to Be Accepted, and Uncontested Election, the Voting Form / Ballot Paper will include:

- the vote title
- tick boxes / checkboxes:
  - For
  - Against
  - Abstain

For each Contested Election, the Voting Form / Ballot Paper will include:

- the vote title
- tick boxes / checkboxes:
  - One for each candidate
  - Abstain

The voting form/ballot paper will also provide an option to accept **all motions, reports, and uncontested elections** in a single action, so that members can record their approval efficiently if they agree with all items.