

Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 25th August 2009 at Methodist Church House

Present: Ken Wales, John Ellis, Jim Booth, Margaret Best, Ian Harrison, Andrew Gibbs, Margaret Havers, Gareth Hill, Dudley Coates, Mark Wakelin, Christine Elliott, Andrew Moore, Stuart Jordan, Alison Jackson, Martyn Atkins

Apologies: Sue Millman, Ron Calver

In attendance: Jane Bates (Minutes)

Opening devotions were led by Martyn Atkins.

Stuart Jordan was welcomed to his first meeting of the Committee.

The Connexional Team was thanked for its hard work in preparing for this meeting.

09.3.1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5th May 2009 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

09.3.2 Matters arising (SRC/09/34)

SRC/09/34 was noted. It was reported that the further work on the Pensions Trust and on housing DDEs will be brought to the October meeting. It was noted that the Cliff College scrutiny group is unlikely to be able to report back by Christmas. The Committee asked whether the Council would find it helpful to consider the outcomes of this review at the same time as it considers the outcome of the review of Wesley College Bristol because of the linked issues.

09.3.3 Reflections on the Conference

(i) Discipleship and link with *Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission*

Martyn Atkins reported that there will be a further report on the focus of discipleship brought to the October meeting. He reflected on the tension between the rightful autonomy of the Conference and its relationship with the strategic and budgetary priorities of the Church. *Mapping a Way Forward* is now progressing in different ways in different parts of the connexion; in some places the emphasis has been too much on the merging of circuits without the appropriate reflection on why and how that is being done. Martyn and Mark Wakelin are now working on 'phase 2', so that they can be conduits of sharing good stories and working with the CLF to move this forward. There will be an inevitable cost of reprioritising their time. The stated priority of discipleship (life-long, whole life and world-transforming) in the General Secretary's report to the Conference is being worked into a paper which asks the question of how it can become a focus of the work of the Connexional Team. It is seen as being a contemporary way of articulating the Wesleyan theme of personal and social holiness. The hope is that the call of discipleship as the central call of Methodism can be addressed by *Mapping a Way Forward* as its focus for the next two years. The SRC were very supportive of this positive approach to *Mapping a Way Forward*, and to the leadership that will be given to it through the work of the Strategic Leaders and primarily Martyn and Mark.

(ii) Team workplan for the September Council

A detailed workplan was not produced for this year's Conference Agenda, partly because it is strange to prepare this before the Conference has made its decisions about various areas of work. The Team envisages producing lists as it did last year, indicating

the different levels of priority being given to specific items of work. The SRC felt that it would be helpful to see this before the Council did, so that they could offer support where necessary. There will need to be a careful prioritisation so that the Team can deliver what is promised.

09.3.4 Training Structures and Finances (SRC/09/36)

Doug Swanney and Siôn Rhys Evans were welcomed for this and the following item. The SRC had requested an overview of the training costs, which SRC/09/36 represented. The 2006 and 2007 reports to the Conference concerning the review of training institutions had only considered 64% of the total learning budget – the rest has not been properly scrutinised for some time. 21% of the learning budget is currently met from the Training Assessment Fund. The number of different committees which are responsible for the different parts of the budget has not helped officers to gain an overview. It is therefore proposed that the committee structure be changed, in line with the review of committees structure, with a new shadow body meeting over the next year.

This paper does not take account of the Conference decisions about the Training Assessment Fund – work needs to be done on what the decision will mean in practice.

There was some discussion about the proposed committee structure. It was felt that it is important that connexional groups are representative in some way. It was also felt that any committee which is dealing with a wide range of important issues must have the capacity to address them. There must also be clear protocols and guidance for local oversight groups, so that there is consistency without the Connexional Team making all the decisions.

It was asked how much of this budget is available for lay training. The expectation is that most lay training is funded out of circuit and district budgets, but this needs to be made clear so that it is more widely known.

It was agreed that the Connexional Team should produce a policy options paper analysing the return achieved on resources expended in the connexional learning budget, taking into account the other factors noted in paragraph 1.5 of the paper.

It was agreed that a resource group be established which includes the chair (or other representative) of each committee whose policy-making functions would be consolidated into a 'Ministries Committee'. The group would have two purposes: (a) to facilitate the production of proposals for a 'Ministries Committee', and (b) to facilitate the production of the policy options paper on the learning budget.

It was suggested that Ken Jackson, Chair of the Stationing Committee, would be an appropriate person to lead this resource group.

09.3.5 Review of Wesley College Bristol (SRC/09/37)

It is expected that the report of the review of Wesley College Bristol will come to the October SRC. In the meantime the Chair of the Review Group had written to the Chair of SRC concerning several matters.

One of these concerned the boiler, which is in need of replacement, for which the College was requesting connexional funding for this work to be undertaken. The SRC agreed that professional information about the boiler must be sought, the options of

replacement and repair outlined and costed, and that no decision could be taken without such information. The SRC also requested further information about the financial situation at Wesley College so that it could be known whether the College could pay for the work itself, or if not, what funds were available for this work to be undertaken.

There was also a more general question about whether there should be further transitional funding for the College agreed at this point in time. The SRC declined this request, on the basis that the Methodist Council had been clear about the terms of the current funding.

09.3.6 Governance Scrutiny Programme (SRC/09/39)

Gareth Powell was welcomed to the meeting for this item. It was noted that SRC/09/39 did not represent a review of the process, which will still be required. The scrutiny process overlaps with the review of committees and where a committee is also being considered through governance scrutiny, the two processes need to link together. In terms of how the trios work, it was felt that option c was the most appropriate.

Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.6 referred to governance issues that had arisen between Wesley College Bristol and the associated conference centre. It was felt that the College had the delegated authority to make the decisions in the areas referred to, but that proposals in this area should be agreed in advance by the Council given the review of the College currently in progress.

Paragraph 5.7 concerned the trustees of the Methodist Church Collection of Modern Art, who are requesting clarification in the area of their governance. It was agreed that this should be taken through the process.

It was also agreed that the Day Schools Committee should be brought into the governance scrutiny process.

09.3.7 Southlands (SRC/09/38)

Helen Woodall was welcomed to the meeting for this item, which she presented. The SRC agreed the draft resolutions to be put to the Council, and felt that this was a good outcome from a very difficult situation. Thanks were expressed to Helen and the accompaniment group for reaching this point.

09.3.8 SRC role in property consents process (SRC/09/41)

John Nelson was welcomed to the meeting for this item.

In the context of the new consents process, the SRC had previously agreed to act as the consent-giving body for connexional and district properties.

It was agreed that the SRC would delegate this to a small group of SRC members; the suggestion was three people. They would then bring any major concerns to the committee. One of the three would convene the group and John Nelson would work with them.

09.3.9 SRC review of Team Focus and new Team (SRC/09/42)

Doug Swanney and Nick Moore were present for this item.

The proposals for a retrospective review of Team Focus, undertaken by an external facilitator as set out in paragraph 1.7 of SRC/09/42 were agreed.

Section 2 of the paper set out the progress made so far in the areas of evaluation and review, and made proposals for how this should be taken forward. It was noted that there are some areas in the Team where regular evaluation takes place as a matter of course and the proposals in the paper were concerned with making the process more systematic. It was agreed that training in this should begin, but that once people were trained, they would need to be able to use their skills in the short term. The proposals for piloting and embedding an evaluation and review process in the Team were agreed. It was also agreed to commission the Team to pursue this exercise in the manner proposed.

Section 3 set out some of the issues that have arisen in the new structures of the Team, and asked the SRC where and how it wished to be involved in a review of these. The SRC did not wish to depute representatives to engage directly in meetings within the Team, but would be happy to find ways of working with the Team where it would be felt to be helpful. The SRC felt that it was too early to revisit the fundamental principles of the Strategic Leader and Cluster Head job descriptions as they had been agreed, and instead wished to encourage the Team to address the issues which had been identified. The SRC felt that the matters identified in paragraph 3.8 were for decision within the Team internally. With reference to the question raised at 3.9 ii, Ken Wales agreed that he would join a meeting of the Strategic Leaders where the issues identified in paragraph 3.9 were considered. The SRC felt that these matters should be brought back to the SRC in no longer than a year's time, to check that things had improved. The decision to agree the increase in Team staffing for 2009-10, which had been agreed by the Chair of SRC, was ratified. The question of the relationship of cluster heads to the governance bodies was raised as they are not currently members of them. It was agreed that the question of membership of the Council should be considered at the October SRC meeting. The SRC was in principle content for cluster heads to be present at its meetings, but it was felt that this was part of wider consideration of the role of SRC and it was agreed that some time for facilitated self-evaluation should be set aside during the 09/10 connexional year.

09.3.10 Non-Team Council Employees (SRC/09/35)

Nick Moore presented SRC/09/35 which proposed the creation of a Development and Personnel Sub-Committee of the SRC. The principle of this was supported, however the Committee asked that more work be done on the terms of reference of such a committee.

09.3.11 Financial issues

(i) 4 John Wesley Road, Peterborough

The managing trusteeship of 4 John Wesley Road, Peterborough resides with the Council and needs delegating. The SRC agreed to take on the trusteeship with immediate effect, subject to the ratification of the Council.

(ii) Funding of Anthony Reddie (SRC/09/43)

Ian Harrison presented SRC/09/43 which raised broad questions about how research should be funded and how the Church can access and make use of the research it funds.

It was agreed that Ian Harrison and Mark Wakelin would discuss the principles of this further and report to the next meeting.

(iii) Finance Office Review and Investigation

The Team Focus review of the Finance Office is now complete, and the process of redeploying staff is underway.

The Conference was promised, following the concerns over the figures provided for the MMS report, that there would be an investigation into how the errors had occurred. An external consultant has been appointed to do this work, and the outcome will be reported to the SRC.

(iv) Connexional Priority Fund and Pension Reserve Fund Transitional Funding (SRC/09/44)

There needs to be an interim arrangement for the Pension Reserve Fund in 2009/10 and the proposals for this as set out in SRC/09/44 were agreed. This will now be taken to the September meeting of the Council.

(v) Methodist Ministers' Pension Scheme Benefits Review Timetable (SRC/09/45)

SRC/09/45 was noted. It was acknowledged that the timetable assumes agreement at each stage, and will prove difficult if consensus is not achieved. The Council will need to delegate the work if additional tweaking is required between meetings of the Council as a result of the consultations.

(vi) New Connexional Treasurer and Role Clarification

Ted Awty had applied for the role of Connexional Treasurer. He has wide experience in accountancy and is a member of the Central Finance Board (CFB) Council and Board. He would need to cease his role at CFB to avoid a potential conflict of interest. It is expected that his name would be taken to the Council for nomination.

There has been some discussion about how the roles are divided between the Treasurers. The SRC was happy for the Treasurers to work that out amongst themselves; however, it would be helpful if there was some continuity of financial advice to the SRC.

(vii) Post Conference reflection on budgets and governance (SRC/09/46)

This item was deferred until the October meeting.

(viii) Confidential item

09.3.12 Epworth Press (SRC/09/47)

SRC/09/47 was noted. The Council will now need to appoint the reference group.

09.3.13 Confidential item

SRC dates for 2009/2010

15 October 2009

16 December 2009

18 February 2010

28 April 2010