

## District Reviews

<b>Contact Name and Details</b>	The Revd Canon Gareth J Powell Secretary of the Conference SoC@methodistchurch.org.uk
<b>Action Required</b>	Decision
<b>Resolutions</b>	6/1. The Council receives the report.  6/2. The Council agrees to recommend the outline District Review process, as set out in the report, to the Conference.

### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	Following the adoption of Resolution 27/19 by the 2017 Conference, this report proposes a mechanism for enabling Districts to be reviewed at appropriate intervals.
<b>Main Points</b>	1 Introduction 2 Proposed parameters 3 Indicative structure
<b>Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)</b>	<i>Methodist Council, part 2</i> report to the 2017 Conference (Report 27) Conversations at the April 2017 Methodist Council MC/17/11 – <i>Taking forward Larger than Circuit resolutions</i> <i>Larger than Circuit</i> report to the 2016 Conference (Report 15) <i>Larger than Circuit: Consultation, Methodology and Findings</i> – available from the Conference Office ( <a href="mailto:conferenceoffice@methodistchurch.org.uk">conferenceoffice@methodistchurch.org.uk</a> )

### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	Yes. The convening of District Commissions has already been agreed by the 2016 Conference. Some costs incurred by the proposed light-touch model of District Reviews would be covered by the District, but there will be costs for the Connexional Team in terms of staff and travel.
<b>Personnel</b>	Yes. The proposed model will involve Connexional Team support, the Secretary of the Conference, the District Policy Committee, others from the District and peers from other Districts.

## District Reviews

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The 2016 Conference directed the Council to bring a process for implementing the creation of District Commissions and the nomination of those to be appointed by the Conference as District Commissioners to the 2017 Conference. The Conference directed that such a commission would be convened when a new Chair is being sought, or the present Chair is exploring the possibility with the District of a reinvasion, or a District (or group of Districts) wishes to engage in the process of reflection or review. It would oversee and undertake a thorough review of the life of the District, set in its wider connexional and ecumenical context.
- 1.2 The Methodist Council in April 2017 considered proposals for a District Commission process as envisaged in Resolution 15/7 (2016). However, the Council expressed significant concerns that this process seemed overly complex and that, instead of helpfully 'holding up a mirror' to the life of the District, it would prove to be a burden.
- 1.3 The Council also considered information about the Church of England's newly-developed [peer review process](#) for dioceses. This more 'light-touch' approach was favourably received, acknowledging that it would need 'shaping' for the Methodist context. Following group discussions, the Council agreed to recommend that work should proceed along the lines of a peer review process.
- 1.4 The 2017 Conference therefore directed the Council to undertake work to establish a peer review process for Districts and report on progress to the 2018 Conference (Resolution 27/19).
- 1.5 One of the overarching themes from the feedback was the need for flexibility. It was proposed that 'broad parameters' should be developed, within which Districts would take the lead in developing the review process as appropriate for the context with regard to timing, the number of people involved, the level of ecumenical involvement etc. However, there will need to be some support from the Connexional Team at various stages in the process, so that there is not too much burden placed on Districts and on volunteers. Some broad parameters are proposed below, based on the conversations of the Council in April 2017. If adopted, these will come into effect no later than September 2019, recognising that some reviews could take place as part of a pilot process during the course of 2018.

### 2. Proposed outline

- 2.1 Each District shall undertake a review every three to five years.
- 2.2 The Secretary of the Conference shall have oversight of District Reviews taking place across the Connexion and shall ensure that one takes place in each District at least every five years. A representative of the Secretary of the Conference will attend the review meeting, not to facilitate the conversation, but to feed in any points of learning from a connexional perspective. If the District wishes them to, they will also act as note-taker and draft the report following the meeting.
- 2.3 The District Policy Committee (DPC) shall take the lead in the organisation of the review process, including setting a date for the meeting and arranging a venue. Costs incurred (other than the expenses of members of the Connexional Team) will be covered by the District.

### 3. Indicative Structure

- 3.1 There will be a named person within the Connexional Team (but not a full time role), whose role will be, on behalf of the Secretary of the Conference, to ensure that the reviews are taking place in accordance with the outline above (but with appropriate flexibility for each context). The officer will hold a log of the reviews, and keep a copy of each report (which will remain confidential). The officer will attend review meetings, and act as note-taker if required. The officer will ensure that the reviewers are provided with appropriate support and training.
- 3.2 The officer will be provided with administrative support to assist with the preparation and sending out of documentation, to work with each District in the setting of review dates, and maintenance of the review log.
- 3.3 There will be a pool of reviewers appointed by the Council, who will need to be trained. No more than three reviewers will be identified from outside the District being reviewed, based on initial feedback from the District concerned as to the skills and experience that they would find most helpful.
- 3.4 It is suggested that the review would normally need to happen in the connexional year prior to the year in which a Chair's reinvitation/nomination process needs to be undertaken, to enable the review to inform that process.
- 3.5 At the beginning of that connexional year, a briefing pack will be sent to the Synod Secretary, which will include a pro forma asking the District to consider the following:
- When is the District Chair's current term of service due to finish? Is this the most appropriate timing for a review, to ensure it can inform the reinvitation/nomination process, without impinging upon it?
  - It is suggested that those involved in the review process meet for one day and discuss papers and feedback circulated in advance. With regard to who should be present at this meeting:
    - Would it be helpful to involve a trained, external facilitator (eg a member of DMLN staff from another District/region)?
    - Who should be involved from the life of the District?
    - What is the appropriate level of ecumenical involvement?
    - Which 'peers' could helpfully be involved? Neighbouring Districts will provide a helpful perspective, as will 'contrasting' Districts – for instance, a large, predominantly urban District might find it helpful to invite the Chair of a smaller, predominantly rural District to join the ASA.
    - Is the group suitably diverse and representative of the District?
    - Are there people in the group willing to ask critical questions?
  - What documents could helpfully be circulated to the review group in advance? Suggested documents include:
    - The District Development Plan (SO 962);
    - The District's statement of needs and opportunities formulated when a District Chair was last appointed (SO 423);
    - Figures from the most recent triennial statistical returns;
    - Financial records;
    - Papers and minutes from the previous Synod;
    - A list of questions to be explored at the meeting.
  - Are there conversations that need to take place in advance of the meeting with people who will not be present but that might inform the work of the review group?

- 3.6 The responses to these questions will enable the Team to appoint the reviewers, and to begin to set up a timetable for the process, including a date for the review meeting.
- 3.7 The following questions are suggested for consideration by those undertaking the review:
- Of the paperwork, what comes as a surprise? What reflects your experience?
  - What appears to be the state of the work of God in the District?
  - How can the Methodist Church participate most fully in the work of God in this place?
  - How do the answers to these questions compare to the District's Development Plan (SO 962)? Are there aspects of the plan that need to be revised? Are these successes to be celebrated, or challenges to be acknowledged?
  - In light of [Our Calling](#):
    - What are the District's strengths? Where are the areas of numerical and spiritual growth?
    - Where are the challenges?
    - What is unique or unusual about the context in this District? How is the Methodist Church in this place responding – and being called to respond?
    - Which areas of the life of the District are energising – and which are draining?
    - What does the District need in order to respond as it feels called? Are there things it needs to 'let go'?
  - How do Circuits relate to the District?
  - What learning might be available from other Districts?
- 3.8 The Secretary of the Conference shall receive a copy of the review report (which need not be long) on a confidential basis. The District Policy Committee shall decide how to take forward the recommendations contained within the report, and how widely it is helpful for the report to be shared.

### **\*\*\*RESOLUTIONS**

**6/1. The Council receives the report.**

**6/2. The Council agrees to recommend the outline District Review process, as set out in the report, to the Conference.**