

The Formation of a Conference Planning Executive

Basic Information

Contact Name and Details	Martyn Atkins x5146
Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Decision
Draft Resolution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council resolves that a Conference Planning Executive be formed with immediate effect. 2. The Council approves the membership of the CPE as listed.
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	This paper invites Council to set up a Conference Planning Executive to co-ordinate the planning of Conference, and to accept the membership proposed.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The February 2009 Council broadly supported the creation of a body charged with co-ordinating the planning of the Conference in its various parts. • Further meetings have demonstrated the potential usefulness of a Conference Planning Executive. • This paper proposes a representative of the existing major Committees and groupings join to form a small Conference Planning Executive (CPE). • A membership list for the Conference Planning Executive is also proposed.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	This paper refers to <i>Making a Better Conference</i> MC/09/09, which was presented to the February 2009 Council for discussion.
Consultations	<p>The Conference Business Committee</p> <p>The Conference Arrangements Team</p>

Summary of Impact

Financial	The costs of the CPE would be absorbed within the Conference budget.
Risk	Without a CPE necessary decisions about Conference practicalities will not be made in a timely and coherent manner.

THE FORMATION OF A CONFERENCE PLANNING EXECUTIVE

Background

1 In February 2009, as part of paper MC/09/09 *Making a Better Conference*, the Council discussed the desirability of creating a 'Conference Planning Executive' charged with co-ordinating the planning of the Conference in its various parts. The Council generally supported the creation of such a group, recognising the need for 'joined up thinking' in relation to the planning of the Conference, and directed that further thought be given to the remit and membership of such a Group.

Outline of context: Why a Conference Planning Executive is needed

2 The Conference is the sum of a Ministerial Session and a Representative Session, in which formal business, worship (including Holy Communion, Ordinations, and prayers), and numerous fringe and exhibition events take place. The start of the Representative Session includes the induction of the new President and Vice-President, the formal welcome of World Church and Ecumenical guests, Conference worship, and reception of Probationers and Ministers into Full Connexion. Consequently this 'showcase' part of the Conference has four or five times the number of people present than are present at the remainder of the Representative Session. The Conference is therefore multi-faceted, and there are a large number of interested groups with varying and sometimes competing needs and aspirations involved in it.

3 As a result, the planning of the Conference currently lies in several places, reflecting the various aspects of the Conference.

(i) The Conference is the supreme governance body of our Church and as such is a place of Christian conferring. It is ultimately the responsibility of the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Conference to ensure that the Conference is able to undertake this core function properly and well. They, together with the Methodist Council and various other bodies (the Strategy and Resources Committee, the Stationing Committee, the Memorials Committee, etc) and with numbers of others both inside and outside the Connexional Team, ensure that the *Agenda* and numerous other publications required by the Conference (e.g. booklets for Candidates etc) are prepared by members of the Connexional Team and others and distributed for the Conference. This 'formal business' continues throughout the year between Conferences and by people and bodies acting on behalf of the Conference.

(ii) The present and incoming President and Vice-President contribute to the planning of the Conference. The present President presides over the Ministerial Session of the Conference and the incoming President and Vice-President preside over the Representative Session of the Conference. Traditionally they allocate those who will lead worship on Sunday, preside at daily Conference Communion services, and choose (but not organise) those responsible for leading Ordination services. They deliver the addresses which often make clear a theme and, together with their chairing of the Conference, set the tone for the Conference.

(iii) There is a Conference Business Committee which meets prior to the Conference to help plan the initial order of business. The main work of the Committee is done during the Conference when it meets twice daily to arrange the business of the Conference in light of any Notices of Motion that have been submitted, any unfinished business from the previous day etc. A separate Business Committee meets to plan the Ministerial Session of the Conference in the same way.

(iv) Historically much of the practical, preparatory work of Conference has been undertaken by a Conference Arrangements Committee that came from what were known as the 'host district(s)'. That Committee has been headed by a team leader and staffed largely by volunteers and has been the formal link with the venue owners and managers in relation to the arrangements for the main hall and ancillary rooms. It has organised the exhibition hall, catering, allocated venues for fringe events, administered tickets for key elements of Conference and stewarded the event, etc. A series of reports to the Conference from 2005 to 2008 have led to decisions to have a small number of venues for the Conference to which the

Conference returns regularly, rather than 'host districts'; and therefore a connexional arrangements team. From the Conference of 2010 in Portsmouth, this role will be overseen by the Events Co-ordinator in the Connexional Team dedicated to this purpose.

(v) Responsibility for certain functions of the Conference lie with other groups. Practical aspects of the Ordination services, for example, are the responsibility of the Connexional Team. It is they who choose the venues, allocate the lists of Ordinands to the venues and send out the information to local organisers. However, ticketing is undertaken by the Conference Arrangements Committee and officials for Ordination Services are chosen mainly by the incoming President.

4 All these strands of Conference design and organisation, mostly supported by extensive work within the Connexional Team, seek to work co-operatively despite the complexity of the overall task. From 2010 there will also be a clear and agreed overall Conference budget, within which the consequences of all the individual decisions about the Conference, wherever taken, need to sit. This can be of particular concern immediately before the Conference, when opportunities to share issues around all the interested groups become impossible to organise and lines of accountability can become unclear. Therefore an executive group has increasingly looked highly desirable.

A recent, useful development

5 At the initiative of the Assistant Secretary of the Conference, a 'Joint Meeting of the Conference Secretariat and the Conference Business Committees and those with responsibilities for Conference Arrangements' met in 7 November 2008, and recently on 3 September 2009. This meeting is too large to serve as the proposed Executive, though is useful in its own right and should continue to meet annually. The meeting clearly demonstrates the potential usefulness of a Conference Planning Executive and the proposal here comes with the support of the 'joint meeting'.

Proposals and remit

6 It is not proposed that the different Committees and groupings functions listed above be brought together into a single Committee, which would be unwieldy, given our Constitution, the different natures of Conference activities and the very different cycles of preparation and delivery. Rather it is proposed that a representative of the existing major Committees and groupings join to form a small Conference Planning Executive (CPE).

7 The CPE would provide a forum where the different sorts of preparatory work required by the Conference can be co-ordinated. Recognising the responsibilities identified in Standing Orders as belonging to Officers of the Conference and other Committees, it would have executive powers to make policy and practical decisions relating to the Conference as an event, with the intention of providing a forum where speedy direction and decision could be given on practical, administrative, organisational and financial matters. It would also be responsible, with others, for the continuing implementation of the recommendations in the *Review of the Conference*. The Events Co-ordinator and others involved in the practicalities of arranging Conference would be particularly helped by such a group. It would meet prior to the Conference but it is envisaged that much of its work would be undertaken by email and/or telephone.

Proposed membership of the CPE

8 A small group is proposed, representing only the major groupings responsible for Conference. Namely:

- the Secretary of Conference (Chair)
- the Assistant Secretary of Conference
- the Chair of the Business Committee (who is currently also a past Vice-President)
- a member of the Conference Financial Committee appointed by that Committee
- a representative of the Connexional Team's management appointed by the Connexional Team Secretaries
- the Events Co-ordinator (Secretary)

Resolutions

1. The Council resolves that a Conference Planning Executive be formed with immediate effect.
2. The Council approves the membership of the CPE as listed above.