

Minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee held on 5th May 2009 at Methodist Church House

Present: Ken Wales, John Ellis, Margaret Best, Sue Millman, Helen Woodall, Ian Harrison, Andrew Gibbs, Margaret Havers, Ron Calver, Gareth Hill, Dudley Coates, Mark Wakelin, Christine Elliott, Graham Thompson

Apologies: Jim Booth, Alison Jackson, Andrew Moore, Martyn Atkins

In attendance: Jane Bates (Minutes), Ken Howcroft

Opening devotions were led by Dudley Coates.

09.2.1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11-12 March 2009 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

09.2.2 Matters arising (SRC/09/23)

(i) DDEs and Manses

It was agreed that this was an issue for the relevant officers to resolve as necessary.

(ii) York Institute Governing Body

It was agreed to ensure that this work was done and then to remove it from the ongoing list.

(iii) Governance Scrutiny

This will be brought to the August 2009 meeting.

(iv) Review of Wesley College Bristol

The group met on the 2nd May and the process has been begun.

09.2.3 Cliff College Funding (SRC/09/28)

Doug Swanney was welcomed to the meeting for this and the following item.

The funding for Cliff College did not seem to have been clearly stated in the 2006 or 2007 Conference reports and it was felt that clarification was required. The meeting acknowledged that Cliff College had traditionally been treated as different from the other training institutions and networks.

The meeting agreed to follow option 2b in SRC/09/28 for 2008/09 and 2009/10, with a scrutiny group set up to make recommendations for the future. Such a scrutiny group would report back by Christmas 2009. It was suggested that the scrutiny group would comprise Andrew Moore, Sue Millman and Ken Wales.

The expenditure was authorised for 2008/09 and 2009/10. Before the point is reached where a decision needs to be taken about 2010/11, the scrutiny exercise will have reached a conclusion.

09.2.4 Costings for training (SRC/09/29)

The SRC had requested the detailed costings of ministerial training and SRC/09/29 represented where this mapping exercise had reached so far.

It was noted that there is currently no gap in the budget since one-off costs were being met by the Training Assessment Fund on the advice of the SRC. There is difficulty in obtaining accurate financial information and not all costs were clear when the review of the training institutions reported to the Conference.

It was felt that a scheme needs to be put to the SRC concerning the budget for training (an expanded version of the training section of the budget which is clear about how it is made up), with a contingency line that is managed by the officers.

It was felt that this raised various issues which needed clarifying and that the September Council needed to be alerted to these. The August SRC would consider a paper scoping these.

09.2.5 Costs of supervising probationers (SRC/09/30)

Training of those who will be supervising probationers has been done, at a cost of £42,000. Work is being undertaken to ensure that this can be delivered through the Forums in future years. This was noted.

09.2.6 Report from the April Council

The draft minutes from the April Council were noted.

In particular, the following points were noted:

Minute 09.2.17

The Council had agreed to the proposal for an additional full time post in World Church Relationships. SRC were requested to support an amendment to the resolution agreed by the Council which would make it more generic, and bring it into line with the job descriptions of the Partnership Co-ordinators. It was agreed that there should be an e-mail consultation with the Council in this respect.

Minute 09.2.10

Members of the Council had asked whether the word 'charge' was the correct one to use, particularly in the context of the amount being different for the World Mission Fund. It was agreed that the levy of 9% on all the four funds should be termed a charge, with the additional 6% being levied on the World Mission Fund being a "supplement". It was reiterated that these percentages would be reviewed annually as part of the budget process.

09.2.7 Pension Reserve Fund (SRC/09/24)

The Council had asked the SRC to make a proposal to the Conference about the figures to be implemented regarding the Pension Reserve Fund. The proposals in Ron Calver's paper, SRC/09/24, that the levy to the Connexional Priority Fund would be 20% of the first £100,000 and 40% of the second £100,000, were supported. Out of the net income coming to CPF from this, 45% would be set aside for the Pension Reserve Fund.

There are proposals to review the benefit structure of the Ministers' Pension Fund and this will need to be on the SRC's agenda in the autumn. The Finance Sub-Committee will be able to do some of the detailed work on this. Some proposals will need to come to the February Council. Noting the need for informal and statutory consultations, it was felt that there would need to be a clear timetable brought to the August SRC.

09.2.8 Epworth Press (SRC/09/25)

Ken Howcroft presented SRC/09/25, explaining that various issues had arisen in the conversations with the Epworth Press Editorial Committee. One of the difficulties has been in the lack of knowledge about its financial state, which is why an implementation group is now proposed.

The SRC agreed that an implementation group would be set up, with more detailed terms of reference than set out in the paper and an agreed end point. Model 2 was agreed provisionally, without being written into Standing Orders at this point. If necessary, the Conference will be asked to suspend the current Standing Order and agree the pattern for 09/10. It was agreed that this should be brought back to the August meeting of the SRC. It was agreed that Ken Wales and Ian Harrison would represent the SRC on the Implementation Group.

09.2.9 Connexional Grants Committee (SRC/09/26A and 26B)

SRC/09/26A set out some of the questions of principle that had arisen through the work to revise Part 9 of CPD. The SRC authorised the abolition of the role of treasurer of the Connexional Advance and Priority Fund, and the inclusion of the Connexional Priority Fund in the list of funds over which the Connexional Treasurers have oversight. The SRC approved the terms of reference of the governance scrutiny group for the funds that are distributed by the Connexional Grants Committee, noting that the Connexional Treasurer needs to be explicitly included. The SRC agreed that the committee should work within a budget that is set by the Methodist Council and monitored on its behalf by the governance scrutiny group.

SRC/09/26B represented a draft report for the Conference. It was felt that although the Committee reports to the Council rather than the Conference, it would be helpful to be transparent this year as a signal that this is a transitional process. It was noted that, in the future, Epworth Fund allocations will be totally under the authority of the Connexional Grants Committee. It was noted that the three streams relating to partner churches are in association with the Methodist Church in Ireland. It was agreed that the rolling annual World Church grants should be within the connexional grants structure. The draft report was approved.

The SRC agreed to recommend to the Audit Committee that they consider whether an internal audit function is required.

09.2.10 Mapping a Way Forward: Regrouping for Mission (SRC/09/32)

SRC/09/32 represented the annual report of the Mapping a Way Forward sub-group. It was noted that the Mapping a Way Forward process is being adapted to local needs and contexts. In some districts, the focus is clearly on circuit boundaries. It was asked whether there is a sufficient ecumenical emphasis but this is difficult where the boundaries are so different. The changed response in the Connexional Leaders' Forum (CLF) was noticeable when the process became seen less as driven from the Connexional Team and more about supporting districts to work out what is relevant in their context. Money, for example district grants, needs to be used to support where good things are happening. Risk-taking must be encouraged including the risk of failing. There are issues about how the stationing matching process can support circuits which are being innovative – sometimes the desire to be egalitarian can mitigate against it.

It was noted that the SRC's role as laid down in Standing Orders does not necessarily give it a role in issues such as Mapping a Way Forward. However, Ken Wales was encouraged to discuss this with the CLF.

09.2.11 Vetting and barring scheme (SRC/09/31)

Ken Howcroft presented SRC/09/31. It was asked whether there would be a charge for volunteer posts, which was not clear from the paper. The paper was agreed and the SRC expressed their thanks to Pearl Luxon.

09.2.12 Terms and conditions for ministers serving in the Connexional Team (SRC/09/33)

Christopher Stephens (Research Officer) was welcomed to present SRC/09/33. This documentation had been prepared for use from 1st September 2009. There is currently very little Team documentation about the appointment of presbyters and deacons to the Team and this was an attempt to clarify the status and policy of such appointments. All presbyters and deacons in the Team will be asked to sign up to this. It was confirmed that all ministers in the Team have been consulted in this regard. It was noted that there are sometimes issues relating to manses and the Connexional Manse Trustees, particularly if it is not clear at the time of an appointment where the minister is expected to live. It was felt that it must be made clear at the point of the interview what that provision is. The paper was noted.

09.2.13 Team Focus follow-up discussion (SRC/09/27)

Questions had been raised, particularly by Ian Harrison and Andrew Gibbs, about reviewing Team Focus now that the new Team was in place. It was felt that early in the new connexional year, there should be a governance scrutiny process where two or three people undertake to talk to people to learn about how the process was. The Strategic Leaders agreed to come to the August meeting with proposals for how that might work.

There was a general discussion about some of the difficulties that had arisen in the new Team, particularly in the areas of financial information and also in those areas where there had been a long process of transition. There was some conversation about the Help Desk and how that was working. Members of the SRC felt that there were positive signs, for example those making presentations at the Council and in other places had been impressive. Support was expressed for the commitment of Team members and concern for the workload that is being carried, but the direction of travel was endorsed. In particular, the SRC supported the principle that the Team should continue to resist pressure to take on roles beyond those that the slimmed down Team was supposed to undertake on the basis of the "uniquely or best" test. The Team was encouraged to continue to come back to SRC where there are issues and pressure points.

Thanks were expressed to Helen Woodall who now completes her term on the SRC, and to Graham Thompson who had served for the past year.

SRC dates for 2009/2010

25 August 2009

15 October 2009

16 December 2009

18 February 2010

28 April 2010

Following the meeting, an election was held for the two people who would represent the SRC on the Methodist Council for the year 2009-2010 and Sue Millman and Dudley Coates were elected.