

# Review of the City Centre List

MC/23/38

Date of meeting	25-27 March 2023
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Action required	For decision
Resolutions	38/1. The Council receives the report. 38/2. The Council agrees to discontinue the requirement for City Centre List members to undertake a review of their mission and ministry every five years. 38/3. The Council requests the advice of the Law and Polity Committee regarding the change agreed in 38/2 in relation to the provisions of SO 440.

## Summary of content

Subject of aims	To undertake a review of the City Centre List, in light of the 2021 Conference decision to amend Standing Order 970.
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• The burden of review</li> <li>• The City Centre List and the Methodist City Centre Network</li> <li>• Feedback from List members</li> <li>• Conclusions and Recommendations</li> </ul>
Background context and relevant documents (with function)	Report to the 2001 Conference: Ministry and Mission in the City Centre – <a href="https://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-ministry-and-mission-city-centre-2001.pdf">https://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/conf-ministry-and-mission-city-centre-2001.pdf</a>
Consultations	Survey of members of the City Centre List.

## Summary of impact

Standing Orders	Likely changes to Standing Order 440.
Wider connexional	City Centre List members only
Risk	Small risk that ceasing CCL reviews will hinder the Methodist Church's mission and ministry in city centres. This should be offset by support as outlined in the paper.

- 1 The City Centre List (CCL) is governed by Standing Orders 440, 512A, 540 (5) and 944 (see appendix 1).
- 2 There are currently 34 members of the City Centre List. One of these is a church that has ceased to meet, but the Synod wishes the property to remain on the List until the sale, letting or other disposition of the property has concluded.
- 3 Membership of the List is a decision of the District Synod. The List of members (available on request) is therefore somewhat arbitrary. For example, the New Room in Bristol, Bishop Street Methodist Church in Leicester, and Kings Cross Methodist Church in London are in the centres of some of the UK's largest cities and yet are not members of the List
- 4 The 2021 Methodist Conference voted to amend Standing Order 970. Previously, CCL properties were exempt from the levy for the Connexional Priority Fund that is charged on all capital money arising from the sale, letting or other disposition of land. However, the 2021 Methodist Conference voted to revoke this exemption for CCL properties. This exemption was a significant benefit to membership of the List.
- 5 Since this change, questions have arisen about the purpose of the List. All the rights and duties of List members are outlined in Standing Orders, but the main rights and duties of List members are:
  - Members of the List have the right to form a management committee who are then responsible for stationing/ re-invitation of ministers. In non-CCL churches/ circuits/ projects this would be managed by the circuit meeting.
  - Any funds proceeding from the sale of any CCL property must be used "in continuing the work of God in the relevant city centre", ie the funds cannot be used in another location.
  - Members of the List must submit to a review of the mission and ministry of their church, circuit or project, undertaken by the District Synod, in collaboration with the responsible Church Council, Circuit Meeting or management committee every five years.
- 6 In addition, it should be noted that SO 540(5) states that the stationing of presbyters or deacons to appointments with the pastoral oversight of CCL churches or projects should involve consultation with the Connexional Team member responsible for maintaining the List. This has not been undertaken at all in the past four years, despite ministers being stationed to appointments with pastoral oversight of CCL churches or projects in that period.

## The burden of reviews

- 7 The obligation to submit to a review, detailed above, is a burdensome process. Reviews are undertaken by Synods in collaboration with church councils/ circuits meetings/ management committees and are also often supported by members of the Connexional Team or District Team (eg a Learning Network Officer or District Missioner). The results must then be reported to the Connexional Team member responsible for maintaining the List, collated, and reported to the Council.
- 8 In the past three years, 17 CCL members have submitted late reviews, ranging from a couple of months late to three years late. This was in part fuelled by the Covid-19 pandemic, but has also been due to the difficulty in engaging congregations, navigating Synod/ Council reporting deadlines, and finding time and energy for this work amongst other competing priorities.

## The City Centre List and the Methodist City Centre Network

- 9 There also exists the Methodist City Centre Network (MCCN). The MCCN is entirely separate to the City Centre List, though with much overlap in membership. It is an informal grassroots group who describe themselves as *"a supportive group of ministers and lay people. We meet for regular online times of prayer and fellowship to share in the strains and delights that are particular to city centre work. We also have a bi-annual two day gathering and day visits to see one another's churches and projects a couple of times a year."*
- 10 The MCCN has no recognition within Standing Orders, and membership of the MCCN confers no duties or responsibilities.

## Feedback from List members

- 11 In order better to understand the perceived benefits of membership of the List, a questionnaire was distributed to all active members of the List (that is, all members except the one church, aforementioned, which has ceased to meet).
- 12 The questionnaire was sent to the relevant Superintendent (or District Chair for district projects) and they were invited to respond themselves, or to delegate the task of responding to another minister or lay person in the circuit, where that would be more appropriate. Members were given one month to complete the survey and feedback was welcomed from more than one individual.
- 13 29 responses were received, representing 24 of the 33 List members (72%). The majority of respondents (83%) were ordained ministers.
- 14 Respondents were asked, "What do you think are the advantages and/or disadvantages about being a member of the City Centre List?"
  - The most popular response was a reference to sharing learning and support with others in city centre ministry; 9 out of 29 respondents mentioned this (31%).
  - The second-most popular response was a reference to the sense of identity, recognition and/or raised profile of the project, consequent to being on the List; 8 out of 29 respondents mentioned this (28%).
  - The joint-third-most popular responses were the advantage of proceeds of capital sales staying in the city centre and the disadvantage of no longer being exempt from the levy; 4 out of 29 respondents mentioned these (14%).
  - Other responses included reference to reviews (in both positive and negative lights), keeping the emphasis of work on mission, receiving support/oversight from the district/Connexion, the disadvantages of proceeds of capital sales staying in the city centre, and how different stationing processes can help ensure appropriate/ experienced ministry. 3 respondents or fewer mentioned each of these (3%).
- 15 Respondents were asked, "How have you found the CCL review process? Did you get enough guidance and support? Is there anything you'd change about the review process?"
  - The most popular response was that the respondent wasn't sure or didn't have an opinion; 13 out of 29 respondents mentioned this (45%). Many of these said they had not yet been involved in a review since they had been stationed to the circuit relatively recently.
  - The joint-second-most popular responses were a reference to good connexional team or district-level support, and the usefulness of the review for reflection and discerning future direction; 5 out of 29 respondents mentioned these (17%).
  - Other responses included both positive and negative references to the review process and level of external support, alongside questions about the purpose, feedback and reporting of reviews. 3 respondents or fewer mentioned each of these (3%).
- 16 The final question asked for respondents' feedback on the MCCN. Most respondents valued the networking, learning and fellowship offered by the MCCN (17 out of 29 respondents mentioned this (59%)).

## Conclusions and recommendations

- 17 It is proposed that many of the advantages to the CCL could be achieved with a reduction in bureaucracy.
- 18 It is proposed that the obligation to undertake a review every five years of the mission and ministry of List members be abolished. Instead, the List could be maintained by asking Synods every five years to affirm or re-affirm which of their churches they would like to hold membership.
- 19 List members value reviews for a range of reasons, including discernment, reflection and listening.

A key part of God for All: the Connexional Strategy for Evangelism and Growth is encouraging every church and circuit to engage in mission planning, a very similar process to CCL reviews. It is proposed that CCL members be encouraged to engage in mission planning on a regular basis, alongside all other churches in the Connexion.

- 20 The Connexional Team should continue to signpost and support the work of the MCCN, to enable opportunities for learning, networking, support and fellowship.
- 21 The continuation of the List ensures that other benefits, including the sense of identity, recognition and/or raised profile of the project, consequent to being on the List, and the advantage of proceeds of capital sales staying in the city centre, would continue for List members.

**\*\*\*RESOLUTIONS**

**38/1. The Council receives the report.**

**38/2. The Council agrees to discontinue the requirement for City Centre List members to undertake a review of their mission and ministry every five years.**

**38/3. The Council requests the advice of the Law and Polity Committee regarding the change agreed in 38/2 in relation to the provisions of SO 440.**

## Appendix 1 – Standing Orders

### **440 City Centres.**

(1) (a) A Synod may, after consultation with the Methodist Council, designate a church or project within the District for inclusion on the official city centre list in accordance with guidelines approved from time to time by the Conference and shall notify the Connexional Team of each church or project so designated. The Team shall maintain the official list accordingly.

(b) A Circuit (including a single-church Circuit) may be similarly designated and listed if in the judgment of the Synod, after consultation with the Methodist Council, it is suitable for inclusion as an entity.

(2) The Church Council or Circuit Meeting of each church or Circuit designated under clause (1) shall consult with the district Policy Committee about the most effective way in which the interests of other Circuits in the city, the District and ecumenical partners may be involved in the work of the Church Council or Circuit Meeting, as appropriate.

(3) Each project designated under clause (1) shall be a mission or ministry project carried on by a Church Council, a Circuit Meeting or a Synod in furtherance of the purposes of the relevant body.

(4) The relevant Church Council, Circuit Meeting or Synod, after consultation with the district Policy Committee, shall appoint a management committee for each project designated under clause (1). The committee shall be large enough to encompass the interests of the Circuit or Circuits which cover the city, the District and ecumenical partners and to include a range of appropriate professional expertise, but small enough to be effective.

(5) Every five years the Synod shall carry out a review of the mission and ministry of each church, Circuit or project designated under clause (1), in collaboration with the responsible Church Council or Circuit Meeting (in the case of a church or Circuit) or management committee (in the case of a project).

(6) (a) It shall be a district purpose of any District in which capital money arises from the disposition of any property subject to Standing Order 944 to apply such capital money and its income in continuing the work of God in the relevant city centre, as directed by the Synod. Any such money is model trust property.

*Any such money is district property and the managing trustees are the district trustees; see para. 2(1) of the Model Trusts (Book II, Part 2) and the definitions of 'district property' and 'district purposes' in para 1.*

*S.O. 944 concerns disposals of city centre premises.*

(b) The district Policy Committee shall in full consultation with the Circuit in which the property was located, (if still constituted as such with one or more remaining Local Churches), bring to the Synod proposals for the application of capital money and income.

(7) Any decision to remove a city centre church, Circuit or project from the official list shall be made by the Synod after consultation with the Methodist Council and notified to the Connexional Team.

(8) Where a Synod carries on a city centre project, the provisions of Standing Order 534 and Section 54 shall apply, as closely as circumstances allow, to invitations and appointments to serve in such a project as if it were a circuit appointment. The management committee appointed under clause (4) above shall exercise the functions of the Circuit Meeting and its invitation committee, and the management committee shall appoint two of its members to exercise the functions of the circuit stewards in relation to the invitation process.

*This clause applies where the Synod carries on the project. Where it is carried on by a Church Council or Circuit Meeting, the normal provisions referred to in the clause apply*

### **512A City Centre Circuits.**

(1) For the purposes of this Standing Order an 'eligible Circuit' is one in which the Circuit itself, a project carried on by the Circuit Meeting, or a project carried on in the Circuit by the Synod, is designated under Standing Order 440.

(2) This Standing Order applies where the Circuit Meeting of an eligible Circuit resolves that by reason of

constraints on the human and other resources available to it, and of the opportunities for mission and ministry presented to the Circuit, the responsibilities of a Circuit Meeting would more appropriately be discharged by a body constituted under this Standing Order and the Conference at the request of the Synod directs that this Standing Order shall apply to that Circuit.

(3) When this Standing Order applies:

(a) the Circuit, including the designated project, if any, hitherto carried on in it, shall continue to exist as a Circuit but shall be treated for the purposes of Standing Orders 440 and 944 as if it were a single designated project carried on by the Synod, save that Standing Order 440(8) shall not apply;

(b) the management committee appointed by the Synod under Standing Order 440(4) shall include the ex-officio members specified in Standing Order 552 and the persons specified in heads (ii) (iv) and (vi) to (viii) of Standing Order 510(1) and shall become the Circuit Meeting for the purposes of clause 40 of the Deed of Union, Section 54 of Standing Orders, Standing Orders 553 and 567, and for any other purpose for which a Circuit Meeting may be required;

(c) for the avoidance of doubt, the purposes for which all model trust property in the Circuit, other than local property, is held, used and applied shall be district purposes;

(d) the Synod, in exercising its powers under Standing Order 966(1), shall appoint as district trustees for the district property in the Circuit all such members of the management committee as are eligible for appointment under that Standing Order.

(4) During the currency of a direction under clause (2) above there shall be no other or separate Circuit Meeting constituted under Standing Order 510, 511 or 512. (5) The Conference may at any time revoke such a direction and make transitional and consequential provisions, and each review under Standing Order 440(5) of a Circuit to which this Standing Order applies shall consider whether the direction should be revoked.

540 Consultations.

...

(5) In Circuits where an appointment has to be made to the pastoral oversight of a city centre church or project on the official list kept under Standing Order 440(1) or in a city centre Circuit on that list the Chair of the District shall in the course of considering with which presbyters to initiate negotiations by the circuit stewards, confer with the district Policy Committee, and with the Connexional Team member responsible for the maintenance of that list. Where the appointment of a deacon is to be made in connection with such a church or project, the Chair shall similarly confer and report the results of such consultation to the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

*See S.O. 440 and 512A for city centre churches, Circuits and projects. The above clause applies to circuit appointments; where the appointment is to a project carried on by the Synod, see S.O. 440(8).*

#### **944 Proceeds of City Centre Premises.**

Where capital money arises from the sale, letting or other disposition of the whole or substantially the whole of the land held in connection with a Local Church, Circuit or project on the official list kept under Standing Order 440(1) the project for the disposition shall provide for the capital money to be applied to district purposes under Standing Order 440(6).

*The Standing Order referred to concerns Local Churches, Circuits and projects in city centres designated to be listed under that Standing Order and thereby subject to certain special provisions.*

*Disposals of city centre premises are no longer exempt from the CPF levy under S.O. 970.*