

Reaffirming *Our Calling*: Trustee Structure

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	For discussion

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	To inform the Council of the feedback and developments made since Council paper MC/19/70 was discussed, and to share the broad direction of travel and proposals.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MC/19/70 – Reaffirming <i>Our Calling</i> - The next steps Governance Structure Review by Bridgehouse, which will be circulated to members of the Council by email.
Consultations	The Strategy and Resources Committee District Chairs who were present at the Council discussion of MC/19/70

Reaffirming *Our Calling*: Trustee Structure

Section One - Introduction

1. The Council received MC/19/70 in October 2019 as a discussion paper which attempted to capture the broad range of conversations undertaken by the Connexional Leaders' Forum (CLF) on 23 and 24 September 2019.
2. Whilst the CLF achieved some consensus around the Principles¹ it largely agreed upon, following the publication of the Council paper there were significant reservations from members of the CLF. These members cautioned against moving down the path of restructuring Districts without being absolutely clear and confident about the 'why' in terms of our mission and the impact on our continued focus on *Our Calling*.
3. Concern was also registered that we would be jeopardising the fruit from the considerable amount of work that has recently been taking place in districts in responding to *Our Calling* and in developing Mission Plans. Some concern was expressed that this 1950s benchmark too simplistically looked at the numbers and would be an unhelpful way to reconfigured Districts today.
4. All of that needs to be heard whilst still holding on to the Principles, which had a shared understanding of the need to look at leadership and governance and the need for Districts to be reviewed.
5. In presenting MC/19/70 there was a clear attempt to give account to all the voices of the CLF, to ensure that the reservations of some were shared but that the Council was still given the opportunity for a wide ranging and imaginative discussion in the substantial time allocated to this work.
6. That conversation provided more feedback which was submitted by each of the working groups and then very helpfully followed up by a few individual Council members in much more depth.
7. All of those submissions were looked at in detail and an attempt to summarise the key themes emerging from the Council produced the following;
 - A concern not to rush changes, particularly to districts – more important to get it right (this timetable is too fast for restructuring districts).

¹ Re-imagining Leadership - Principles

- *Oversight in Leadership has to be different than it is now - it should be shared - new model needs to developed*
- *Leadership needs to model lay and ordained working collegially*
- *Leadership must connect responsibility and authority*

Reconfiguring Districts - Principles

- *Re-imagined districts must serve the reaffirming of *Our Calling**
- *All Districts need to be reviewed*
- *The new structure is not simply combining existing districts*

Re-shaping Governance - Principles

- *Governance needs to be as simple as possible with minimal duplication*
- *Governance must serve the 'God for All' strategy*
- *Governance bodies (and leadership) must be representative of our diversity (more so than at present)*

- Be sensitive to geography and existing relationships – and an awareness that larger districts make the relationships more difficult (noting the relational aspect of the Chair’s role).
 - Impact of the change to the District Chair role on the stationing process.
 - Would ‘networks’ of districts work better than reducing them? A federated model.
 - Simplify committees (including getting rid of some)
 - Trusteeship needs tackling – suggestions about moving it to the district and then gifting it back to churches where appropriate resulting in missional/fewer trustee bodies than worshipping communities.
 - Do this by evolutionary changes rather than one-off.
 - Change must be linked to the Evangelism and Growth agenda.
 - Need to link this to circuits as well as districts.
 - Smaller Conference would be less representative and less accessible.
 - Consideration of whether we needed external expertise to help with this work.
 - Concern to retain connexionalism and not become diocesan.
8. These key themes along with the individual submissions were critical to developing a further set of questions as to what should happen next. At the heart of this was the question ‘what is driving the need for structural change?’ The answer to this is about ensuring we have the most effective decision-making structures in place for the Church we are now, and the church we feel called to be in the next ten years.
9. Whatever that structure looks like we now have the evidence (see Section 2) that from the perspective of good governance having a trustee body of 306 people that meets once a year does not provide the strategic decision-making we require if we are to be a Church responding to its calling in the next ten years. We must move to a structure that enables informed, flexible, efficient and focused decision-making, and that means fewer trustees, fewer complex bodies, and a better method of ‘representation’.
10. If this is the question we are seeking to answer then the work outlined in MC/19/70 did not perhaps start in the correct place and the focus on the Districts and the numbers in Districts was a distraction. The reason that work was highlighted was that the number of people elected to Conference and acting as representatives on the Council is derived from the number of Districts. Significantly to change the make-up of those bodies whilst maintaining their representative nature as representative a change in the numbers of Districts. The issue of the ‘number’ of Districts is only important from that perspective, with the issues of the purpose and leadership of the Districts being much more critical from the grass roots.
11. Realising that this ‘confusion’ around purpose existed and that the concern for the way ahead was going to come from the Districts themselves, a meeting was convened of the District Chairs who are on the Council (in a number of different capacities) with the Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary to try to determine a way forward. That meeting reached the following main conclusions:

Governance

12. The work on governance (the role of the Conference, Council, and SRC) needs to be dealt with expediently and separately from the work looking at the Districts.
14. A future model (or models) of governance needs to be presented to the Council for consideration in January; this will focus on forming a trustee body which is effective for our mission and much reduced in number. It will need to consider whether there is a continuing need for both a Council and an SRC if the new body can achieve a more coherent and strategic decision-making process. If the

main purpose of Conference is for us to be able to confer on the work of the Spirit, what is the composition needed of a body that can have those informed conversations?

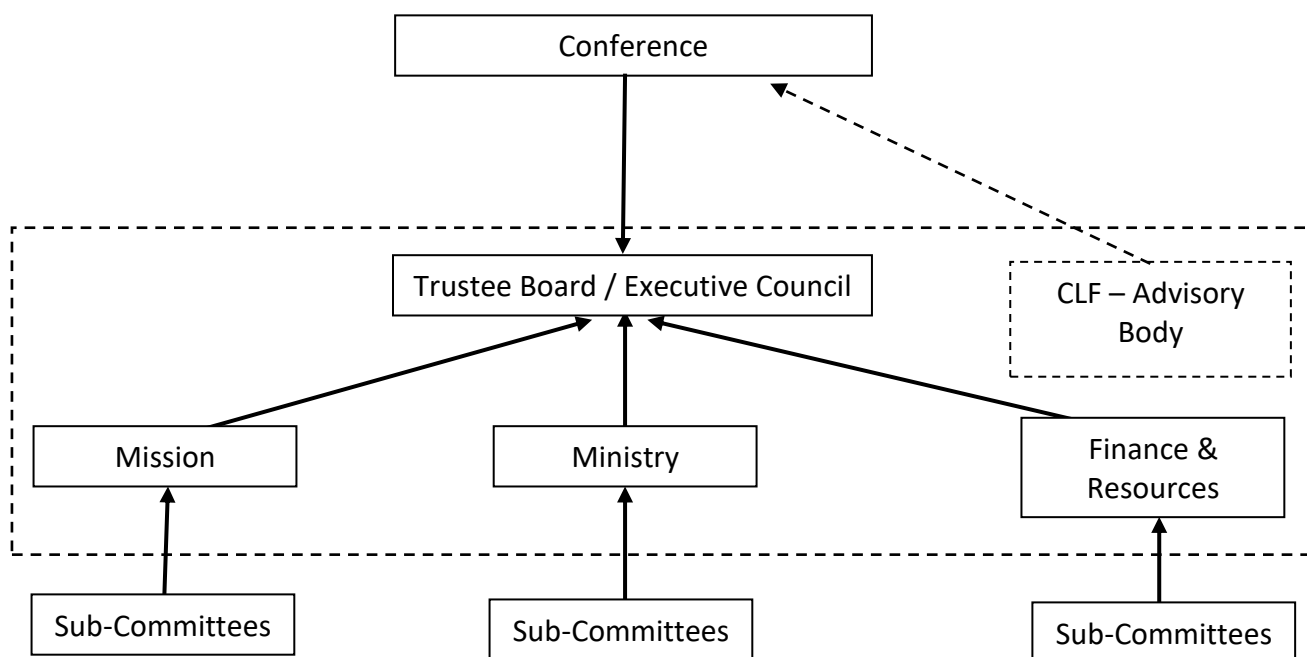
15. This review also needs to offer a more streamlined committee structure than we have at the moment. The feedback from the Council has given rise to thinking around grouping more work around a Mission Committee which would sit alongside the Ministries Committee as being one of two 'programme committees' with delegated authority from a new Trustee body. This might be a good place to start and would then link more with the structure of the Connexional Team and the work of the new trustee body. The SRC has a paper before it that explores the future of the Connexional Grants Committee (CGC) in line with this hope for fewer committees in a more streamlined structure. The Council itself (through one of the working groups) offered a broad brush model for governance which is shared in the Appendix below. What this model does not do is offer reflection on the future role of the CLF which remains a critical gathering for leadership.
16. Further reflection also needs to be given as to how to liberate local churches for the work of mission and discipleship as opposed to fulfilling many of the functions they currently are required to fulfil. One suggestion from the Council working groups was the by making local church into 'societies/classes' and Circuits into Churches you would start the process of moving trusteeship and enable more contextual engagement on *Our Calling*.
17. The remainder of this paper therefore offers to the Council thoughts on two inter-related areas which the Council will be asked to discuss when it meets: trusteeship for the Connexion and trusteeship at a local level.
18. There is a fourth section of the paper which brings the Council up to date on thinking around District Reviews with suggested questions to be used for this process going forward. The Council will also be asked to discuss this section of the paper.

Section Two – reflections on Trusteeship

19. To assist the thinking of the Council and SRC, Bridgehouse Company Secretaries were engaged to carry out a review of our decision-making processes, particularly in light of the registration of the Methodist Church as a charity in 2006 and the Charity Code of Conduct. The scope of the review was:
20. To review the governing documents (the Methodist Church Act 1976 and Deed of Union 1932), highlighting the parameters that are set by the Methodist Church Act 1976 in terms of governance structures for the Church as a charity.
21. To highlight the key areas of concern in respect of the current governance arrangements particularly in terms of where charity trusteeship sits and to make key recommendations as to how these might be amended to achieve a more effective governance and oversight structure for the Church as a charity.
22. To offer suggested models for more effective governance structures /examples from other organisations that the SRC and Council might consider.
23. To review relevant elements of the Church's Standing Orders as they pertain to structure/board and committee membership etc.
24. The report (which is being made available to Council members) drew a number of conclusions in relation to the current structure of our decision-making which led to a series of recommendations:

Conference	1. Delegate the role of trustee from Conference members to Council members
Council	2. Council members agree to become trustees
	3. Consider reduction in numbers that sit on the Council (and hence reduction in number of trustees)
	4. Ensure some common membership between the Conference and the Council
	5. Extend scope of the Council's function to despatching the regulatory affairs of the Church including charity affairs'
	6. Make changes to the form and content of annual reporting to the Council
Committees	7. Review the current governance committees for effectiveness and efficiency
	8. Consider merging and dissolving committees as appropriate
	9. Repeat for religious/doctrinal committees
Standing Orders	10. Make required amendments to Standing Orders to effect change
	11. Consider change to form of Standing Orders, moving appropriate parts into a Governance Manual

25. If all of these recommendations were accepted and actioned, our structure would be as follows:



26. The Conference fulfils the role described in the Bridgehouse Report as ‘religious trusteeship’ for conferring on spiritual/doctrinal matters; it could be shorter and have fewer members (if this were desired for other reasons: this model does not necessitate any change in the size or composition of the Conference). Though no longer the charity trustee body, the Conference would still exist to exercise the powers and functions detailed in paragraphs 18 to 25B of the Deed of Union.
27. The Trustee Board/Executive Council would be the legal Trustee body from a charity perspective and also the employing body for the Connexional Team. It would need to be both large enough to be (and to be accepted as) representative of the Connexion (and of the diversity of the Connexion), to include particular areas of expertise and responsibility, and to include some members of the CLF, but at the same time be small enough to ensure that discussion can be held in which all points of view are considered and detailed work undertaken. .
28. Three key committees would be created – Mission, Ministry, and Finance & Resources (including Property work). These would all have members of the CLF on them alongside skilled (mainly lay) members bringing particular areas of expertise. Each committee would have an appropriately skilled Chair, seeking to utilise those who are lay and ordained across the committees. If this broad architecture were accepted, detailed work would need to follow to review the purpose and composition of all other connexional committees all (or perhaps almost all) would report to the Executive Council through one of the key committees.
29. The CLF would continue to bring together the Presidency, the Chairs of Districts (all of whom would be members of either the Trustee body or the three Committees), the Committee Chairs (and, to increase the diversity, other representatives) of the new Committees, and the Senior Staff of the Connexional Team. The CLF would continue to act so that those with significant leadership responsibility can watch over one another in love, reflect theologically and develop vision to inform the deliberations of the Conference, the Trustee Board/Executive Council and three key committees.
30. Every member of the CLF would be on one of the three Committees or the Trustee Board; this would enable the Connexion to make best use of experience and expertise throughout the decision making

bodies. This would also ensure that there is integration between the body seeking to reflect theologically on the needs of the Church and the bodies developing and implementing policy.

Section Three – Trusteeship in a Local Church

31. One of the ways in which the Methodist Church in Britain lives as a Connexion is through the relationship of governance structures at the four levels of its life – Connexion, District, Circuit and Church. It is unsurprising that a realisation of a need for connexional structures to change has been mirrored in other parts of the MCB's life, particularly in terms of the demands that our ways of working currently place on local managing trustees. There has also been a sense of frustration that there is a disjunction between the development of mission strategies (in line with the requirements of SO 400A and 500) and the exercise of local trusteeship in the churches through which those mission strategies are implemented.
32. The Conference in the last two years has received memorials and a notice of motion in this area [see Appendix 1]. These have highlighted the ongoing and increasing concern about the ability of managing trustees to fulfil their responsibilities, that managing trustee don't have the time or energy for mission, and how the resources of the connexion can be more effectively deployed. The Connexional Property Strategy along with the development of the Evangelism and Growth Strategy has meant there is an increased focus on the need for decisions to be made which fulfil *Our Calling* in line with Circuit Mission plans and the District Mission Development Plan.
33. Until 16 April 1977 the affairs of every Methodist Local Church were managed by two separate and independent bodies, each with its own sources of funding and financial responsibilities. The "Trustees" held and managed the chapel and any other properties and the Leaders Meeting (who were of course in law also trustees, but never described as such) were responsible, directly, for the worshipping, fellowship, pastoral and all other aspects of the church's life and, through the circuit assessment, for the upkeep of the ministry. That division of responsibility was increasingly, and in the end overwhelmingly, found to be deeply unsatisfactory, and it was the primary motivation for and purpose of the 1976 Act to abolish it. The Church Council "has authority and oversight over the whole area of the ministry of the church, including the management of its property" (Standing Order 603).
34. A Church Council (as the managing trustee body) has a number of responsibilities in respect of Model Trust property. The Church Council must ensure that the property is only used in accordance with the purposes set out at paragraph 13 of the Model Trusts and only used for purposes permitted in section 92 of CPD. Managing trustees are also responsible for making decisions about the sale, purchase and redevelopment of church land and property subject to the consent requirements. Should it be deemed necessary, a Church Council under SO 943 has to resolve to cease public services on Methodist premises as one of the three bodies (the other two being the Circuit Meeting and the District Policy Committee) which has to make the recommendation to the Synod which grants permission.
35. Managing trustee responsibilities do not however only apply to property; they must also ensure that local church model trust funds are spent in accordance with the purposes set out in SO 916 and 917, as well as more generally ensuring that the requirements of Standing Orders are complied with by the local Church.
36. It is important to note that in considering the alternative models of managing trusteeship set out below, there are other means by which some of the concerns about managing trusteeship might be met.
37. In exceptional cases of a serious Breach of Trust or Methodist Discipline, SO 611A already enables some or all members of the Church Council to be replaced. If managing trustees are proceeding with

a sale without consent under SO 930(4), refusing to pay their assessment or not complying with a health and safety notice, then Standing Order 611A enables a District Policy Committee to decide to replace some or all of the managing trustees.

- 38 As noted, a Church Council, Circuit Meeting and District Policy Committee all have to make a recommendation to the Synod that public services be ceased under SO 943. It would be possible for the Methodist Council to consider a review of the policy on whose consent/recommendation should be required to cease public services. There may be circumstances when the Methodist Council consider it not to be appropriate or necessary for a Church Council to have to make the recommendation to cease public services.
39. If the concerns that have led to these memorials and notice of motion were about local churches or circuits being able to dispose of property or land upon terms that might not be considered to be furthering Our Calling, there is an existing means by which this could begin to be addressed. Circuit Meetings and District Policy Committees (DPC) could more effectively utilise their role as a consent giving body prior to any disposal or development of church land or property.
40. Circuit Meetings and DPCs need to know about potential disposals or developments, at an early stage and ideally need a District Property Secretary (DPS) who has the ability and capacity to understand the proposals at the blue sky thinking stage. Therefore enabling the DPS to raise any concerns about the proposals early and before consent is sought. It is not uncommon, for a Circuit Meeting or DPC to only be considering consent, when all terms relating to the project have been agreed. Often the consent-giving bodies consider it too late to object or raise concerns. Circuit Meetings and DPCs need to be willing to challenge Church Councils and withhold consent where the project does not further the District Mission Development Plan and Circuit Mission Plan. The Connexional Team is already working on means by which the existing consents system can enable projects to be entered and given consent on a staged basis. Ideally projects would be entered on the consents system at an early (the blue sky thinking) stage which would enable the Circuit Meeting and DPS to be engaged with the project at the outset.

Potential Models of Managing trusteeship

Delegation

- 41 It is possible under paragraph 16(k) of the Model Trusts for a managing trustee body to delegate all or some of their powers or duties to the Conference, to any connexional, district, circuit or local church body, or to any committee of one of those bodies. The Council could ask the Connexional Team (in consultation with the Law and Polity Committee) to produce guidance on the use of delegations across the Connexion to encourage more use of the power to delegate. A Circuit Meeting or District Policy Committee might establish one or more committees that would receive the delegation of managing trusteeship and fulfil the responsibilities. It should be noted that the Church Council would remain the charity trustees where the managing trusteeship was delegated elsewhere.
42. This approach would have a number of advantages. It would be a simple means by which a Church Council could be freed from the necessity to undertake some business in order to focus on mission. As a decision of the Church Council, this development is likely to be better received locally than a removal of managing trusteeship. The committee to which trusteeship is delegated would have to report regularly to the Church Council (ensuring there is ongoing involvement in decisions) and could have people with relevant experience and expertise to enable better management of property.
43. There are however disadvantages. General funds and monies not held on the model trust would not be under the responsibility of the exercising the delegation so a means by which the committee could access to funds that the local Church would have used for property would have to be

identified. More, authority remains with the Church Council which could revoke the delegation at any time.

44. This is not a long term solution and unlikely to provide a significant change to the current position given it is a decision for Church Councils to make and then revoke as they wish.

Amend Paragraph 2 of the Model Trusts

45. Model Trust 2 sets out where the responsibility for managing trusteeship lies, indicating that for local property this responsibility lies with the appropriate Church Council. To change that would be a significant shift to the current position with managing trusteeship moving in its totality from the Church Council for local church property to another church body that would be named in paragraph 2 of the Model Trusts.
46. Whilst it would be possible to name the Circuit Meeting as the managing trustee body, this is unlikely to be welcomed by the majority of Circuit Meetings. One possibility would be for the Circuit Meeting to appoint a property committee that would be named as the managing trustees for local church property. If this option were to be explored further consideration would need to be given as to how a local church would still be a part of any decision to dispose of property or land or cease public services.
47. Again, there are advantages to this idea. It would offer a long-term solution to concerns about the ability of some Church Councils effectively to manage their property and would enable the appointed property committee to make decisions about property and land in the Circuit (such as its use, disposal, retention and purchase) on the basis of the circuit mission plan along with the district mission development plan. The property committee could include those with expertise in property matters, enabling that expertise to be available across the circuit.
48. However, there are also disadvantages. It would move managing trusteeship even from effective Church Councils (and weaken the sense of ownership amongst those who most often worship in or otherwise use buildings). The appointed property committee would need access to appropriate levels of funding to maintain the buildings without having charge of the local churches' general funds or other restricted funds (though it would have responsibility for model trust funds). Furthermore, the difficulty of finding appropriate people to exercise responsibility is experienced by circuits as well as churches and a property committee of this nature would be another committee for which a Circuit Meeting had to find members.
49. There is also considerable potential for tension. The property committee deciding to dispose of land or property without the agreement of the members of the local Church and/or Church Council is likely to lead to conflict within the circuit and local churches might be concerned that this model would mean decisions being made against their interests, eg, to sacrifice smaller churches to release funds for work elsewhere in the circuit.

One Church Council overseeing number of classes with own property

50. A number of circuits have already begun to explore or implement a change to where managing trusteeship lies within the life of the Circuit. This model has one Church Council that is appointed to oversee a number of classes, all or some of which have their own property. Any income to the classes is passed to the one Church Council although each class will have some funds available for their day-to-day expenses.
51. This model requires the agreement of each local church that they will become a class (unless they have fewer than six members, see SO 605 and 612) and that the one Church Council will manage their property, funds and fulfil the responsibilities set out in SO 600. This would shift both managing

trustee and charity trustee responsibilities to one body and mean that the classes can focus on mission.

52. Whilst some circuits have managed to work within the current SO 610 for the constitution of the local Church to ensure that there is representation of all the classes on the Church Council, if this option were to be favoured, there would be a need to consider whether a modified Church council constitution would need to be an option, similar to the option offered to larger Circuits in section 58 of CPD.
53. Again, there are advantages. The class meeting can focus on mission and not have to worry about burden of managing trustee and charity trustee responsibilities. Decisions can be taken by one Church Council upon the basis of the circuit mission plan and in the interests of all the classes within the church. Money and property move together, as the Church Council can use the funds as it so wishes for all the classes, enabling a more connected approach to the use of funds and property.
54. Existing circuits where this has been effective could be offered as examples to others in the Connexion. A larger Church Council registered with the Charity Commission can ensure appropriate governance and compliance with regulatory requirements as well as charity law without smaller bodes having to deal with these matters and a net of fewer Church Councils makes it more likely that willing and people with the right range of skills and experience will be found to serve as trustees.
55. The disadvantages are that the Church Council will still be named in paragraph 2 of the Model Trust as the managing trustee body so it would be for each existing local church to agree to become a class. Each class might still have its own property, meaning that any disposal that might be preferred by the Church Council still has the potential to cause conflict and upset if implemented against the wishes of the class. Similarly, there is the potential for conflict if a class does not agree with decisions of the Church Council regarding use of 'its' funds or property.

Section Four – District Reviews

Background

57. The 2016 Conference directed the Council to bring a process for implementing the creation of District Commissions 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 of a reinvitation, 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.
58. The Council (in April 2017) considered proposals for such a process. However, the Council expressed concerns that this would prove to be a burden rather than a helpful reflective exercise. The Council heard about the Church of England's newly-developed peer review process for dioceses. This more 'light-touch' approach was favourably received, noting that it would need to be adapted for a Methodist context. The Council agreed to recommend that work should proceed along the lines of a peer review process.
59. 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.
60. In its report to the 2018 Conference, the Council noted that a District Review process should be flexible and proposed that it be set within 'broad parameters', within which Districts would take the lead in developing the review process as appropriate for their context with regard to timing, the number of people involved, the level of ecumenical involvement etc. It also noted the need for Connexional Team support, so that the burden placed on Districts and on volunteers is not too great.

61. The Conference received a proposed outline and an indicative structure for such reviews and directed that a District Review process be established as described.

Reviews that have taken place

62. Pilot reviews have taken place in Cumbria, Channel Islands, Plymouth and Exeter and Nottingham and Derby Districts. They have each been undertaken by an external reviewer (usually a former District Chair) who has spent time asking questions of people and preparing a report in the light of those responses. They have each been done with slightly different methodologies and therefore different responses and styles of report have emerged from them.
63. It is proposed that District Reviews should be conducted in a much more contextual way than previously envisaged, and that they should, where possible, be undertaken in stationing regions or other relevant groupings of Districts. It may be that, as the reviews progress, changes in the composition of Districts or ways in which they relate to one another are suggested out of that process and such changes will then feed into the work on trusteeship and governance. In this way, changes will evolve over a longer period of time than that envisaged in MC/19/70.

Core framework of questions to which contextual ones can be added.

64. It is proposed that, in order to gather responses which enable similar reflections to take place in different Districts, there is a core framework of questions for all District Reviews. Each District can then add questions which address its particular context and needs. The questions need to address the pastoral, representational, missional aspects of leadership but in the context of the District rather than focused only on the Chair, and must be separate from any consideration of a reinvitation for a District Chair. It is recognised that this will not always be easy, because of the way in which the Chair represents the District in various ways.
65. Such a core framework could include the following:
- In what ways has the support of the District been valuable in increasing your confidence in God?
 - How could the District (including its structures and officers) be even more effective in this respect?
 - How does the life and ethos of the District encourage you to be more aware of God's presence, purpose and love?
 - How might the District build on this to inspire you even more?
 - What is your dream for the District?
 - What do you most appreciate about the District's support and care?
 - How might that support and care be even more helpful?
 - How might the District fruitfully assist the Circuits and Churches in growing and learning in faith and deepening discipleship?
 - What do you most value about the transformational leadership the District gives for mission?
 - Looking ahead, what does the District need to provide to enable your Circuit to flourish in mission?
 - Do you feel that the District encourages you to 'live on a bigger map'? What do you value about that?
 - How might the District enable you to be more effective in tackling such pressing issues as building inclusion, tackling injustice and responding to need in your local communities?
 - If churches are called to be welcoming centres of inclusive Christian hospitality, what do you particularly value about the District's support as you seek to make your church(es) fit for purpose?

- How might the District be even more successful in the assistance it gives?
- Looking ahead, what more can the District do to support and enable you/your church/your circuit to bring about the changes in society you long to see?
- What do you need from the District if Methodists are to become more effective in talking about God with others?
- What do you especially value about the District's approach to pioneering and supporting new work to make fresh disciples of Jesus?
- How might this develop to be even more effective in future?
- How might the District best support our people to become more confidently Spirit-led, with a heart for Jesus and a passion for mission?
- In the future, what key priorities would you set for the District's work and the allocation of its resources in order to drive forward the revitalisation of the whole church through *Our Calling*.
- If the District were to become part of a larger regional entity, what are the really valuable aspects of its current leadership and support that you deem to be absolutely essential to the future vitality of the Circuits, as they evolve and grow through *Our Calling*?

Timetable

66. It is proposed that all Districts will be reviewed through this process by the summer of 2022. The reviews will be conducted in regions, to enable reviews to be informed by the reviews which are being undertaken by nearby Districts and to provide a regional context. The timetable below uses stationing regions as a starting point (with the exception of Wales Synod and Synod Cymru which are linked together), but it is recognised that alternative regional groupings may emerge in the context of how particular Districts relate to one another.
67. This suggested timetable has attempted to use the earliest reinvitation dates for District Chairs in each region, however, it will not be possible to do that in every case for those whose reinvitations are due in 2020 or 2021.

2019/2020:	2020/2021:	2021/2022:
Bristol	Wales Synod	Darlington
Plymouth and Exeter	Synod Cymru	Newcastle
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	Sheffield	Scotland
Channel Islands	Yorkshire West	Shetland
Southampton	Yorkshire North and East	
Lancashire		
Bolton and Rochdale	Birmingham	
Manchester and Stockport	Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury	
Isle of Man	Chester and Stoke-on-Trent	
Cumbria		
Liverpool	East Anglia	
	Lincolnshire	
	Nottingham and Derby	
	Northampton	
	Bedfordshire, Essex, Hertfordshire	
	London	
	South East	

68. However, even this is a demanding schedule and it is more important that the reviews produce helpful outcomes than that they are completed within a predetermined timespan. One of the concerns that emerged from the Council in October was that each district should be enabled to honour and continue good work that is in progress and not feel that change was imposed upon it. It is therefore proposed that there should be a gathering in each region which introduces the review timetable for that region and the broad parameters, asks each district to share its hopes and fears about the process, and attempts to articulate the review processes so that neighbouring districts have some input into each neighbour's review and existing inter-district initiatives can be recognized and considered.
69. The 2018 Conference agreed that oversight of reviews should rest with the Secretary of the Conference and that someone within the Connexional Team should have responsibility for ensuring that they happen. The Council is asked also to consider the creation of a 'cabinet', which would work with the Secretary of the Conference and the Connexional Secretary to reflect on the thinking of Reviews and their implication. Such a cabinet would have a limited lifespan and would cease to exist once the review process was completed and recommendations had been brought to the Council.
70. What must not be lost as we think ahead is how we address the current demands made on the role of the Chair nor the need for us to expand the diversity within the Chairs' Meeting. Thinking is emerging about how we see the current role of the Chair exercised in a different combination of individuals providing pastoral, representative and missional leadership.
71. **The Council is therefore asked to consider:**
1. **The recommendations from the Bridgehouse Report.**
 2. **The suggestions on local trusteeship (including a decision on keeping decision making locally in one place).**
 3. **The suggestions for the core framework for the District Reviews.**
 4. **The timetable as laid out for the Reviews.**

*****RESOLUTION**

- 9/1. The Council receives the Report.**

Appendix 1

M8 Circuit strategies

The Bradford North (27/32) Circuit Meeting (Present: 42; Voting: unanimous) notes that many churches, finding themselves with decreasing and ageing membership, are having to consider their future viability. The number of ministers available for stationing is also decreasing. The Circuit Meeting proposes that each District sets up a small team to consider with Circuits their strategy for the next 5–10 years. The team to be independent, including one person qualified to judge the suitability of buildings, one person with an understanding of Methodism and co-opting one person with a knowledge of the circuit geography and transport links. Rather than individual churches making decisions and to avoid piecemeal closures, let's merge for mission – not just from necessity.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Bradford North Circuit Meeting for its memorial which rightly diagnoses some of the effects of decline and the needs for churches to consider their viability. The Circuit's proposal for a district team to assist each church to consider its future is akin to ways in which a number of Circuits and Districts have used their resources to assist churches in the difficult task of discerning their calling in challenging circumstances. Such a practice has been very helpful and embodies the spirit of Standing Order 431(i) which requires that the district Policy Committee assists "Local Churches and Circuits having exceptional problems."

Whilst there would be advantages in each District adopting the strategy proposed in this memorial to offer that assistance, the Conference does not consider it wise to prescribe the creation of such teams in every District given the disparity of resources and particular needs across the Districts. However, this does not diminish the need for Circuits and Districts to pay careful attention to the need for the development of mission plans. To that end, the Methodist Council is committed, under the re-articulation of *Our Calling*, to develop strategies for the whole Connexion that will enable the sort of support which this memorial envisages. Such support requires not only a rediscovery of the vision of a Local Church, but also Connexion-wide methods of nurture that bring together the ability to give a renewed articulation to evangelism, a coherent use of property and finances and patterns of oversight that enable coherent mission plans across each Circuit, which is the primary unit of mission.

To this end, while declining the specific proposal contained within the memorial, the Conference welcomes the concern within it and directs the Methodist Council to continue its consideration of how Districts can more effectively be resourced and the connexional principle of support articulated, and where managing trusteeship of Local Churches and Circuits can most effectively reside.

Notice of Motion 2018/201: Models of Trusteeship

The Conference, mindful that the Circuit is the primary unit of mission policy and has a particular responsibility to ensure the faithful deployment of resources, directs the Methodist Council to explore alternative models of managing trusteeship and bring to the Conference no later than in 2020 proposals that would enable other bodies to more easily hold trusteeship of Local Churches, after due process.

The Conference adopted the Motion.

M17 Application of policies

The Melton Mowbray (23/12) Circuit Meeting (Present: 26; Voting: 21 for, 1 against) raises concerns that the Methodist Church has become too bureaucratic.

Whilst recognising the need to comply with statutory legislation and acknowledging past mistakes, the Methodist Church's current requirements for churches in relation to safeguarding, data protection (GDPR)

and Premises Hire Licenses are so complex and time consuming that they impact on the real work of the Church of mission, worship and outreach. The duties of Safeguarding, Data Protection Officers are so onerous that it is increasingly difficult to find members willing to fulfil these roles. Churches and Circuits are resorting to employing staff to do them which uses scarce resources and again impacts on the Church's ability to fulfil its purpose.

Fundamental principles are that all procedures and documentation should be user friendly and minimise administration time. We ask the Conference to reconsider the application of these policies in practice and the negative impact they are having on the work of the Church and its members.

Reply

The Conference thanks the Melton Mowbray Circuit for its memorial and for raising the important issue of support for managing trustees in respect of data protection, safeguarding and licenses.

The Conference recognises the ever increasing regulatory burden placed on managing trustees and the need to employ people for roles that might have once been undertaken by a volunteer. This situation is not however unique to the Methodist Church nor is it Methodist policies that are necessarily leading to all the increased burdens. The Connexional Team makes every effort to assist managing trustees in meeting the regulatory compliance and best practice through precedent documents and policies. The Conference reaffirms that safeguarding work is a vital part of the Methodist Church's response to the love of God. It is an integral part of the Methodist Church's witness to God through Jesus Christ as it seeks to be a community marked by love and care for one another and for all whom it encounters.

It is not within the power of the Conference to remove the regulatory burdens or legal compliance from managing trustees. However, the 2018 Conference directed the Methodist Council in response to Notice of Motion 201 to consider alternative models of managing trusteeship and to bring proposals to the Conference in 2020.

The Conference therefore declines the memorial but directs the Council to consider the concerns raised by Melton Mowbray Circuit in this memorial when reviewing alternative models of managing trusteeship.