

## Basic Information

<b>Title</b>	<b>Review of Committees, Advisory Groups and Reference Groups that Support the Work of the Connexional Team</b>
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<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final Report
<b>Resolution/s</b>	As set out at the end of the Report

## Summary of Content

<b>Subject and Aims</b>	This report describes the completion of the Review of Committees and suggests ways in which future work on behalf of groups & committees may be taken forward
<b>Main Points</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The Purpose, Process and Value of the Review</li><li>2. Chronology &amp; Summary of the Process</li><li>3. The Revised Nomenclature</li><li>4. Standing Order changes and major work areas</li><li>5. Ongoing monitoring process</li></ol>
<b>Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)</b>	Methodist Conference 2007 Resolution 41/4. Council papers April 2008 MC/08/49; February 2010 MC/10/05; April 2010 MC/10/46. The Council has given the authority to determine future outcomes of groups and committees to the Secretary for Internal Relationships unless it involves a matter of substantive principle.
<b>Impact</b>	Necessary Standing Order changes will be brought to the 2011 Conference.
<b>Risk</b>	Failure to establish the nomenclature and establish a new ongoing compliance monitoring system risks hindering the effective work of groups and delaying cost savings.

## **1. Introduction – The Purpose, Process and Value of the Review of Committees**

1.1 The review of Committees is an important piece of work for the Church. Behind the complex process of the review are some clear purposes and motivations. In the first place, it is clear that the Church needed to consider the costs incurred in supporting the large number of meetings; we are obliged to find ways to be more efficient in the use of our limited resources of people and money. Behind this review, however, is not simply the intention to reduce our costs but a desire to be more open, honest, inclusive, effective, and accountable in the way that the Church does its work. In particular, it has not always been clear how policy is developed, decided on and implemented.

1.2 In many cases we have simply needed to confirm that it is the formal governance bodies of the Church – in particular, the Conference and, under it, the Methodist Council – that make policy. In a similarly straightforward way it is usually the employees of and officers serving the Council who help develop that policy and ensure that those decisions are properly implemented and then monitored and evaluated. In this way there are clear lines of accountability for the whole process. Therefore clarifying the place of all the meetings in the overall structure becomes essential for the oversight of the life, work and mission of the Church. It is also essential for the Connexional Team to be able to do its work. A review that seeks to make these meetings more able to support this process is fundamental to the Church fulfilling its mission in a prayerful, thoughtful and grounded way.

1.3 Throughout the review, we have become aware of just how many people give their time, passion, expertise, and energy to serve. The review itself has demanded much of the committees and other bodies that have been reviewed. The Church owes them a great deal and the hopes of this whole process are that it will both properly affirm all that is offered, and provide a much more efficient, effective and inclusive way for all those who so generously offer to make their contribution.

## **2. Chronology and Summary of the Process**

2.1 The 2007 Conference [Resolution 41/4, Daily Record 7/22/10] directed the Methodist Council “... to oversee a review of all committees, advisory groups and reference groups which relate to the work of the current Team”.

2.2 The Council set up a Reference Group to address the matter. The Reference Group reported to the Council in April 2008 [MC/08/49]. Based on a review of 31 of the 78 committees identified by the group, it made recommendations for change to 15 of these, deferred work on 16 and proposed a new set of definitions for the different types of group.

2.3 The Reference Group also implicitly identified a distinction between bodies which have an independent decision-making authority delegated to them from the Conference or the Council (and which are normally established in Standing Orders), and bodies which advise the Conference and the Council or support the work of members of the Connexional Team (to whom any decision-making authority has been delegated by the Conference or the Council), but did not clarify this explicitly.

2.4 The 31 groups which the Reference Group considered in its preliminary review all fell in that latter category. This meant that the emphasis in the preliminary stages fell on those bodies which advise the Conference and the Council or support the work of members of the Connexional Team. Perhaps for that reason the new terminology or definitions for the various types of group was not placed before the 2008 or 2009 Conference for approval.

2.5 The progress made by the Council was reported to the 2008 Conference as an appendix to the Team Focus report [Agenda item 37]. There were no resolutions attached to it. A further report on progress was received by the 2009 Conference [Agenda item 41 as amended by the Conference – see Daily Record 8/12].

2.6 The work done between April 2008 and September 2009 concentrated on mapping the number of groups known to the Connexional Team (which was much greater than originally anticipated), classifying and reviewing them according to the nomenclature and principles established by the Council Reference Group, and following the given deadline of implementing the recommendations by the end of August 2009. But this work demonstrated that the review was a much larger task than originally foreseen, so it was not possible to conclude the work in the original time frame.

2.7 In February 2010 the Council received a further report [MC/10/05] and resolved:

1. that the nomenclature and ways of working adopted by the Team since April 2008 ... be formally adopted as baseline standards for the future functioning of all groups and committees, and that appropriate recommendations to that effect be made to the Conference
2. that the final stage of review should consider whether any new categories of groups or committees might be required.

(The results of these considerations and some proposed amendments to the list of categories and their definitions approved by the Council can be found in Section 3 below).

2.8 In the light of the above, the Team presented to the April 2010 meeting of the Methodist Council a further report, dealing in particular with details concerning those groups which are not formal oversight or governance bodies of the Church but which advise those bodies or support the work of the Connexional Team [MC/10/46]. This showed that the Review, as specified by the Conference in 2007 and overseen by the Council in accordance with the principles established by the Council Reference Group, was essentially complete and extracted principles for future work [see Section 3 in the report to the April 2010 Council] and a process to enable their application.

2.9 The April Council adopted the following resolutions:

1. that the Council recommends that the Conference establishes a new compliance monitoring process, overseen by the Secretary for Internal Relationships;
2. that the Council accepts the Review of Committees as complete (with final implementation of agreed work in 2010–2011);
3. that the Council recommends that the Conference commission the Team to extend the principles of the Review of Committees to the broader range of groups and committees that serve the Methodist Church.

### **3. The Revised Nomenclature**

3.1 The report to the Methodist Council in February 2010 [MC/10/05] clarified the implicit distinction between

- (i) bodies which have an independent decision-making authority delegated to them from the Conference or the Council (and which are normally established in Standing Orders); and
- (ii) bodies which advise the Conference and the Council and/or support the work of members of the Connexional Team (to whom any decision-making authority has been delegated by the Conference or the Council).

3.2 The report to the April Council offered further clarification by suggesting that, the following categories of groups identified for use in the future, namely:

- (a) Decision-making Committees
- (b) Reference Groups
- (c) Scrutiny Groups
- (d) Stakeholders Forums
- (e) Practitioners Forums
- (f) Resource Groups
- (g) Open Networks.

- 3.3 The type of bodies outlined in 3.1(i) above are likely to fall under heads (a), (b) and (c) in 3.2 above; whereas those in 3.1(ii) above are likely to fall under (d) to (g) inclusive. However, further review suggests that category (f) Resource Groups might either be given an independent authority as in 3.1(i) or be appointed by the Connexional Team to support its work as in 3.1(ii), and that the title of this category ought therefore to be “Resource or Working Groups”. Moreover, the tasks given to such groups are sometimes not time-limited in the sense of being one-off events, but, say, annual or repeating events.
- 3.4 Further review also suggests that a distinction needs to be made between who authorises the group’s existence and who appoints its members. Neither applies to Open Networks which are, by definition, open. In categories (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) the existence of the group should be authorised by the Conference or the Council [with many of those in (a) being codified in Standing Orders]. In category (f) the Resource or Working Group may be authorised either by the Conference/Council or by the Connexional Team.
- 3.5 The Conference or the Council should appoint the members of the groups in categories (a), (b), (c) and (d). With regard to (e) Practitioners’ Forums, the Conference or Council should either state that all those holding a particular office in the relevant area of practice should be able to attend, or, if the group is to be representative, should appoint the named members. With regard to (f) Resource or Working Groups, either (a) the Conference or the Council, or (b) the Team should appoint the members as appropriate.
- 3.6 In the light of the above, the categories and definitions are presented to the Conference as follows:
- (a) **Committees authorised by the Conference or the Council (often codified in Standing Orders) and appointed by the same.**  
Committees are standing groups appointed by the Conference or the Council and delegated to make decisions on its behalf. The decision-making remit means that Committees benefit from face-to-face meetings; however, some contact can be undertaken electronically.
  - (b) **Reference Groups authorised and appointed by the Conference or the Council**  
Conference Reference Groups are likely to have one representative from each of the districts and other main constituencies of the Conference membership. They are asked to explore issues in a complex Conference report and make their own report to the Conference to expedite the Conference’s work.  
Council Reference Groups usually have five members. Their role is to consider in detail reports to the Council on complex issues from any part of the Connexional Team or a working group that reports to the Council; and make recommendations to the Council as a whole.
  - (c) **Scrutiny Groups authorised and appointed by the Council**  
Scrutiny Groups are established by the Council to undertake detailed analysis of reports on its behalf on matters relating to formal processes, trusteeship and finance. Scrutiny Groups consist of three or four people with appropriate experience and include within their membership one person who is independent of both the Council and the Strategy and Resources Committee.
  - (d) **Stakeholders’ Forums authorised and appointed by the Council**  
Stakeholders’ Forums are established by the Council and comprise a maximum of 12 persons with experience and expertise in a particular area of the Church’s work (for example, Methodists within Higher Education and students). They will include Christian practitioners from that area of work. The Stakeholders’ Forum facilitates discernment of emerging issues in that area of work. The Connexional Team will assess suggestions from the Stakeholders’ Forum and assess their priority within the Connexional Team’s work and budgets. Stakeholders’ Forums are in contact electronically throughout the year and typically meet face-to-face once a year.

**(e) Practitioners Forums authorised by the Council and with their members being either ex officio or appointed by the Council.**

Practitioners' Forums are established by the Council and comprise of practitioners with similar responsibilities within the Church (for example, Higher Education Chaplains). The Practitioners' Forum facilitates learning and development, fellowship and discernment of emerging issues in that area of work. The Connexional Team will assess suggestions from a Practitioners' Forum and assess their priority within the Connexional Team's work and budgets. Practitioners' Forums are in contact electronically throughout the year and typically meet face-to-face once a year.

**(f) Resource and Working Groups authorised by the Conference, Council, other body or the Connexional Team.**

Resource and Working Groups are established to undertake a clearly defined and often time-limited piece of work on its behalf. (For example, provide a resource pack, provide advice on a new initiative, and undertake a piece of consultation with the wider network.) Resource and Working Groups comprise a maximum of 12 persons with appropriate experience and expertise, and are likely to be recruited from existing forums, committees and networks. Accountability for a Resource Group is to the authorising body. Connexional Team support for the Resource Group (financial and HR) is to be agreed with the Team or directed by Council or Conference.

**(g) Open Networks**

Open Networks are groups of persons with an interest and varying degrees of experience in a particular area that communicate electronically in an ad hoc manner to share information and experience, hold discussion, explore new ideas and provide mutual support. Members of Networks need not be in direct contact with each other.

### **3.7 Conclusion on nomenclature**

Following the April Council's adoption of the resolution to recommend the revised nomenclature and accompanying explanations to the Conference for its approval, the Connexional Team believes that the possibility of further revisions should be left open, but these should not be undertaken for at least three years, by which time the ongoing monitoring process will have been established in the Ways of Working thoroughly embedded in the Connexional Team and the groups with which it interacts.

## **4. Standing Order changes and major work areas**

4.1 In the early stages of the Review, it became clear that a large number of groups with or without independent decision-making powers had remits that were connected to particular provisions in Standing Orders, which did not always reflect their purpose very accurately.

4.2 As a general rule, Standing Orders should only be used for precise specification of the particular function of an independent decision-making body, (as implied by the definition of committee in paragraph 3.6(a) above). As groups may require future review, Standing Orders should be flexible, minimally specific, and able to be adapted without undue complication if necessary.

4.3 Three groups whose future roles require changes to Standing Orders are as follows.

- It is planned that the Aldersgate Memorial Committee should be subsumed in the Wesley Chapel Circuit Meeting. This will involve modifying SO 211.
- The Epworth Press Editorial Committee is now known as the Epworth Press Editorial Board, and defined as a Resource Group. This will require modification of SO 243.
- The Lay Workers Advisory Committee should become the Lay Workers Stakeholders Forum. This will touch on SO 327, although that Standing Order does not currently mention the Advisory Committee which is ceasing to meet.

4.4 There are some major areas of ongoing work which it is expected will involve amendments to

Standing Orders in due course. These are:

- i. the work on the new Ministries Committee;
- ii. the development of the new Equality & Diversity framework (see below for some comments on the Committee for Racial Justice);
- iii. Connexional Property and related issues;
- iv. the Methodist Heritage Committee (see further below).

At the present time, work on the first three is still ongoing. The Review of Committees has offered advice to those undertaking that work. In the future input will be given through the monitoring process proposed in paragraph 2.9 1 above.

Work on the Heritage Committee is further advanced, and provides a useful illustration of the flexibility of the current framework set out in this report.

#### **4.5 The Methodist Heritage Committee**

4.5.1 The Review of Committees was able to inform discussions about how best to structure the work on Heritage required by the 2009 Conference. A summary of the emerging results is offered here (further details contained in Methodist Heritage Committee Report found elsewhere in the Conference agenda).

4.5.2 Notably, The Archives and History Committee will cease to exist as a separate body. Therefore the Terms of Reference of the Heritage Committee will be adapted so as to allow for its membership to retain the skill and experience of the Archives and History Committee.

4.5.3 Some other groups are being retained, but will be renamed in line with the nomenclature and Review principles:

- the Heritage Forum will be renamed the Heritage Sites Network (HSN);
- the District Archivists Conference will be renamed the Connexional Archivists Network (CAN).

Both of these changes illustrate the usefulness of the category of Open Networks. The HSN will be a virtual community for all who are involved in Methodist Heritage, particularly those managing smaller historical sites. The CAN performs a similar role for those involved in archives. District Archivists are established and defined in Standing Orders, but the Heritage Committee report describes proposed amendments to those Standing Orders to make the system more workable and flexible.

Both of these Open Networks will also be meeting once per year: the network structure will be informing a meeting, and this is in line with paragraph 3.6 above which notes that an Open Network must be a more purposive entity than a mere sharing of information electronically.

4.5.4 Other bodies will cease to exist and be replaced by new groups. In particular the Archives and History Committee Task Groups – (Connexional Records, Local Archives & Oral History, and Sites & Museums) – will cease and be replaced by:

- a Records Practitioners Forum (RPF);
- an Heritage Site Managers' Practitioners Forum (HSMPF);
- a Conservation Experts Network.

The RPF will draw on expertise in Connexional records management and the archiving of historical documents at Connexional and District level. Practitioners Forums typically meet once per year, but this group will meet twice per year in line with its aim of providing timely and robust advice. The HSMPF will encourage development of and collaboration between the four key site managers and curators, and also the visitor services' manager of WCH. Both of these are representative uses of the category of a Practitioners Forum, and it will be important to monitor their working as they are set up.

4.5.5 There will then be one completely new group, namely a Methodist Heritage Resource and Working Group. This will be an editorial panel “to ensure accurate and consistent historical and theological content for our displays and publications”. It will mainly work by communicating electronically, but may meet physically once a year. This is an example of a group whose name does not fully reflect its function. It is an Open Network, and its Terms of Reference will need to align its function to the nomenclature listed in paragraph 3.6 (g) above.

## **5. Conclusions**

5.1 The Review of Committees has considered the role of over 100 groups between 2007 and 2010. That work has highlighted the need for the review process to focus on the fundamental principles of the functioning of the various types of group. It has become clear that the appropriate goal of the Review should be to develop an efficient, effective and just structure of groups and committees. The work following the successful trial of the nomenclature and Ways of Working on the initial 31 committees has now been completed, and has not identified any essential gaps in the original proposals. The nomenclature and ways of working have proved extremely useful, and in their revised state are ready to be adopted by the Connexion. Groups and Team members should view them as tools to ensure productive working relationships, rather than as straightjackets.

## **5.2 Resource Implications**

The Review of Committees emerged from the Team Focus process, and inherited its drive towards guaranteeing cost effectiveness and good stewardship. The current expense to the Connexion of groups and committees is estimated at £650,000 per annum. Initial figures suggest that up to £200,000 of this can be attributed to travel expenses. Groups requiring substantial travel to physical meetings risk excluding individuals who do not have the time and mobility to travel across Britain. As well as cost, the amount of connexional travel has environmental implications, and this must be addressed as part of the agenda embodied in the *Hope in God's Future* report presented to the 2009 Conference.

5.3 In the present budgetary climate, a substantial – e.g. 50% – reduction in the overall expense of groups would help to preserve other areas of work. However, at present there is no precise breakdown of the costs of individual groups and committees. The Team is developing the practice of embedding results analysis into its ongoing work, which will help those officials that interact with groups to measure performance.

5.4 The Review has followed the ‘rule of thumb’ of limiting groups (other than formal oversight and governance bodies established under Standing Orders) to one physical meeting per year and making enhanced use of electronic communication the rest of the time. Preliminary evaluation suggests that this approach is succeeding in reducing costs and enabling more efficient and inclusive working practices. However, the Review is aware that the traditional regime of groups arose in response to work that the Conference requires, and the success of the new policy in achieving the Conference’s goals will have to be reviewed in two years’ time.

## **5.5 On-going Monitoring Process**

It is important that all groups, including those that are time-limited, are set up with clear Terms of Reference – and that all old groups have Terms of Reference that are current. Without this, it is difficult to assess the performance of these short-lived groups and extract learning from them. Another reason for prioritising the creation of appropriate Terms of Reference is that, should groups choose to brand themselves with an arbitrary name, the Terms of Reference will specify their remit formally according to the nomenclature, and ensure consistency with the work of other groups.

5.6 The Terms of Reference will be developed in accordance with the principles of the Review.

The Team has already placed relevant information on its Intranet. This will be extended by the creation of a new document designed to assist the formation of new groups. This will have necessary guidance for Connexional Team members and also the participants who make up the groups.

5.7 It is central to the work of the Review of Committees that the ways of working support the Methodist Church's clear mandate of ensuring that the hard work of the volunteers that largely comprise the groups and committees is duly recognised and appreciated, and that the Church's structures enable the Methodist Church to benefit from this work. To facilitate this, it is important that appropriate expectations for collaboration are specified at the beginning of any piece of work, and that processes are in place to safeguard them.

5.8 The Secretary for Internal Relationships should oversee the development of an ongoing monitoring process. This monitoring process will oversee the creation and continued functioning of groups that support the work of Team members in particular, and will aim to:

- assess the performance of the Ways of Working and nomenclature, and review these in two to three years;
- gather feedback from volunteers and staff on the Review of Committees process;
- consider ongoing relations between this work and other areas of policy such as Methodist Church's carbon reduction targets;
- undertake or commission any further work necessary to ensure that the various committees and other groups are known across the Connexion, sufficiently publicised and inclusive.

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

**45/1. The Conference received the Report.**

**45/2. The Conference adopted the revised nomenclature and ways of working set out in section 3 of the report as baseline standards for the functioning of all groups and committees**

**45/3. The Conference directed the Methodist Council to establish a monitoring system, overseen by the Secretary for Internal Relationships, to ensure that those groups which advise the Conference and the Council or support the work of members of the Connexional Team (to whom any decision-making authority has been delegated by the Conference or the Council) comply with the nomenclature and ways of working.**

**45/4. The Conference directed the Council to continue the explorations of how the principles identified in the Review of Committees can be extended to those bodies which have an independent decision-making authority delegated to them from the Conference or the Council (and which are normally established in Standing Orders), and to bring any appropriate recommendations to the Conference.**