

Basic Information

Title	Team Focus Review of the Resourcing Mission Office (RMO)
Contact Name and Details	Nick Moore, Head of Support Services; mooren@methodistchurch.org.uk
Status of Paper	Decision
Resolution/s	64/1. The Conference receives the Report. 64/2. The Conference endorses the gratitude expressed by the Council to the staff of the Resourcing Mission Office for their work, professionalism and co-operation during the Team Focus review.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	As the last part of the Team Focus process, the work of the RMO in Manchester has now been thoroughly reviewed and the Methodist Council has decided the way forward. In response to requests for the Conference to hear more about this decision, this paper summarises the extensive work behind the Council decision.
Main Points	<p>The RMO was reviewed in line with the principles adopted for the rest of the Connexional Team in Team Focus.</p> <p>The review was independent and very thorough and took account of the changing demands on the RMO.</p> <p>The Council agreed that the present staff posts should be replaced by (i) some additional posts within TMCP; (ii) the ending of some work; (iii) a small number of posts integrated within the London Team office.</p> <p>Careful transitional arrangements are being developed to ensure minimum disruption to the standards of service given to the Connexion.</p> <p>There are significant cost savings from this reconfiguration but the decisions were not driven by them.</p>
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	<p>Methodist Council paper MC/10/51</p> <p>Review of the Resourcing Mission Office, SRC Paper MC/10/05</p> <p>Review of the Resourcing Mission Office, SRC Paper MC/09/69</p> <p>Team Focus Report, Methodist Conference 2007</p> <p>Location of Resourcing Mission Office, SRC Paper MC/07/80</p>
Risk	<p>Proposed changes may cause the loss of corporate memory and familiar channels of communication for some local churches. Ongoing support will be offered to the consents process in particular to ensure the progress made in this work is not impeded.</p> <p>Failure to reconfigure the RMO will prevent the results of this part of the Team Focus process integrating with those parts already reconfigured, reducing the quality of service to the wider Connexion and incurring significant additional costs. It may also perpetuate confusion between the roles of the RMO and TMCP.</p>

Introduction

1. Paragraph 8 of the Report of the Methodist Council found elsewhere in the Conference Agenda (Item 30) states that

The Council had a long and careful discussion of the Review of the Resourcing Mission Office, currently located in Manchester, which formed the last major part of the Team Focus process. Members of the Council were sensitive to dealing with the feelings of members of the staff and others in the connexion, as well as varying perceptions of the needs of the Church. The Council unanimously expressed its gratitude to the staff of the Resourcing Mission Office for the work they do and the way they had co-operated with the review process. After alternative proposals were considered which failed to reach a majority, the Council voted by a two-thirds majority that specialist areas of property work (conservation; listed building; landfill grants etc.) should remain in Manchester; a new post of Connexional Property Coordinator should be established in the Team based in Methodist Church House, together with posts dealing with property grants, finance, governance and database management. Further discussion of these matters can be found in a reply to a Memorial on the subject elsewhere in the Conference Agenda.

2. After that Report was written, the Memorials Committee met to consider what reply it would recommend that the Conference make to the Memorial concerning the outcome of the Review [M9 (2010)]. In the light of the wealth of material provided to it, the Memorials Committee recommended that

.... in accordance with Standing Order 138(5) the President, Vice-President and Secretary of the Conference make arrangements for the Conference to debate the issues in this memorial that it is proper for the Conference to debate; and that an additional report of the Methodist Council's actions be provided to facilitate that debate.

3. The following report has been written to fulfil that request.
4. It is proper for the Conference to consider where in the Connexion there should be a visible presence of entities whose impact is not so much local as connexion-wide; and how the work of connexional officers and staff can best be configured. Thus in 1997 and 1998, the Conference decided that the creation of a single Connexional Team out of the previous seven Divisions required that a single London base for that Team should be created out of the various London bases that had previously existed [1997 Agenda Item 4.4; Notice of Motion 40 (1997); 1998 Agenda Item 8]. However, it is important to note that so far as individual lay members of staff are concerned, the location or base of their work is a matter of their terms and conditions of contract – and their employer who is ultimately responsible for those is the Methodist Council.
5. Aware that it is the Council which is the employer, the 2007 Conference adopted Notice of Motion 129 that “(The) Conference acknowledges the considerable debt of gratitude which the Methodist Church owes to the work of the Connexional Property officers and their support staff. (The) Conference judges that the skills, expertise and experience of the Connexional Property officers and their support staff constitute a uniquely valuable resource for the future life and mission of the Methodist Church. (The) Conference directs the Methodist Council to give due consideration to these judgements when formulating detailed plans for the implementation of the Team Focus proposals.” The Review of the Resourcing Mission Office addressed those concerns and, as stated above, the Council considered and weighed them carefully.

Background to the Review

6. At its meeting in April 2010, the Methodist Council adopted the recommendation of the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) to reconfigure the work of the RMO and to end Connexional Team operations in Manchester. This decision was taken after a long and thorough discussion and as part of that debate the work and commitment of the RMO staff was recognised by the adoption of the following resolution:-

“The Council expresses gratitude to the RMO staff for the work they do and the way they have co-operated with the Review process”.

7. It is as the employer of all staff in the RMO that the Methodist Council made the decision to reconfigure the work of the RMO, as recommended by the Project Management Group overseeing the review. The RMO has been reviewed during the 2009–10 Connexional Year as the final part of the Team Focus process used to review the whole Connexional Team. It has not been a standalone review of this one office’s work and cannot be viewed as such. The majority of the Connexional Team, including all offices based at Methodist Church House, had been evaluated and reconfigured in work undertaken since 2005, subject to the same criteria and principles as used in this latest phase of the review work.
8. The Methodist Council originally agreed that the RMO Review should be an exception to the timescale set out for the review of all other parts of the Team. This was because during the main Team Focus review period members of staff at the RMO were asked to work to both develop the connexion-wide property consents process for building schemes and digitise records held in the RMO office. This work was scheduled to be undertaken between 2008 and 2010. The decision to postpone this review to allow the better completion of these projects did not impact the criteria used in this review which was carried out according to the same principles as the wider Team Focus process.

The Review Process

9. To ensure a fair and objective review process, this was led by an external consultant. The work was overseen by a Project Management Group (PMG) made up of representatives from across the connexion who proposed the recommendations that were approved by the Methodist Council at its meeting in April 2010. The PMG was chaired by a former President of the Conference, the Revd Graham Carter, and the other members were all selected because of their expertise and knowledge regarding property and other related projects. All had many years of experience of working with the RMO at circuit and district level and have served in leadership positions within the Methodist Church and/or on a number of connexional committees and groups. One was specifically selected as an experienced lawyer who is also a member of the TMCP Board. The experienced and knowledgeable contributions of all members of the group helped to ensure that there were informed discussions and balanced assessments of the services and resources needed in this area, and the structure that will be required in future to support this. The membership of the PMG is set out in Appendix 1.
10. The methodology employed by the consultant in preparing his report to the PMG was thorough and objective. Members of the RMO staff and stakeholders across the connexion who use the services of this office were consulted as to its current work and potential future needs in this area. An inclusive approach was adopted with as much information as possible gathered from both the RMO’s current staff and its ‘customers’. The consultant assessed this data before making recommendations to the PMG. This ensured that the PMG’s proposals and suggestions were evidence based and focused on the needs of stakeholders across the Connexion.
11. As part of this work, focus groups were held with District Property Secretaries, Managing Trustees, Ministers and Circuit Stewards in two districts, Northampton and Nottingham & Derby. This gave stakeholders across the Connexion, including those who had already

experienced and used the new Consents system, the opportunity to share their views of the current services offered by the RMO and future needs in this area of work. The outcomes of these focus groups helped to shape a questionnaire that was sent to other District Property Secretaries who were not involved in either of the focus group meetings. These responses were reported back to the PMG and were used to help to shape the recommendations approved by the Methodist Council.

12. Throughout the review process the Strategy and Resources Committee was kept up-to-date with the progress of this work. The PMG submitted reports on the progress of its work to the December and February SRC meetings before submitting its findings and recommendations to the April Methodist Council meeting. As the employer of all staff in the RMO, the Methodist Council accepted these recommendations, after a thorough debate on the issue.

Tasks Currently Performed at the RMO

13. Like that of all areas of the Connexional Team, the work of the RMO was subject to the 'unique or best' test developed as part of the Team Focus process. The purpose of the Connexional Team is to provide the best possible service to the wider Connexion, as efficiently and effectively as possible, in those areas of work where it can uniquely or best provide that service. The Conference had asked the Team to reduce the resources it consumed by around 30% which made it essential in every stage of the Team Focus process to examine critically whether old patterns of work were the best possible for the present and future needs of the Church. It is not a criticism of former patterns to recognise that the needs and the opportunities have changed from those of previous decades.
14. In particular, the Conference has instructed the Team "to work collaboratively to provide a coherent and effective service" (SO 302(1)). To achieve this it has been essential to look at each area of the old Team not in isolation, as if each were an independent service centre, but in the context of how the work it previously handled can best be delivered collaboratively with the rest of the Team for the benefit of the coherence of the service provided to the whole Church.
15. Looking at the work of the RMO, the review noted that over the past few years, numerous changes have taken place, both internally and externally, that have an impact on the role of this office and the best way of working. For example:
 - The consents process has now been rolled out to all districts, and CPD Part 9 has been re-written to reflect the new set-up. As a result the RMO no longer has a role in authorising property schemes on behalf of the Methodist Council.
 - The requests for specialist technical knowledge have reduced substantially over time – in fact a Technical Officer is now only employed one day per week, after the last permanent post-holder resigned citing lack of work. This is partly due to the successful introduction of the Minor Works Scheme.
 - The increased demands of the Charity Commission have demonstrated the need for a greater focus on, and a closer linkage of, related work in the areas both of finance and governance.
 - The grants process has changed with the creation of the Connexional Grants Committee which is responsible for all grant-making. Administration of all grants and the funds from which they are paid is now concentrated in one part of the Connexional Team located in London. Property grants are the only exception, pending the outcomes of this review.
 - Through Team Focus, the Connexional Team has been reconfigured to work around themes, rather than discrete subjects, e.g. the Governance Support Cluster (GSC) brings together expertise in legal and constitutional matters. It seems logical, therefore, to locate staff dealing with property governance issues together with those in the GSC who are responsible for all other areas of Methodist governance. This will also be a positive way of dealing with the increasing crossover in areas involving managing trustee

responsibility, etc.

- The creation of the Support Services Cluster has assembled a range of functions together, so that their synergies could be exploited to enable the mission of the Church to be more effective. Enhanced flexibility, and therefore quality of service and cost efficiency, has been achieved by placing all of the cluster's work within one location. Again, the RMO is the one exception to this.

16. The review looked in close detail at the tasks currently being performed by the RMO staff in the light of these changing circumstance and demands. Every member of staff was interviewed about their own work. It was noted that many tasks had been added to the work of the Manchester office over the years without there always being a compelling logic. Once the tasks had been carefully analysed, the review reflected on which were still needed and where they best fitted in the Connexional Team as it is today.
17. The review recommended that some specialised property functions were best taken on by the Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) whose offices are also in Manchester. Applying the Team Focus criteria implied that some other tasks should now be drawn to a close. For the remaining tasks, requiring only five full-time staff and three part-time staff, the arguments for grouping them together in a small office in Manchester were much less strong than the advantages of integrating them with the colleagues with whom they would need to work closely on a day to day basis in London. The review therefore proposed the latter.
18. Whilst it has been recommended that certain functions should no longer be offered by the Connexional Team, moving other tasks to London does not mean that the service provided in those areas is being sidelined or reduced. Many tasks currently carried out by the RMO are not being ended but rather incorporated into a different structure within the Connexional Team which will provide them with better support and more effective cover for key staff. The review recognised that many useful and valuable services are currently offered by the RMO so support and guidance will continue to be offered on a number of issues. Most of this work relates closely to other work currently carried out by different staff teams and the recommendations as to the reconfiguration of this work, as now approved by the Methodist Council, were formulated with regard to these existing structures.
19. Amongst the services which will now be better integrated with related work is the administration of Connexional property grants, finance functions and advice on governance issues. The Team Focus review of the Finance Office had previously recommended that all finance work should be consolidated in the main Finance team. By decision of the Conference, all connexional grant-making now falls under the remit of the Connexional Grants Committee, which has also expressed concern at the current separation of administration of property grants from every other type of grant. Experience of the reconfigured Connexional Team since 2008 has illustrated the advantages gained from all staff working with easy access to immediate colleagues, but above and beyond this is the belief that all users of the Connexional Team's services will also benefit from a central basis of knowledge in specialist areas. The review found that much of the work performed by the RMO had continued as part of the legacy of the old Property Division. It found that it was no longer appropriate or effective for the existing diverse collection of tasks to be performed separate from the much larger groups of staff in London.
20. The review also offered the opportunity to clarify the role of the RMO on certain issues. Consultations and conversations with people across the Connexion highlighted that it was not always clear what was, and was not, the role of the Resourcing Mission Office. In particular, there was a lack of clarity as to the division of responsibilities between the RMO and TMCP as well as overlaps with functions carried out in other parts of the Connexional Team. The remit of the RMO has developed organically over a number of years and it is more logical for some services offered by this office to be carried out exclusively elsewhere in the Team. In addition,

consultations showed that many stakeholders were not aware that the RMO could only offer guidance, and not advice, on property-related matters.

21. In addition to the Team Focus review process, significant changes to much of the work previously undertaken by the RMO have meant that it would no longer be appropriate or possible for this office to continue in its current form even if it were not part of this wider review. Since the introduction of the new consents process, enshrined in part 9 of CPD, it is no longer the role of the Connexional Team to authorise property projects in the same way. As consent for property projects is now provided at district level, the connexional approval function previously undertaken by the RMO is no longer required. Mindful of the fact that most districts have only begun using the consents process in the last six months, the Project Management Group (PMG) specifically recommended the creation of several transitional posts focussing specifically on continuing the development of this work. These roles are currently being developed. Nonetheless, the long-term work required in this area will be very different from that which has traditionally been undertaken by the RMO.

Transitional Arrangements

22. Transitional arrangements are being put in place so as to ensure as smooth a reconfiguration as possible from the current set-up of the RMO to the integration of future work in this area elsewhere in the Connexional Team, or as new posts in TMCP. This transitional period will help to ensure that much of the knowledge, expertise and experience held within the RMO will not be lost as its continuing functions are gradually incorporated into other structures with the Connexional Team. Flexible working arrangements will be considered for individual members of staff in line with the approach for other staff based in London who wish to live elsewhere on a temporary or permanent basis. This will help the Connexional Team to continue to be able to offer valuable services and resources to church, circuits and districts across the connexion. Members of the existing RMO staff have expressed their commitment to achieving the most effective transition possible.

Pastoral and Personnel Issues

23. As the employer of all members of the Connexional Team, the Methodist Council has the responsibility to ensure that its employees are treated objectively, fairly and equally. The review of the RMO utilised the same principles as those used in previous Team Focus reviews so as to ensure consistency in this work across the Team. It would be unfair, and potentially unlawful, for the Methodist Council, as the employers of those whose posts have already been reviewed as well as staff at the RMO, to now introduce new principles, exceptions or special cases to the review process.
24. As in previous Team Focus reviews, all existing posts come to an end at the end of this review process. This is not affected by whether or not corresponding roles will be continuing in this area of work, or where these roles will be based. Team members currently in these posts have the opportunity to apply for new posts within the reconfigured Team. Any employee who finds that a large amount of their current role matches the job description of a new post can apply for redeployment to this new position. The physical location of any existing or future jobs does not impact directly on this process. This is the same procedure that has been employed for all posts within the Connexional Team as they have been reviewed under Team Focus; all staff whose posts were previously subject to such a review (which now equates to all areas of the Connexional Team except for the RMO) had to reapply for posts in the reconfigured Team. The redeployment process utilised within Team Focus by definition introduced the risk of loss of experienced staff within all locations including London and Manchester. To ensure consistency and equal treatment of all members of the Team, the same process is now being used for the redeployment of RMO staff as was used in the earlier stages of the Team Focus review. This includes the opportunity for some staff to apply to leave via the Methodist Council's voluntary severance procedure.

25. The Methodist Council has a duty of care to its employees that demands such consistent treatment of all of them. But it also has a strong pastoral responsibility for those staff who have already endured a long period of uncertainty as the work need from the RMO has changed and the future configuration of the posts there has been unclear. In the Council debate it was argued strongly that a further period of uncertainty would be most unhelpful and the Council's decision has allowed all the RMO staff to start to plan for their personal futures.

Financial Considerations

26. Although the overall aim of the Team Focus process was to reduce the size of the core Team budget by 30%, the PMG's Terms of Reference specifically did not state that the review should be driven primarily by financial factors. The brief was rather to investigate objectively which of the RMO's existing work should be retained, what new emphases were required and how that could most effectively be delivered. Nevertheless there have been requests for the Conference to have information about the cost dimension.

27. A summary costing was produced in order to demonstrate the likely savings, which suggested identified savings in excess of £100,000 per annum would be achieved by the proposals. No attempt was made to quantify a large number of additional hidden costs that arise from operating a single Connexional Team from two locations. There would also be some one-off transitional costs to offset the savings initially, of which the largest are likely to be redundancy costs for those staff who leave the Team. However it must be stressed that the PMG and Methodist Council were both quite clear that costs were not the determining factor in the decisions that were taken. This is consistent with the general approach throughout the Team Focus process where the reconfiguration of work meant that individual departments or work areas were not re-organised based on specific discrete targets for cost savings.

Conclusions

28. As employer of members of the Connexional Team, and with its concern for the wellbeing of the whole Church, the Methodist Council agreed with the recommendations of the RMO review.

29. Members of the Connexional Team working in the RMO have not been treated differently from their colleagues working elsewhere in the Connexional Team, and it is believed that this is the fairest approach to this last stage of the Team Focus review process.

30. The decision to reconfigure the work of the RMO as recommended by the review is not a judgement on the quality of work carried out by those working in this office. The Methodist Council, along with the Connexional Team and churches, circuits and districts across the Connexion, value the service that the RMO has offered over a number of years but after a thorough review the Council believes that such services can now be better provided through the implementation of the recommendations from this review.

*****RESOLUTIONS**

64/1. Conference declined to receive the Report and instructed the Methodist Council to review its decision regarding the closure of the Resourcing Mission Office in Manchester.

64/2. The Conference endorsed the gratitude expressed by the Council to the staff of the Resourcing Mission Office for their work, professionalism and co-operation during the Team Focus review.

Appendix 1

Membership of the Project Management Group

The RMO Review was overseen by a Project Management Group (PMG) with the following members:-

Graham Carter	Former President and retired District Chair (PMG Chair)
Andrew Moore	SRC member, Circuit Property Steward
Graham Danbury	Law & Polity Member, member of TMCP and PASLEMC (the lay staff pension scheme) Boards
Cliff Lewer	Resources Convenor, Notts & Derby District (the first consents pilot district)
Nick Moore	Head of the Support Services Cluster, the Connexional Team
Trevor Durston	Head of the Projects, Research and Development Cluster, the Connexional Team (not all meetings)