

WESLEY COLLEGE, BRISTOL**Basic Information**

Contact Name and Details	Doug Swanney Head of Discipleship & Ministries SwanneyD@methodistchurch.org.uk 020 7467 3791
Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Information
Draft Resolution	n/a
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	n/a

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	A progress report in the wake of the Conference's decision to close Wesley College, Bristol.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A summary of Council's decisions since the Conference. • A summary of decisions taken at the September 2010 meeting of the SRC regarding the wind-down of educational programmes at the college and the activities to determine the future of the college's site. • A progress reports on other issues.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	2010 Conference report 41 ("Wesley College, Bristol").
Consultations	The Principal of Wesley College, Bristol; the College Council of Wesley College, Bristol; the directors of Wesley Conference Centre Limited

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	n/a
Faith and Order	n/a
Financial	Some of the activities outlined in the paper will incur professional fees, to be recovered from the proceeds of sale; the cumulative effect of the activities will demand a reassessment of contractual arrangements with partner organisations, which may incur one-off costs.
Personnel	Some of the activities outlined in the paper have initiated curtailment processes; the cumulative effect of the activities will impact upon lay staff during 2010-2011
Legal	Some of the activities outlined in the paper will commence legal activities.
Wider Connexional	n/a
External (e.g. ecumenical)	n/a
Risk	See paragraphs 4 and 5.

WESLEY COLLEGE, BRISTOL

METHODIST COUNCIL'S DECISIONS SINCE THE METHODIST CONFERENCE

1. In the wake of its decision to close Wesley College, Bristol, the Conference adopted two consequential resolutions:

[Resolution 41/4] The Conference directs the Methodist Council to take all necessary steps to achieve the closure of the college as soon as is practically possible, taking into account the need for proper processes and pastoral care outlined in this report.

[Resolution 41/5] The Conference directs the Methodist Council to consider the future use of the site and bring recommendations as appropriate to a future Conference.

2. Mindful of the length of time between the Conference and the first meeting of the Methodist Council, the General Secretary, the Chair of the Council and the Assistant Secretary of the Conference wrote to all members of the Methodist Council in early August, requesting their consent to a way of working which allowed actions to be taken between meetings of the Methodist Council. The Council approved the following:

1. [To] charge the General Secretary with overall responsibility for implementing the resolution of the Conference to close the College;

2. [To] authorise the appointment of a consultant / project manager to undertake the practical management of the closure;

3. [To] authorise the SRC to approve any actions needing a decision by a governance body between meetings of the Council;

4. [To] agree that a reference group of up to five members of the [Strategy and Resources Committee of the Methodist Council ("SRC")] or the Council be appointed to act between meetings of the SRC and the Council as a group with whom the officers can check out any decisions which they have to make on their own authority in advance of those meetings.

DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE SEPTEMBER 2010 MEETING OF THE SRC

3. The September 2010 meeting of the SRC devoted a significant amount of time to a discussion of urgent matters pertaining to Wesley College. The Revd Dr Jonathan Pye, the Principal of Wesley College, was present for the SRC's discussions. The SRC's discussions were also supported by a paper produced by the Connexional Team at the request of the Chair of the SRC and General Secretary.

4. **Educational programmes:** The SRC discussed timelines for the wind-down of educational programmes at the college. A mixture of accredited and non-accredited courses are offered by the college. The formal arrangements with validating partners which pertain to accredited courses give these courses a determining role when discussing the wind-down of educational programmes, whereas greater flexibility is available with regard to non-accredited courses. Twenty continuing students are currently enrolled on accredited courses at the college. Nine of these students will complete their courses during the 2010-2011 academic year. Of the remaining eleven students (the majority of whom are part-time students, and all of whom are following courses accredited by the University of Bristol), six are expected to complete their courses during the 2011-2012 academic

year, and the remaining five during the 2012-2013 academic year. The delivery of educational programmes at the college is supported by a principal, one full-time tutor and two part-time tutors (all of whom are Methodist presbyters), and by several support staff. The SRC decided that the delivery of educational programmes cease on the college's site at the end of the current academic year, and that adequate and appropriate provision (on the site of, or under the auspices of another academic institution) should be sought for students completing accredited courses during the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 academic years. The SRC noted that the Revd Dr Mark Wakelin would be designated as the Team Secretary responsible for taking account of the repercussions of this decision for the college's tutors, working collaboratively with the chair of the district. The SRC also noted that the Connexional Team would offer full and appropriate support with regard to the repercussions of the decision for the remainder of the college's work, including its lay staff, and for Wesley Conference Centre Ltd (the limited company established by the college to undertake its commercial activities; see paragraph 8 below).

5. **The college's site:** The SRC also discussed the future of the college's site. The SRC noted that work is about to commence to audit the condition and suitability of the connexionally-owned components of the Church's learning and development infrastructure. The SRC also noted that there were advantages to waiting until the completion of the audit before making any decisions about the future of the college's site. However, the SRC also noted that there were also serious disadvantages to such a delay, including the risk of needing to maintain an unused site for several months, and the insecurity which a delayed decision would create for local partners. The SRC received a summary of advice provided by property consultants regarding the processes for marketing the site and an indicative timeline which foresaw the marketing of the site prior to the 2011 Conference. The SRC clearly noted that no final decisions could be taken about the site, and thus no commitments made to any potential purchasers, until a future Conference had made a decision on the matter. The SRC therefore decided to proceed to market the college site, with a view to indentifying a potential purchaser or potential purchasers in time for the 2011 Conference to make a decision.

6. **Reference group membership:** The SRC also discussed the membership of the reference group outlined in paragraph 2 above, and mandated the Connexional Team to approach members of the Methodist Council to serve on the group. A further report on the membership of the reference group will be tabled at the October meeting of the Methodist Council.

OTHER ISSUES

7. **The library, archive and historical artefacts:** Consultations regarding the future use of the college's library, archive and historical artefacts are being coordinated in the Connexional Team by the Heritage Officer, the Research Officers and the Ministries, Learning & Development staff. The college's library, archive and historical artefacts are clearly important connexional resources and assets, whose future should be seen in the fullest possible context, including that provided by (a) the new Methodist Heritage Committee, (b) a review of the Church's deposit agreement with the John Rylands Library, and (c) the Fruitful Field project. The consultations coordinated by the Connexional Team are providing an opportunity to discuss wider synergies between those components of the Church's connexional infrastructure which pertain to learning, development, research, scholarship, history

and heritage. Consultations are scheduled to continue over coming weeks prior to the development of processes and recommendations.

8. **Wesley Conference Centre Limited ("WCC"):** WCC is a private company limited by shares, established in July 2007 to undertake the commercial element of WCB's activity, gifting its profits to WCB. The Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes ("TMCP") is the majority shareholder. WCC traded at a loss during the financial years to 31 August 2008 and 2009. At 31 August 2008 and 2009, WCC's debts exceeded its assets; WCB (ultimately the Methodist Council) was its greatest creditor. Management accounts for the year to 31 August 2010 are not yet available. During an informal meeting with members of the Connexional Team, the directors of WCC have expressed the hope that the company will trade profitably during the remainder of its existence; however it is possible the directors will not be able to produce a business plan which envisages being able to close WCC during the coming academic year at a point when its debts do not exceed its assets. Redundancy payments are clearly likely to increase WCC's liabilities. The Connexional Team is seeking to design an intervention to ensure that WCC is able, when closed, to meet its obligations to its employees, while also ensuring that, prior and subsequent to the closure of WCC, as few additional liabilities as possible are incurred by the Methodist Council. This work is ongoing, and recommendations are not yet able to be brought.

9. **Appointment of a consultant / project manager:** As noted in paragraph 2 above, the Methodist Council has agreed to "authorise the appointment of a consultant / project manager to undertake the practical management of the closure;" the costs of the appointment will be recovered from the proceeds of sale. Tasks to be undertaken by such a project manager are currently being mapped. Care is being taken to undertake such mapping alongside the identification of tasks for property consultants.