

54. Oversight and Trusteeship

Introduction

1. The 2024 Conference received a report from the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group as the latest in a series of reforms to the governance structures of the Church, beginning in 2017. In some ways, this has been the most significant period of change in this area since 1996 if not since the Methodist Church Act of 1976. A fuller account of the journey that the Conference has taken can be found in the 2023 and 2024 reports, Oversight and Trusteeship.
2. By comparison with some of the other reports in this series, the decisions that the Conference is asked to make in 2025 might seem less significant. For the most part, they are consequences of the changes that the Conference has already made; the resolutions attached to this report ask for confirmation of positions that the Conference has already taken or complete work for which there was insufficient time or around which there was insufficient clarity in 2024. For those reasons, the Conference asked the group that reported in 2024 to continue and to finish its work.
3. However, there are four other sorts of decisions which the Conference will be asked to make as it receives this report. The first is to recognise that in a small number of instances the decisions that previous Conferences have made have had unintended consequences. A prime example of this is that (following advice from the auditors) the special resolution on the changes to the Model Trust definitions, on which the Synods in the relevant jurisdictions were asked to vote, is brought back to the Conference but the Conference is invited to adopt it with the exclusion of one of the proposed amendments (see paragraph 24 below). A second category of proposed changes concerns a number of resolutions that result from having 'road-tested' our new ways of working over the past year and found that what seemed good to the Conference could work better in practice. An example of this is the changes proposed to the Nominations Committee's ways of working. Thirdly, as it has done its work, the OTTG has noted or been alerted to a number of inconsistencies in the new ways of working and seeks to remove those where possible in the interests of simplicity and fairness. So, for example, there is a proposal to standardise the length of the terms that committee members serve. Fourthly, the OTTG brings for confirmation some changes in provisions regarding District leadership that were indicated in last year's Conference Report.
4. Those who have served on the OTTG this past year are Anne Bolton, the Revd Dr David Chapman, Susan Howdle, the Revd Dr Jonathan R Hustler, Dr Daleep S Mukarji, the Revd Leslie M Newton, David Pickles, the Revd Dr Mark Rowland, Sandie Smith, Doug Godfrey-Swanney, and the Revd Dr James N Tebbutt. This is the group's final report and a debt of thanks is owed to them for their tireless and painstaking work. This report is in some senses an end of a journey, and others will pick up work in developing and giving life to the new arrangements. However, it is possible that new questions will emerge in 2025-26 as they did in 2024-25. The OTTG would not favour a standing committee to deal with such questions so the final resolution directs the Secretary of the Conference to take appropriate action to ensure that any such points are addressed and recommendations made to the 2026 and future Conferences.

SECTION A: Committee Structure

5. The focus of the work on oversight and trusteeship has been to ensure that the principal connexional bodies, the Conference and the Connexional Council, are able to fulfil those functions that are necessary for the Methodist Church to discern what its part in God's mission in Great Britain is and to work in ways which are efficient, effective and in line with the best practice in charity governance. Throughout the discussions, there has been a recognition that in order to do that, the Church needs a number of committees which will report to the Conference, the Council or both, but that a smaller Church can maintain (and ought to require) fewer committees than it has inherited. One of the aims of the reforms that was articulated early on was that the structure of the Connexion should be more flexible. As the 2021 report put it, 'The recognition throughout this process that the current structures were designed for a larger Church means that part of the consideration has to be to seek to reduce and streamline where possible. Changes of connexional committees and organisational structures alone will not result in greater efficiencies, accountability, and the smoother working of the

governance of the Connexion. There are other factors that need to be addressed such as the cultural change in the practice of governance, oversight, and trusteeship within the church.¹

6. The Conference was therefore presented with an organogram in 2023. Fundamental to this (and to the reformed structure of the Connexion) was that there are seven main committees. Three of those – Safeguarding, Faith & Order and Law & Polity – are committees of the Conference. Four – Resourcing, Audit & Risk Assurance, Ministries, and Mission – are committees of the Council.
7. The organogram included in the Appendix to this report notes the existence of a number of other bodies reporting directly to the Conference. Some are those which enable the Conference to do its business – the Memorials Committee, the Business Committees, the Scrutiny Committee, the Conference Planning Executive and the Conference Arrangements Committee, and the Law & Polity Conference Subcommittee. The organogram reflects present arrangements, but is also an evolving ‘work in progress’ where further flexibility or development is helpful or required (for example, the Stationing Review recommends some changed stationing arrangements which, if accepted and once implemented, may require further evolutions).
8. Particular attention has been given to the place of the JDS strategy in the Church’s oversight and governance. The Conference remains committed to ensuring that the whole Connexion treats people with equity, maintains and enhances its diversity, and enables the inclusion of all people with particular concern for those with protected characteristics and those who have in the past been under-represented in the life and structures of the Connexion. To that end, the OTTG proposes that this work be now understood in two ways. Completing the work to which the 2021 Conference committed itself through the JDS Strategy is a vital part of the mission of the Church and therefore it is appropriate that the JDS Committee report to the Council through the Mission Committee. However, in order that the Conference might keep under review its own work in the light of JDS concerns, the EDI scrutiny group should remain independent of all other structures and be appointed by and report to the Conference. Whether or not these arrangements need to be permanent is a matter for some debate: the OTTG recommends that the provisions are retained and kept under review by the Secretary of the Conference in meetings with the EDI scrutiny group and in consultation with the Council.
9. The OTTG makes no recommendation in relation to the Stationing Committee. It remains of the mind that, as the stationing of its ministers is the prerogative of the Conference, a body that determines recommendations for stationing needs to report directly to the Conference. It also recognises that the Ministries Committee has a role to play in developing policies which effect ministerial stationing. The Conference is to consider a review of its stationing processes as a separate agenda item.

*****RESOLUTION**

54/1. The Conference received Section A of the Report.

SECTION B: Evaluation/development of committee chairs

10. Best practice in charity governance asks that those who take on roles as Trustees should continually assess their skills and be open to the benefits of undertaking ongoing training and reflection beyond ensuring they have a full understanding of their responsibilities. For those chairing meetings which are part of the connexional structure it is essential they are open to both the feedback of their peers and any opportunities for their development that may be identified during their appointment.
11. SO 220(5)(iv) gave to the Nominations Committee the role of advising the Council on training and self-evaluation of all those who are appointed to bodies coming within its ambit. In the majority this refers to the committees of the Conference, the Connexional Council and its committees.
12. The practice of self-evaluation is not new to some connexional bodies, with, in the previous iteration, the members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee carrying out 360-degree review of each other and their Chair.
13. The OTTG affirmed during the year that the practice of those who are appointed being in a process of self-reflection as well as there being peer reflection was a positive developmental tool.

¹ Conference Agenda, 2021, *Oversight and Trusteeship*, paragraph 5.3

https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-2021-30-oversight-and-trusteeship_A5cyKZk.pdf

14. The Nominations Committee is asked to ensure that this practice is embedded throughout the connexional committee structures and is asked to work in tandem with HR in the Connexional Team to best implement this.

*****RESOLUTION**

54/2. The Conference received Section B of the Report.

SECTION C: Amendments to the Model Trusts and Standing Orders

I. SPECIAL RESOLUTION RELATING TO THE MODEL TRUSTS

15. With the new relationship of the Conference to the Connexional Council as the trustee body with effect from 1 September 2024, as well as the replacement for the Methodist Council, amendments were needed to the Model Trusts to deal with: (A) the creation of the Connexional Council; and (B) the continuing powers of the Conference in relation to the Model Trusts, with particular reference to Conference and Connexional Property. A full explanation is set out in Section C of [Conference Report 57 \(2023\): Oversight and Trusteeship](#).
16. By Special Resolution 57/5, the 2023 Conference agreed to make the relevant amendments to the Model Trusts, and the intention was that, after appropriate consultation, the proposed amendments in Special Resolution 57/5 would be brought back to the 2024 Conference for confirmation (again by Special Resolution), to take effect from 1 September 2024 when the Connexional Council came into being.
17. Unfortunately, the proposed amendments were not submitted to the relevant Synods under Standing Order 126(1)(a) for consideration, meaning the 2024 Conference was not able to confirm the Special Resolution. The process therefore needed to begin again and the 2024 Conference duly re-adopted the Special Resolution (as Resolution 24/5) to enable the appropriate consultation to take place before being brought for confirmation (or otherwise) in 2025.
18. In the meantime, to allow for the fact that all references to “Methodist Council” in the Model Trusts would need to remain in place pending the outcome of the consultation despite the Methodist Council being disbanded on 31 August 2024, the 2024 Conference adopted an amended Standing Order 904 covering the interim position so that: the functions, powers, duties and responsibilities assigned to the Methodist Council in the Model Trusts shall be exercised and performed by the Connexional Council (the Connexional Council being, for this purpose only, to be regarded as the body of persons identified under the Model Trusts as “the Methodist Council”); and the Connexional Council shall constitute the connexional trustees.
19. A further resolution was also necessary with regard to the appointment of trustees of Conference property, defined as “Conference trustees” in the Model Trusts. It had been intended that such appointments would in future be made by the Connexional Council rather than the Conference. Therefore, pending such change, the 2024 Conference by Resolution 24/3 delegated its power of appointment to the Connexional Council. The reasoning for this is set out in the Law and Polity Conference Sub-committee’s report at item 5/7/1 of the 2024 Conference Daily Record: <https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-2024-daily-record-complete.pdf>.
20. However, since the 2024 Conference, the Connexional Team has been advised by the Church’s auditors that the effect of providing that the Connexional Council rather than the Conference appoints the “Conference trustees” is that the Conference property accounts would have to be consolidated with the Connexional Council accounts, which would be an unintended and undesirable result.
21. The Law and Polity Committee has therefore advised that the Special Resolution intended to come to the 2025 Conference for confirmation should omit that particular amendment to the Model Trusts. The effect of omitting this provision would ensure that the Conference’s existing power to appoint the “Conference trustees” under the Model Trusts remains with the Conference, rather than being transferred to the Connexional Council.
22. The Special Resolution consultation process under Standing Order 126(1)(a), however, involves

consultation on the resolution as passed by the 2024 Conference and so the Connexional Council was asked to vote on it in that form, and then to consider the Law and Polity Committee's advice to withdraw the "Conference trustees" amendment and pass a second resolution indicating the Council's views on that point. At the same time, in accordance with the requirements for consultation with the relevant Synods (ie the Isle of Man, Channel Islands and Scotland and Shetland), those Synods were also invited to adopt a similar process.

23. The Council approved the special resolution as adopted by the Conference of 2024, but then, as advised, resolved to support the proposal that if and when Special Resolution 24/5 is put to the 2025 Conference for confirmation, it be put in a form which omits the amendment to the definition of "Conference trustees" in Section (B). The outcome of the voting in the relevant Synods will be reported in the Order Paper.
24. The amendments proposed by Special Resolution 24/5 of the 2024 Conference are as follows, in accordance with the usual convention that the proposed insertions are shown in ***bold italics*** and deletions shown as being struck through:

A. Amendments relating to the Connexional Council

1 Interpretation In this Schedule [*i.e. the Model Trusts*], unless the subject or context otherwise requires – ...

~~'Methodist Council'~~ ***'Connexional Council'*** means the body of persons of that name for the time being constituted by the Conference under the Deed of Union and Standing Orders for the despatch of connexional business in relation to (inter alia) property affairs or other the body of persons constituted for the time being under Standing Orders to discharge the responsibilities of the Property Division, and includes, where appropriate, any person or persons ***or other body of persons*** to whom any functions of such body under any provision of this Schedule may have been delegated by such body in accordance with any Standing Order made pursuant to paragraph 11 of this Schedule, and 'board of the Property Division' has the same meaning;

...

Replace 'Methodist Council' by 'Connexional Council' in the following instances:
3(2)(a), 3(3), 4(1), 5(2), 6(1), 6(2), 8(3), 11 (title and text), 11A, 18(1), 19(2), 19(3), 21A(c), 26(1)

B. Amendments relating to Connexional and Conference property

1. Interpretation

...

'Conference trustees' means, in relation to any Conference property or any part of such property the person or body of persons, being members of the Church, annually appointed by the ~~Conference~~ ***Connexional Council*** to be the managing trustees of such property or part property.

'Connexional Trustees' means, in relation to any Connexional property or any part of such property, ~~the Connexional Council the person or persons for the time being constituting, in accordance with Standing Orders, the Connexional Trustees for that property or part property;~~

2. (1) [*specifying who are the managing trustees*]

...

- (d) Connexional property: the Connexional ***Council Trustees***;
- (dA) Conference property: the Conference Trustees;

25. The Conference is therefore invited to approve the special resolution with the exception of the item in Section B relating to the definition of "Conference Trustees" in paragraph 1 of the Model Trusts (shown in the text that is shaded above) which will therefore remain unaltered.
26. There are some consequential amendments proposed in the next section of this report which will depend upon the outcome of the Conference's decision on this item.

The Channel Islands, Isle of Man, Scotland and Shetland Synods were consulted on the proposed amendments, as required by Standing Order 126(1)(a). All four Synods voted in favour of the

amendments, and supported the proposal to present the amendments for confirmation with the exception of the first item listed in section B. 1. Interpretation as to the meaning of 'Conference Trustees'.

***RESOLUTIONS

54/3. The Conference received the report upon the Special Resolution process and concurred with the advice of the Law and Polity Committee.

54/4. (Three quarters majority) The Conference amended the Model Trusts as set out above, with the exception of the first item listed in section B. 1. Interpretation, as to the meaning of 'Conference Trustees'.

II. STANDING ORDER AMENDMENTS CONSEQUENT UPON THE SPECIAL RESOLUTION IN SECTION I.

27. The Law and Polity Committee has taken the view that if the Special Resolution amending the Model Trusts (with the exception of the one item mentioned above) is adopted at this Conference, not having been able to be adopted last year, then the 'holding position' which the Conference was invited to adopt for the current connexional year, in the form of SO 904, will no longer be necessary, as the essential points will now be covered in the Model Trusts. Therefore the Conference is invited to revoke SO 904, so as to follow our usual practice of avoiding direct repetition in Standing Orders of provisions which appear in the Model Trusts or Deed of Union, to reduce confusion and affirm the primacy of those documents. The current text of SO 904 reads as follows:

904 Trusteeship Provisions Consequent on the Establishment of the Connexional Council.

(1) The Connexional Council shall constitute the connexional trustees for any connexional property or part or category of such property.

(2) The Connexional Council shall perform and exercise the functions, powers, duties and responsibilities assigned to the Methodist Council in the Model Trusts and for this purpose only is the body of persons of that name constituted by the Conference.

***RESOLUTION

**54/5. [To be moved if the Conference confirms the main body of the Special Resolution]
The Conference revoked Standing Order 904.**

28. If the Conference adopts the Special Resolution as recommended, ie without the intended amendment of the definition of "Conference Trustees" (as explained above), then the consequential amendments to SO 280 and 281 dealing respectively with the appointment of the trustees of the New Room, Bristol and of the trustees and chair of the trustees of Westminster Central Hall which were put in place last year need now to be amended again, partly to revert to the previous provision, but additionally to reflect the revised functions of the Nominations Committee which is being proposed at paragraph 31 below.

***RESOLUTION

54/6. The Conference amended Standing Orders 280 and 281 as appears below.

280 The New Room, Bristol

(1) The Connexional Council ~~Conference~~ shall, ~~in exercising its powers of appointment in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2(1)(dA) of the Model Trusts,~~ annually appoint managing trustees, as provided below, for the Conference Property at John Wesley's Chapel (the New Room) and 4 Charles Street (Charles Wesley's house) and 5 Charles Street, Bristol.

...

(3) The trustees shall appoint a chair, a secretary and a treasurer from among their own number, ~~with the agreement of the council.~~

281 Westminster Central Hall

(1) The Connexional Council **Conference** shall, ~~in exercising its powers of appointment in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2(1)(dA) of the Model Trusts,~~ annually appoint, as provided below, the managing trustees of Westminster Central Hall, as a Conference Property.

(4) The chair of the trustees shall be appointed by the council **Conference**, ~~upon the nomination of the Nominations Committee.~~

III. OTHER PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

29. There follow a number of proposed amendments arising from further reflection upon the changes made last year, in the light of working practice, as explained in the introduction to this Report. The reason for each change is set out below, and the resolution at the end of this Section C is brought to enact these various changes.

1. Terms of appointment and related matters

30. This group of proposed amendments ((i) to (iv)) is intended to clarify and standardise the terms of appointment for various connexional bodies, to be normally for a period of three years renewable for three, and only further renewable after that in exceptional circumstances.

(i) 200(1)

Counsel's Opinion on the governance proposals in 2022 included the advice that the provision for annual appointment of the members of the Connexional Council did not accord with the proposed terms of service, and should be deleted. This had previously been agreed by the Law and Polity Committee, but not then followed through in the drafting of SO 200(1)(a). Therefore this deletion is now proposed.

200(1)(a): The Connexional Council ... shall be appointed ~~annually~~ by the Conference ...

(ii) 200(2)

The terms of appointment of Connexional Council members (other than those appointed ex officio), and of its chair (and deputy chair), currently provide for a four year period of office, renewable for a further two years. (Four years was the equivalent provision in relation to the Methodist Council.) It is now thought appropriate that these appointments should reflect those of the main committees (and current practice in many charitable bodies) and therefore it is proposed that the appointments should normally be for three years, renewable for three, with the provision proposed in (c) for exceptional extensions, equivalent to that for the main committees in SO 300(5).

200(2)(a): The chair of the council shall be appointed ... normally to serve ... for a period of ~~four~~ **three** years and may be appointed for a further period of up to ~~two~~ **three** years....

(b): The persons appointed under head (1)(b)(viii) above ... shall normally serve ... for a period of ~~four~~ **three** years and may be appointed for a further period of up to ~~two~~ **three** years.

(c) Any extension of an appointment under sub-clause (a) or (b) above beyond the initial reappointment shall only be granted if the Conference is satisfied that there is good reason to do so in the light of a statement by the Nominations Committee as to the exceptional nature of the circumstances which have led the council to make the further nomination.

(iii) Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

It is proposed to standardise the terms of appointment of this committee to accord with the proposed term for the Connexional Council, and those for the council's main committees.

Furthermore, as the committee's function is to provide assurance to the Connexional Council, not the Conference, as to the matters within its responsibilities, it is thought appropriate that it should be appointed by the Connexional Council and be treated as one of the council's main committees. In accordance with the arrangement of Standing Orders into Parts 2 and 3 adopted last year it would therefore be appropriate for it to appear in Part 3, and be renumbered as SO 304. This would require some further consequential amendments as set out below, mainly because what would previously have been specific provisions for this committee are now covered by the general provisions as to the main committees in SO 300.

(1) This Standing Order applies to the appointment of the following committees:

- the Ministries Committee
- the Mission Committee
- the Resourcing Committee
- **the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

referred to here as 'the main council committees'.

...

301 Responsibilities

(1) The respective general areas of responsibility of the main council committees shall be as delineated in Standing Orders **304**, 311, 321 and 361 below

~~222(1)– 304:~~

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. (1) ~~The Conference shall each year appoint, upon the nomination of the Connexional Council, a connexional Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, having~~ **shall have** the constitution and responsibilities specified below, in order to assist the **Connexional** Council in its functions under Standing Order 203 and 204.

(2) The committee, **appointed in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 300 above**, shall consist of no fewer than three persons, ~~including one appointed by the Conference to chair the committee and, if the Conference thinks fit, one appointed as deputy chair~~, all of whom shall be members of the Methodist Church ~~and all of whom shall normally serve for an initial term of four years and thereafter on an annual basis for a maximum of three years.~~

(3) (a) With the exception of the person appointed to serve *ex officio* on the ~~Connexional Council~~ by virtue of Standing Order 200(1)(b)(vii), no member of the council shall be eligible to be a member of the committee.

(b) No member of the Connexional Team shall be eligible to be a member of the committee.

(4) ~~Any nomination for appointment which will result in a committee member serving for a continuous term exceeding seven years may only be made in exceptional circumstances and shall require a resolution of the council carried by a majority of 75% of those present and voting. [The general provision in SO 300(5) now covers this.]~~

(5) The committee shall meet as frequently as need be, but in any event at least three times a year and also whenever the auditors appointed under Standing Order 012 require it to do so.

(6) When required to do so by the committee, any appropriate members of the Connexional Team shall also be in attendance at meetings.

(7) The responsibilities of the committee shall be:

(i) to advise the council upon the appointment in accordance with Standing Order 012 of auditors for all the funds for which it is responsible, and (subject to that Standing Order) upon the nature and scope of the audit required;

(ii) to **conduct a** review **of** the consolidated accounts required by Standing Order 203(8); *[See below, under Finance and Resourcing Matters, for this proposed amendment, to clarify the relationship between various bodies.]*

(iii) to review, in direct consultation with the auditors, their annual report;

(iv) to review and monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of the financial and other internal control systems with regard to moneys and other assets for which the council is responsible;

- (v) to review and monitor the appropriateness and effectiveness of risk management processes and assurance reporting arrangements;
- (vi) to submit an annual report to the council.
- (8) ~~In carrying out its functions the committee shall have reference to the terms of reference for the committee provided by the council from time to time.~~ *[The general provision in 301(2) now covers this.]*

Consequential amendment:

204(2) "...such advice and reports from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee as are required in Standing Order ~~222~~ **304**

(iv) Nominations Committee

Again, it is proposed to amend the terms of appointment of this committee, to align with the proposed term for the Connexional Council and its committees. [Further proposed amendments in relation to the Nominations Committee appear further on in this report.]

220 (2) The committee shall consist of a chair and up to six other members, none of whom shall be members of the Connexional Council. The members shall (subject to the need to ensure appropriate continuity and turnover) normally be appointed to serve for a ~~maximum~~ period of ~~four~~ **three** years **and may be appointed for a further period of up to three years.** ...

2. Nominations Committee: further amendments

31. Now that the processes relating to this committee's role and functions have been able to be put into practice, and after consultation with the committee, the Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group propose some further amendments to SO 220.

As a result of the conversations which followed Resolution 45/5 of the Conference of 2024, it is proposed that certain other committees should be added to the remit of the Nominations Committee, as set out in the amendment to SO 220(4) below at (a). *See the report of the Nominations Committee elsewhere in the Agenda.*

On further reflection it has been thought more appropriate for the body to whom the appointment is being made to bring any nomination to the Conference. This would therefore require a revocation of SO 220(5)(ii), and certain consequential amendments. See (b) below.

The role of the committee member in taking part in selection processes has been further explored and clarified in the amendment to SO 220(5)(i). See (c) below.

(a) Nominations Committee – expansion of role

220(4): Add as further heads:

- ***the Faith and Order Committee***
- ***the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Committee***
- ***the Law and Polity Committee***
- ***the Safeguarding Committee***
- ***the Conference Trustees***

(b) Nominations Committee – not to be responsible for bringing the resulting nomination

~~220(5)(ii): bring to the Conference or council, as required, the resulting nomination for appointment;~~

Consequential amendments if 220(5)(ii) is revoked:

- (i) The Connexional Council: 200(2)(a) The chair of the council shall be appointed upon nomination by the ~~Nominations Committee~~ **council** normally to serve, subject to the provisions of clause (4), for *[see other amendment as to term of appointment above]*... . The ~~Nominations Committee~~ **council** shall also nominate for appointment by the Conference, from the members appointed under head

(1)(viii) above, a deputy chair, who may hold office during the period of appointment under sub-clause (b) below.

(b) The persons appointed under head (1)(viii) above shall be nominated by the ~~Nominations Committee~~ **council** for their experience, expertise and representative roles, each person having the appropriate skills to serve on a trustee body. *[See other amendment as to term of appointment above]*

(ii) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. 221(2) The *[JDS scrutiny]* group shall comprise three persons with relevant experience, knowledge and skills relating to the implementation of complex issues and understanding of the workings of the Methodist Church, who shall be nominated annually to the Conference by the Nominations Committee.

(iii) 300 The Main Council Committees: Appointment

(5) All persons appointed to the main council committees shall initially be appointed for a period of three years and may be reappointed for a further period of no more than three years. The council may only extend the appointment for a further period beyond the initial reappointment if it is satisfied that there is good reason to do so in the light of a statement by the Nominations Committee as to the exceptional nature of the circumstances **involved** ~~which have led the committee to make the further nomination.~~

(c) Nominations Committee – participation in selection processes

220(5)(i): add at the end “, ***including the right to take part in selection processes, but not to vote in those processes nor to chair them unless so requested by the relevant recruitment group or panel.***”

3. Nominations to office generally: the provision in Standing Order 016

32. SO 016, which appears below in strike-through, is a provision which dates from an earlier period of our history. It is purportedly of general application, but SO 200 has already limited it in relation to nominations which are currently brought by the Nominations Committee [see above for the proposal in relation to SO 220(5)(ii)], and it is also excluded eg for the process of appointment of District Chairs. In other contexts awareness of the provision is probably minimal. In most cases the body in question would determine its own procedure in the case of a contested nomination, and if anything this provision goes against what might be good and safer recruitment practice in explicitly permitting other names to be brought. It is proposed that it now be revoked, together with the consequential references in SO 220(7) and 300(4).

~~016 **Nominations.** Where provision is made in these Standing Orders for the nomination or proposal of a name or names by a committee or officer to an appointing or nominating body for appointment or nomination respectively by that body then in the absence of provision to the contrary members of that body may add other names before the vote takes place and unless some other procedure is specified may do so orally when the business is called.~~

~~220(7) [Nominations Committee] For the avoidance of doubt, the provisions of Standing Order 016 do not apply to nominations brought to the Conference or any other body by the committee.~~

~~300(4) [The Main Council Committees: Appointment] The council shall work in consultation with the Nominations Committee, in accordance with that committee's responsibilities under Standing Order 220, to make the appointments under clauses (2) and (3) above. For the avoidance of doubt, the provisions of Standing Order 016 do not apply to nominations brought to the council by the committee.~~

4. Financial and Resourcing Matters

33. **Accounts**

It is proposed that matters to do with the necessary review of the accounts should appear under SO 222, to be renumbered as 304 if the suggestion above is agreed, so as to clarify that this is the responsibility of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (rather than the Resourcing Committee), and therefore it is also proposed to delete SO 362(2) and make the appropriate provision under what would become SO 304.

An amendment is also proposed to SO 204, to clarify what was intended to be the relationship between the Connexional Council and the Conference as to the accounts: the ultimate responsibility for the preparation and approval of the connexional accounts is for the Connexional Council as the trustee body, but provision needs to be clearly made for members of the Conference (and any other persons who wish to do so) to have access to the accounts via the church's website, and that appears in SO 204(1)(i) below.

203 [Connexional Council's] General Responsibilities as Trustee Body

(8) [This general provision remains unchanged] The council shall be the trustee body for all connexional funds and have responsibility for the preparation and approval of the connexional accounts.

204 [Connexional Council's] Responsibilities for Finance and Property

(1) The Connexional Council shall be responsible for:

(i) ~~presenting to the Conference the financial statements for information~~ **ensuring that the accounts specified in Standing Order 370 are published on the Methodist Church's website,** and

(ii) presenting to the Conference the budget for expenditure upon the central services for which the council is responsible, for approval by the Conference.

304 [as proposed to be renumbered] Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

(7) The responsibilities of the committee shall be:

....(ii) to **conduct a** review **of** the consolidated accounts required by Standing Order 203(8);

362 Resourcing Committee: Particular Responsibilities. (1) Without limiting the ambit of its general responsibilities as outlined in Standing Order 361, the committee's responsibilities shall include those listed below.

~~(2) The committee shall be responsible for~~

~~(i) the detailed examination of the accounts required by Standing Order 370 to be prepared and for recommending their adoption by the Connexional Council; and~~

~~(ii) the preparation of summary accounts to be presented for information to the Conference~~

34. **The Resourcing Committee**

The rest of Standing Order 362 then lists the various other responsibilities of the Resourcing Committee. Now that this committee has come into operation and its relationship with the Connexional Council and other bodies has become clearer, it is recommended that the current provisions in SO 362(3) set out below (which were largely taken over as interim provisions from what appeared at various points in Standing Orders previously) be replaced with what follows below.

~~(3) To enable the council to fulfil its responsibilities under Standing Order 204(1) and Section 37, the committee shall propose to the council, for presentation to the Conference for its approval, the budget for the connexional funds for expenditure upon the central services for which the council is responsible, together with a rationale for it in terms of the priorities and mission strategies of the Methodist Church, recommending the total amount required to be levied by the Conference for the next connexional year and the payments to be made from the fund, taking into account the priorities judged necessary by the council.~~

~~(4) The committee shall act to advise and enable the council to fulfil its legal duties and obligations as an employer. It shall have responsibility for all personnel matters for those with council employment contracts, and shall act as the responsible body for implementing the Church's duty of care towards those ministers appointed to serve in appointments under the direction of the council and those ministers appointed as officers of the Conference and located in the Connexional Team.~~

~~(5) The committee shall, on behalf of the council, oversee and administer the funds referred to in Section 37 below, and all other connexional funds of which the council is trustee.~~

~~(6) The committee shall make recommendations to the council, to be brought to the Conference, as to ministerial stipends and related matters. These shall include (but not be limited to) recommendations~~

as to: minimum stipends to be paid to ministers and probationers; the amount of any additional allowances and initial payments; the level of travel expenses payable; financial arrangements for ministerial sabbaticals; expenses incurred and any additional allowances payable on removal between circuits.

~~(7) The committee shall produce guidance for ministers, probationers and students as to grants, loans and allowances available to them (particularly where stationed in one of the Island districts, the Isles of Scilly, the Isle of Wight, Malta or Gibraltar).~~

~~(8) The committee shall be responsible for making recommendations as to any other terms under which ministers and probationers serve within their covenant relationship with the Conference.~~

(2) The committee shall be responsible for:

(i) the preparation of the budget for connexional funds, for presentation by the Connexional Council to the Conference for its approval;

(ii) advising and enabling the council to fulfil its legal duties and obligations as an employer;

(iii) scrutiny, on behalf of the council, of all connexional funds;

(iv) making recommendations to the council, to be brought to the Conference, as to ministerial stipends, allowances, and related matters; producing guidance on grants, loans and allowances for ministers; making recommendation as to any other terms under which ministers and probationers serve within their covenant relationship with the Conference;

(v) scrutiny of connexional property guidance;

(vi) advising the council concerning properties for which it is managing trustee;

(vii) overseeing the work of the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee;

(viii) overseeing the relationship with those entities whose accounts are consolidated in the accounts of the Methodist Church in Great Britain, and with any other bodies which act in partnership with the church, in accordance with a list to be published from time to time by the Connexional Council.

5. Other minor drafting amendments

35. The following list contains a number of minor amendments, either to correct the drafting which took place last year or to make alterations to what was then decided, in the light of experience.

(a) Representatives and Delegates to Other Bodies and Associate members of the Conference

There are some instances where on fuller reflection it would better reflect current and appropriate practice if these Standing Orders were amended as to the responsible office-holder involved.

106 Representatives and Delegates to Other Bodies. (1) [revoked]

(2) The Conference may itself appoint any representatives whom the Conference or the Methodist Church is entitled to appoint to other autonomous conferences (as defined in the Deed of Union), and may appoint a committee or committees to bring nominations for that purpose, but in so far as any such representatives are in any year not appointed by the Conference itself the power and responsibility of appointing them is hereby delegated to and laid upon the Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the ~~Ecumenical Officer~~ **Connexional Secretary**.

(3) (a) Before the first meeting of the World Methodist Council in each quinquennium the Conference shall appoint its representatives for that quinquennium in such numbers as the Conference shall determine.

(b) The power and responsibility of making appointments to fill any vacancies arising during the quinquennium by the death or resignation of any such representatives or by the inability of any such representative to attend particular meetings is hereby delegated to and laid upon the Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the ~~Ecumenical Officer~~ **the Connexional Secretary**.

(4) The Conference shall from time to time decide whether any right of the Methodist Church or of any person or body on its behalf to appoint delegates or representatives to any assembly other

than those specified in the above clauses shall be exercised. If so, the Conference may itself appoint the delegates or representatives and may appoint a committee to bring nominations for that purpose, but in so far as any such delegates or representatives are in any year not appointed by the Conference itself the power and responsibility of appointing them are hereby delegated to and laid upon the Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the Ecumenical Officer **or the Connexional Secretary**.

107 Associate Members. (1) The associate members of the Conference to be appointed under clause 14(4) of the Deed of Union shall be as follows:

- (i) four persons appointed by other churches and Christian bodies which are members of an ecumenical body or association in Great Britain of which the Methodist Church is also a member;
 - (ii) fourteen persons appointed by other autonomous conferences, other Methodist churches and united churches in which Methodists have joined.
- (2) The Secretary of the Conference, after consultation with **in the case of (1)(i) above** the Ecumenical Officer **and in the case of (1)(ii) the Connexional Secretary** shall annually recommend and the Conference shall annually determine which bodies are to appoint associate members, and in what numbers, to the next or next but one Conference under clause (1) above.
- (3) The appointment under clause 14(4)(d) of the Deed of Union of two associate members as members of the Conference shall be made by the Secretary of the Conference after consultation with the ~~Ecumenical Officer~~ **the Connexional Secretary**. Such appointment shall not give rise to a casual vacancy or require or permit further appointments of associate members to be made.

(b) Conference Planning Executive.

The provision which previously appeared at SO 212(6) as a function of the Methodist Council needs to be reinserted, with the substitution of the Conference Planning Executive for the Methodist Council, as appears below.

140 Conference Planning Executive and Conference Arrangements Committee

Insert as a new clause (3A):

The executive shall be responsible for recommending to the Conference what date it shall fix for the commencement of the next Conference and what date it shall provisionally designate for the commencement of the next Conference but one.

(c) The Property Secretary

At various points in the Model Trusts and Standing Orders, reference is made to 'the Property Secretary'. There is no longer a specific person appointed to that office; instead, the Property Secretary's various duties are fulfilled by different Connexional Team members, as assigned to them by (until this year) the Methodist Council. The office cannot simply be abolished, as there are references to such an office in the particular clauses of the Model Trusts which are not able to be amended. It is thought sensible to make explicit that this arrangement continues, with the Connexional Council now replacing the Methodist Council in this regard. This would be added to Standing Order 204(4), which already provides for the council to discharge the responsibilities of the Property Division (an arrangement which similarly has to remain in place because the Property Division is referred to in unamendable provisions).

204 Responsibilities for Finance and Property

(4) For the purposes of the Methodist Church Act 1976 and the Model Trusts the council is the connexional organisation authorised by the Conference to act generally on behalf of the Conference in relation to property affairs and constituted to discharge the responsibilities of the Property Division. ***The council is also the body authorised for the purposes of Standing Order 006(2A) to appoint such person or persons as are required to fulfil the duties assigned to the Property Secretary or General Secretary of the Board of the Property Division by the Model Trusts.***

*****RESOLUTION**

54/7. The Conference amended Standing Orders as proposed in Section III above, with effect from 1 September 2025.

SECTION D: Connexional Leaders' Forum

36. The 2024 Conference received a section of the OTTG's report which recommended that a 'retreat type gathering' be held for District Chairs and the Warden and members of the Connexional Council. This gathering took place at Yarnfield in early March and was facilitated by Jill Baker, a former Vice-President of the Conference. Over 24 hours, those assembled attempted to listen to what God is saying to God's Church through Bible reading, prayer, teaching, discussion and silence.

A number of key themes emerged during the planning and the event itself. Unsurprisingly, a range of Methodist spiritualities disclosed different approaches to (and differing levels of comfort with) the challenge of communal silence.

37. Subsequently, both the Connexional Council and the District Chairs'/Warden's meeting have reflected on the Yarnfield experience. The council affirmed its sense that being able to spend time with others in connexional leadership (primarily but not exclusively the Chairs and Warden) would be hugely valuable. In some senses, the two groups would seek different but complementary outcomes from such a gathering. The Connexional Council, as a trustee body, would value the opportunity to engage with those in senior oversight roles such as the District Chairs and Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order. Connexional leaders, including the District Chairs and Warden, would value the opportunity to engage with members of the Connexional Council for mutual learning, discernment, and awareness of their respective responsibilities. The council also noted that such a meeting need not be residential and that with the right facilitation and venue a lot could be achieved in a day.
38. The OTTG recognises the value of those with these responsibilities spending time together annually and notes the introduction of a post-Conference meeting to discuss the work of the next connexional year. It feels that a broader agenda reflecting on the work of God should also form the basis of discussion during the year and therefore recommends that a gathering that focuses on listening to God and God's people be planned each year. In addition to the Chairs and Warden and Connexional Council (including the Assistant Secretary of the Conference, the Connexional Secretary and the Conference Officer for Legal and Constitutional Practice), the OTTG recommends that the Secretary of the Conference determines who should be present at such a gathering.
39. The OTTG also notes that that SO 293 has been suspended for two years; the council has noted that not every meeting in the life of the Church requires a SO and that greater flexibility and openness might be achieved by there not being one. The OTTG therefore presents a simplified SO 293. It also recommends amending SO 294 to update its title.

***RESOLUTIONS

54/8. The Conference received Section D of the Report.

54/9. The Conference amended SO 293:

293 The Connexional Leaders' Forum. ~~(1) Leaders appointed by the Conference to exercise oversight in particular bodies or spheres of responsibility shall work together collegially in the oversight of the whole Church. The leaders listed in (2) below shall meet together as often as practicable to watch over one another in love in order to support each person in the exercise of the particular responsibilities of the office, to engage in prayerful theological reflection, to share insights and develop vision, and to confer about how the vision and policies adopted by the Conference might be implemented in the Church.~~

~~(2) The Connexional Leaders' Forum shall consist of:~~

- ~~(i) the Secretary of the Conference;~~
- ~~(iA) the assistant secretary of the Conference;~~
- ~~(ii) the President, Vice-President, ex-President, ex-Vice-President, President-Designate and Vice-President-Designate of the Conference;~~
- ~~(iii) the District Chairs;~~
- ~~(iv) the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order;~~
- ~~(v) the Connexional Secretary as defined in Standing Order 383;~~
- ~~(vi) the members of the senior management group as defined in Standing Order 383 not otherwise forming part of the Connexional Leaders' Forum under this clause;~~
- ~~(vii) the chair of the Connexional Council;~~
- ~~(viii) the chair of the Ministries Committee;~~

- (ix) ~~the chair of the Mission Committee;~~
(x) ~~the chair of the Resourcing Committee;~~
(xi) ~~the Youth President.~~
- (3) ~~Other persons appointed by the Conference to fulfil connexional duties shall be invited to form part of the Forum on particular occasions, as appropriate.~~

The Secretary of the Conference shall at least once a year convene a meeting of the Chairs of District and the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order together with the members of the Connexional Council and such other persons whom the Secretary of the Conference considers it appropriate to invite to consider the work of God and for mutual learning, discernment, and awareness of their respective responsibilities.

54/10. The Conference amended SO 294 as follows:

294 Chairs' and Warden's Meeting. (1) There shall be a meeting of the Chairs of ~~the home~~ Districts **and the Warden of the Methodist Diaconal Order** not less than three times a year for the discussion of stationing issues and other matters of mutual concern, reflection upon the work of God in the Districts and Connexion and consideration of whether there are any matters that the meeting believes it to be necessary or appropriate to bring to the Conference's or Connexional Council's attention. The expenses of these meetings shall be pooled and charged to the District Expenses Funds of the Districts, assisted by a grant from the Methodist Church Fund.

SECTION E: District Leadership

40. This matter was raised in some previous Oversight and Trusteeship Reports, most fully in Section 5 of the Report to the 2024 Conference (https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/50._OTTG.pdf). This has reflected a move towards reconfigured arrangements within or between Districts, including District mergers and amalgamations to form, in some cases, larger Districts, leading towards new ways of being a District and new patterns of officers serving them. This applies in particular to the roles of Chairs of District and those who deputise for them or assist them, and more generally to the principles of shared and collaborative district leadership. Over the years a wide range of patterns have emerged which are increasingly divergent, and that tendency is likely to increase under the new developments. As Section 5 of the OTTG Report to the 2024 Conference acknowledged, care is therefore needed to ensure that arrangements can be tailored to suit the context of an individual District, but within a consistent connexional pattern.
41. In Section 5 of the OTTG Report to the 2024 Conference, the OTTG made initial recommendations to amend and amplify some of the provisions within CPD concerning District Leadership. These recommendations were considered by the Law and Polity Committee. In response to a Conference direction, the Faith and Order Committee also considered the matter of District Leadership in their Report (No.28) which was received by the 2024 Conference on The Role of a District Chair. Care was taken to ensure that the respective reports were mutually informed so that the Conference might receive a cohesive set of recommendations. Section 5 of the OTTG Report included indicative changes to the relevant Standing Order, SO 426. A related special resolution provisionally amending the Deed of Union was also passed by the Conference, with the expectancy that final proposals would be brought to the Conference of 2025.
42. The OTTG presented Standing Order amendments to the 2024 Conference that were only indicative for this matter because, firstly, the amendments could not be fully adopted without confirmation first of the Deed of Union amendment by special resolution of the 2025 Conference; secondly, to allow for any necessary adjustment in the light of other possible proposals that might be presented to the 2025 Conference (not least in respect of the Stationing Review); and thirdly, to allow for comment on the proposed SO amendments. On the first point, a special resolution to confirm the Deed of Union amendment is included in this Report; on the second point, the OTTG is not aware of any other proposals (including in connection with the Stationing Review) that would affect the ability to confirm the amendments proposed in their various details at the 2025 Conference; and thirdly there have not been any comments received on the indicative Standing Order amendments to suggest further variation or refinement.
43. Accordingly, proposals are now brought to the 2025 Conference to confirm the proposed amendments to the Deed of Union and Standing Orders. The reasoning for these is set out in the

remainder of this report, which to a large degree repeats the explanatory text received by Conference in Section 5 of the 2024 OTTG Report, but with updating where now appropriate, to enable the members of the 2025 Conference also to consider what is proposed.

44. The relevant Standing Order, SO 426, makes provision for two categories of persons to be appointed to deputise for or to assist a District Chair. Different roles, descriptions and mechanisms for appointment are involved. Firstly, there is provision for a Synod to appoint one or more people to act as deputies to the Chair [Clauses (1) and (3)].
- 44.1 As the role of Chair involves exercising pastoral responsibility, ministerial oversight, and some forms or expressions of pastoral charge, these deputies are to be presbyters in the active work stationed in the District concerned [Clause 2(ii)]. Being “in the active work” and having regard to Deed of Union Clause 1 (iA), means that they cannot be a supernumerary or without appointment, and it is inferred that they may be Recognised and Regarded (under DU 45 and SO 732), but cannot be an Authorised (or Associate) Presbyter (under SO 733 or 733A)). Given silence on the point, they may apparently be full-time in this role or part-time.
- 44.2 Their role is to perform the duties specified in a role description approved by the Synod [Clause (2)(i)]. The Standing Order does not specify what those duties should be, but it does specify that they cannot include anything that the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts expressly state can only be performed by the Chair of District. The only thing that can easily be found to be without exception in that category is that another presbyter cannot be a substitute for a Chair of District in the membership of the Conference (clause 14(2)(v) of the Deed of Union).
45. Secondly, SO 426 makes provision for a Chair to appoint other people “to assist him or her” [Clause (5)]. The language is important here. Some Districts have adopted the terminology of ‘Assistant Chairs’. That is understandable in common speech, but the language of the Standing Order as presently drafted would suggest that technically it would be more correct to refer to them instead as ‘Chair’s Assistants’. Assisting the Chair in this way may involve a range of duties other than those of exercising presbyteral oversight and forms of pastoral responsibility or charge. This is demonstrated by the fact that the people appointed to this role may be other than presbyters in the active work. Standing Order 426(6) allows for both ordained and lay possibilities.²
- 45.1 If ministers, they have to “reside in the District for the purposes of the stations” [SO 426(6)(i)]. Standing Orders 005(vi), (vii) and 785(4)(a) imply that this encompasses presbyters or deacons who are in the active work, those who are authorised ministers, those in appointments not within the control of the Church, those without appointment, or those who are supernumeraries; but not those residing for the purposes of the stations within the categories referred to in SO 785(8)(c) or (d). In suggesting amendments below to this category of those who assist Chairs and contribute to the leadership of a District, it is proposed to narrow the possible classes of minister involved to those in the active work who are stationed in the District (although those outside the District should be able to apply but would need to be stationed in the District on appointment to the role). In making that proposal, the OTTG considered the level of responsibility involved and concluded that it was not dissimilar to that involved in taking pastoral charge of a local church (a supernumerary minister would need to return to the active work in order to have pastoral charge, with the responsibilities and accountabilities that come with being in the active work). It noted also that Districts could still appoint supernumerary ministers to other offices or supportive roles, and that the proposed revisions to SO 426 were focused on District Leadership. The OTTG therefore agreed that a supernumerary or minister without appointment who wished to be considered for a District leadership role under SO 426 should seek to return to the active work.
- 45.2 Alternatively, those appointed as ‘Chair’s Assistants’ have to be members in the District concerned. That means that they can be lay people.
46. Going forwards, a consistent intent has been to retain Deputy Chairs, but to be clearer about the role(s) of Chair’s Assistants/Assistant Chairs, and not least to acknowledge that such roles may contribute to or have a share in the leadership of the District as a whole (whether lay or ordained), rather than merely ‘assisting’ the District Chair, even if that is conceptually or practically part of the role. Further considerations follow regarding the possible nature, purpose and terminology of the different roles.

² See *Role of a District Chair* paragraph 9.2

47. Deputy Chairs will share with the Chair(s) of a District in the Chair's presbyteral duties of maintaining Methodist order and discipline [SO 424(2)]; exercising oversight of the character and fidelity of the presbyters and presbyteral probationers in the District [SO 424(3)]; stationing; being a pastor to the ministers and probationers [SO 424(1)]; representing the District in the Conference (if agreed, as proposed, from now on), Connexion and wider world; and representing the Conference and wider Connexion in the District. They may also substitute for the Chair with delegated authority where appropriate. The Deputy (or a particular one of them if there is more than one, as determined by the District Policy Committee from time to time) should in addition be designated as the person to fill the role of the Chair (including as a member of the Conference, if this change were to be agreed) should the Chair be incapacitated or unable for a time to exercise their office.
48. Three particular proposals arise (the first and second perhaps standing or falling together) concerning the Deputy Chair role:
 - 48.1 The connexional aspects of the role of the Chair that a Deputy or Deputies would thereby share or fulfil as a substitute mean that representatives of the wider Connexion should play some role in the appointment of Deputies, just as they are in the initial appointment of a Chair (but perhaps not to the same extent, involving for example two members of the connexional panel referred to in Standing Order 421A(3)).
 - 48.2 Districts should be entitled to have a Deputy Chair substitute for their District Chair in the Conference, which would require a change to clause 14(2)(v) of the Deed of Union by special resolution. Such a change was not contemplated in the Reply accepted by the Conference of 2019 when a question to that effect was raised in Memorial M12; however, a precedent towards allowing the filling of a Conference seat by alternate or substitute named officers was established by the 2024 Conference's amendment of clause 14(2)(vii) of the Deed of Union to permit the filling of a seat by alternates: "the President or the Lay Leader of the Methodist Church in Ireland...".
 - 48.3 The appointment of someone as a Deputy should be shown against the name of the person concerned on the stations. If the Deputy role is only part-time and they are also appointed to other duties it can be shown against their name in the Circuit in which they are stationed as "... (... also Deputy Chair)". If ever full time, it would be shown under the District Chair's name at the start of a District's list, provided that in the appointment there has indeed been connexional panel involvement as suggested above.
49. The 'Chair's Assistant' role would become more focused on contributing to the leadership of the District in other ways than the specifically presbyteral role described above. It might be open to both lay members in the District, or ordained, and if ordained, to either deacons or presbyters stationed in the District, but in either case being clearer that those ordained should be in the active work (ie in Full Connexion or Recognised and Regarded). Since the role would be focused on contributing to and sharing in leadership of the District:
 - 49.1 Firstly, a title other than 'Chair's Assistant', or even 'Assistant Chair', might be preferred and should be permitted. Indeed, if the role is filled by a lay person, there has previously been concern expressed in the OTTG that using 'Assistant' of a lay person reinforces a risk of actual or perceived hierarchy rather than the practice of collaborative leadership. As an alternative term, 'District Secretary', with its analogies to Connexional Secretary or Diocesan Secretary, is gaining currency in the proposals for some merged Districts, a term that need not be confused with the role of Synod Secretary. However, since no single term commands universal assent or meets every contextual requirement, flexibility in the use of terms should be permitted, and under these provisions Districts will have some liberty in finding appropriate titles for those who assist the Chair and contribute to the leadership of the District. The proviso is that the Synod should determine which title should be used for the role, the nature and details of which they will also agree, in their context. This is reflected in the suggested Standing Order amendments below.
 - 49.2 Secondly, since the category is primarily envisaged as involving a contribution to District leadership, references to clerical and administrative duties should now be removed (given that Standing Order provisions are surely not required for this). If helpful in practice these or other forms of support can still be provided for the District Chair or other District Leaders as may be required (but again without requiring a Standing Order to permit them).

50. In terms of distinguishing between the roles:
- 50.1 If the Deputy role can be defined as in paragraph 47 above, it should be explicit that the role(s) of those who assist Chairs or contribute to District Leadership in this category do not include those duties. If that is made clear, then the confusion of describing 'Deputy Chairs' as 'Assistant Chairs' might be ended. This will require adjustment in the use of terms in some contexts, where usage has perhaps sometimes developed as a pragmatic response to the methods of recruitment set out by the present Standing Order (which will also be addressed below), rather than through focusing on the essence of a deputy's role as envisaged in SO 426(1)-(4), and which it is proposed to be made clearer through the suggested amendments so as to ensure greater connexional commonality and clarity concerning the different categories.
- 50.2 As for what under the present Standing Order might be described strictly as 'Chair's Assistants', but for which going forwards there will liberty to adopt a title and role agreed by the Synod (such as 'Assistant Chairs', 'District Secretaries' or other appropriate term, but not in this category Deputy Chair), in essence, these lay or ordained roles will be focused on contributing to the leadership of the District in general or specified ways, other than through fulfilling the presbyteral functions referred to above. Such roles will, like Deputy Chairs but in other ways, constitute and enable helpful and valued contributions to the life and mission of both traditional sized and merged Districts.
51. The development of larger Districts with more complex or creative features for fulfilling the responsibilities of a District in the contemporary environment has raised related questions about how both ministerial and lay roles might best be recruited or appointed, which also needs to be considered. The Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group has long noted that the Methodist Church has become increasingly aware that recruitment and appointment processes should be transparent and inclusive. Thus, whilst at present under SO 426(6)(ii) any public facing aspect undertaken by a Chair's Assistant must be approved by the District Policy Committee or Synod, in other respects, a Chair's Assistant can be appointed by the District Chair alone: the EDI risks of appointing by an individual, at worst simply through a 'tapping on the shoulder' method, should from now on be avoided; and the greater leadership aspect being emphasised through the development of the role to meet emerging circumstances also suggests that a public process should be embedded. For these reasons, but also out of concerns that there should be scope for recruiting suitable postholders to both the Deputy Chair and Assistant Chair/District Secretary type roles, the following suggestions are made to reinforce and develop the processes for recruitment and appointment going forwards.
52. Given the presbyteral and representative responsibilities for deputising for the District Chair, it is proposed that Deputy Chairs should be appointed connexionally on the nomination of the Synod.
- 52.1 Potentially this would mean that the District might advertise for applications or to invite nominations for suitable presbyters from both within or outside the District for full or part time roles. Such appointments should involve two members of the connexional panel involved in the nomination of District Chairs and, on the nomination of the Synod, mean that the appointee would be stationed to the role by the Conference, either by separate resolution of the Conference (as for District Chairs) or more simply through the adoption of the stations with the deputy being listed as such in the stations for that District.
- 52.2 It is recommended that advertisement of a Deputy Chair role, whether full or part time, should not require the approval of the Stationing Committee (nor require the presbyter to seek the approval of the Stationing Advisory Committee ['SAC'], since this is an appointment within the control of the Church).
- 52.3 However, if a part time role is involved and appointment to a circuit role is also desired in connection with the appointment, which may require recruitment from outside the District, or a circuit appointment within the District that is half time or more, then, regarding the circuit aspect, the applicable stationing matching provisions and processes should still be applied. This would require the timetable of the circuit and district appointment processes to be correlated between the District and the Circuit to enable stationing to both aspects to take place at the same time, and to be subject to both a satisfactory circuit match and satisfactory appointment to the deputy chair role, to be approved by the Conference through the adoption of the stations.

53. Regarding any other type of district leadership role under SO 426 (ie the category of Assistant Chair/District Secretary/other suitably termed role):
- 53.1 If this is to be advertised for appropriate fulfilment by a lay person, a successful recruitment process involving advert, agreed role description, application and interview should lead to appointment by the District Policy Committee ('DPC') as the District Trustees and employing body, and not be dependent on or wait for confirmation by the Synod, provided that the role has previously been agreed to in principle by the Synod through the approval of a title and role description specifying the duties that will be involved.
- 53.2 If the role is also open to a minister in the active work, following existing principles, the District will not need permission from the Stationing Committee to advertise nor the minister to seek permission from SAC (although references from the minister's minister in oversight should as standard be required, and from the Warden of the Diaconal Order in the case of a deacon). For parity (and reflecting the possibility in the present Standing Order), appointment should be by the DPC, again providing the role and title has previously been agreed in principle by the Synod, although in a minister's case also being subject to the Conference's confirmation of the stations.
- 53.3 If ever the role were appropriately to be suitable only for an ordained minister, the minister will need to be in the active work and appointment should again be by the DPC, but to a role and title previously agreed in principle by the Synod. Additionally:
- i. if the role is part time and involves release of a minister stationed within a circuit, it could be dealt with through agreement between the District and Circuit (but in the case of a deacon will require the agreement also of the Warden of the Diaconal Order) with, where necessary, changes to the Stations with the approval of the Conference.
 - ii. if part time but requiring a 'new' minister who will also be expected to fulfil a circuit role, recruitment should be through the standard stationing matching process.
 - iii. if a full time role and it is desired to advertise and seek applications for the post, the permission of the Stationing Committee will be required.
54. In terms of the length of the appointment of Deputy Chairs or other district leadership roles under SO 426, at present SO 426(2)(iii) provides for repeatable three-year terms for Deputies, and there is no provision in 426(5)-(6) regarding (what are at present) 'Chair's Assistants'. The present Stationing Review, contained elsewhere in the Agenda, continues the move adopted in the recent Changing Patterns of Ministry Report towards establishing more flexible appointment periods. Part time district leadership appointments might also be coupled with circuit appointments, themselves of different length. Lay appointments usually need to be open ended, or at least to reflect available funding, and are subject to general provisions regarding redundancy and dismissal. Thus, seeking to legislate comprehensively for appointment lengths might be difficult or unwise, even if desired, although there would be merit in allowing for greater flexibility for appointment periods of deputies. In order nonetheless to provide an appropriate baseline, an initial maximum length of a ministerial appointment as Deputy Chair, or as an Assistant Chair/District Secretary, is suggested as being five years, to correspond with what is often still the standard initial circuit appointment, as included in the indicative Standing Order amendments (and thereafter the principles of a circuit reinvitation process have been referred to where connected circuit appointments are also involved).
55. The Deed of Union and Standing Order amendments set out below are therefore intended to provide some clarifications and updating regarding the roles and recruitment of Deputy Chairs and others who may also be appointed under Standing Order 426 to senior leadership in a District. As explained, one aspect proposed is that a Deputy Chair should be able from now on to substitute for a District Chair as a member of the Conference in limited circumstances where appropriate. Since this requires a change to the Deed of Union and therefore a two-year special resolution process, this was first proposed to and agreed by Conference of 2024 (Resolution 50/11). The consultation required under SO 126(1) was directed by the Law and Polity Sub-Committee to be with the Connexional Council (Daily Record 7/42/1 <https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/conf-2024-daily-record-complete.pdf>), and the Connexional Council agreed the amendment by Resolution 19/3 at its March Meeting. Accordingly, the OTTG therefore invites the Conference by special resolution to confirm the following amendment to the Deed of Union, to take effect from 1 September 2025:

Deed of Union clause 14(2) (v) the Chair or Chairs of each home District, **or, as prescribed by Standing Orders, a deputy for a Chair who is unable to attend;**

56. The OTTG sets out the following amendments to Standing Order 426 which, if approved by the Conference of 2025, would take effect from 1 September 2025.

426 Permanent Deputies, Temporary Deputies and Assistants. Deputy Chairs and other senior District leaders

(1) ~~On the nomination of the Synod, the~~ **Conference** may appoint a person ~~presbyter or presbyters in the active work~~ to the office of deputy to the Chair. **A Deputy Chair shall share with the Chair in the leadership and presbyteral duties of the Chair, dealing with matters of Methodist order and discipline, stationing, the pastoral care of ministers and probationers, representing the Conference in the District and the District in the Conference.**

(2) Any appointment made under clause (1) above shall comply with the following requirements:

(i) the appointment shall be on terms that the deputy is to perform the **particular** duties specified **in each case** in a description of the deputy's role which has been approved by the Synod;

(iA) The Secretary of the Conference and two members of the panel appointed annually by the Conference under Standing Order 421A(3) shall be consulted in making any nomination to the Synod concerning such an appointment.

~~(ii) the person appointed shall be a presbyter in the active work who is stationed in the District~~ **the appointment may be full-time or part-time and in either case shall be advertised. Following satisfactory recruitment (and completion of any stationing matching process applying to a related circuit appointment), the appointment shall be brought to the Synod for nomination to the Conference for confirmation by designation on the list of the stations in the District;**

[Suggested editorial note: The words in parenthesis relate to situations where a presbyter is being appointed as a part-time Deputy Chair and also being newly stationed to a part-time circuit appointment, when the applicable stationing matching processes will still need to be followed for the circuit appointment. Other situations may involve the partial release of a presbyter from their existing circuit appointment, where a new stationing matching process will not be required but where the District should still liaise sensitively with the Circuit. In all cases, the processes for both the district appointment and any related part-time new or reconfigured Circuit appointment should be coordinated, and will culminate with the Conference's confirmation of the appointments through the adoption of the stations for the ensuing year.]

(iii) the appointment shall be for a specified period not exceeding **five** years in the first instance (but capable of extension for a further period or periods each of which shall not exceed three years and upon terms that it shall terminate if the person ~~presbyter~~ appointed ceases to be qualified under (ii) above **in the active work and stationed in the District;**

~~(iv) the duties to be performed by the deputy shall not include duties expressly required to be performed by the Chair by any provision of the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts.~~

~~(3) The Synod may appoint more than one person to hold office as a deputy at the same time, but each appointment shall comply with the requirements set out in clause (2).~~

~~(4) If the Chair of a District or a deputy appointed under the preceding clauses of this Standing Order is temporarily unable to fulfil all or any of the duties of the office because of accident, illness, absence from the country, sabbatical leave or other cause, the Deputy Chair duly appointed under this Standing Order shall substitute for and act as the Chair in all matters, including that of membership of the Conference. If more than one Deputy Chair has been appointed, one of them shall have been expressly designated in advance to substitute as a member of the Conference by the Synod or the district Policy Committee.~~

(4) In cases of emergency and in the absence of a deputy previously appointed under this Standing Order, the President or the Vice-President on his or her behalf, after consultation with the Synod or district Policy Committee and the Conference Office, may appoint a person, being a presbyter in the active work stationed in the District, with authority to fulfil such of those duties which the Chair or deputy is unable to perform as may be specified in the appointment. An appointment made by the President or Vice-President shall continue only until such time as the Synod or district Policy Committee is able to confirm their nomination of the appointment, or to appoint-nominate another person under the provisions of this clause Standing Order, for appointment by the Conference by designation on the list of the stations in the District.

~~(5) A Chair~~ **The district Policy Committee** may at any time appoint a person to assist him or her in such way as he or she may think fit **the Chair and contribute to the senior leadership of the District. The**

appointment shall not be to fulfil the duties set out in clause (1) above, but to fulfil such duties as are specified in each case in a description of the role approved by the Synod, with such title as shall be determined by the Synod.

[Suggested editorial note: This replaces a previous provision for the appointment by a District Chair of an assistant (sometimes to a purely clerical or administrative role, since such support can be provided without requiring a Standing Order to that effect), with a provision enabling Districts to appoint others to share in the senior leadership of the District, including, if a minister, from within or beyond those already stationed in the District. A title such as Assistant Chair, District Secretary or other suitable title (and not therefore 'Deputy Chair') may be used for a role under SO 426(5)]

(6) ~~Unless the assistance is purely clerical or administrative, a~~ Any appointment made under clause (5) above shall comply with the following requirements:

(i) the person appointed, ~~if a minister, shall reside~~ **be in the active work and stationed** in the District for the purposes of the stations, ~~or, if a lay person, shall be a member in the District, and the terms of appointment shall provide for it to terminate if this requirement ceases to be satisfied;~~

(ii) ~~if the person appointed is to act publicly on behalf of the Chair, the appointment shall not take effect until it has been approved by the Synod or the district Policy Committee.~~ **the appointment may be full time or part time and shall be advertised if open to lay persons or to lay persons and ministers. If the appointment is appropriately open only to ministers, it may be advertised if any necessary permission has been given; otherwise, recruitment shall be through a stationing matching process. Following satisfactory recruitment (and, in the case of a minister, completion of any stationing matching process applying to a related circuit appointment), the district Policy Committee shall make the appointment, subject in the case of ministers to the Conference's confirmation of the appointment by designation on the list of the stations in the District;**

[Suggested editorial note: Permission of the Stationing Committee is usually required to advertise ministerial appointments, unless also open to lay persons. If the appointment is part time and involves a minister who is also being newly stationed to a part-time circuit appointment, the applicable stationing matching processes will still need to be followed for the circuit appointment. Other situations may involve the partial release of a minister from an existing circuit appointment where a new matching process will not be required but where the District should still liaise sensitively with the Circuit, and, in the case of a Deacon, additionally with the Warden of the Diaconal Order. In all cases, the processes for both the District appointment and any related new part-time or reconfigured Circuit appointment should be coordinated, and will culminate with the Conference's confirmation of the appointments through the adoption of the stations for the ensuing year.]

(iii) ~~the duties to be performed by the person appointed shall not include duties expressly required to be performed by the Chair by any provision of the Methodist Church Act 1976, the Deed of Union or the Model Trusts~~ **if the appointment shall be of a minister, the appointment shall be for a specified period not exceeding five years in the first instance (but capable of extension for a further period or periods following a reinvitation process that shall reflect the principles involved in a circuit reinvitation process), and upon terms that it shall terminate if the minister ceases to be in the active work and stationed in the District.**

(7) Nothing in this Standing Order infringes upon the provisions in the Deed of Union for filling casual vacancies.

See cl. 42(c) of the Deed (Book II, Part 1).

*****RESOLUTIONS**

54/11. The Conference received Section E of the Report.

54/12. [Special Resolution]

The Conference, with the required majority, amended clause 14(2) of the Deed of Union as follows and directed that it takes effect from 1 September 2025:

(v) the Chair or Chairs of each home District, or, as prescribed by Standing Orders, a deputy for a Chair who is unable to attend;

54/13. The Conference adopted the amendments to Standing Order 426 set out in paragraph 56 above with effect from 1 September 2025.

SECTION F: Conclusion

57. The Oversight and Trusteeship Task Group has completed the work entrusted to it and is grateful to all who have contributed to its work. In its final meetings, it has reflected on the benefits of a process that has drawn together representatives of the Faith & Order and Law and Polity Committees with (from the previous governance structure) members of the SRC and others.
58. The Task Group notes the importance of keeping under review the efficiency, effectiveness and suitability of the structures of the Church. The group, however, believes that this responsibility lies with the Secretary of the Conference under the provisions of SO 114(1A) and therefore recommends that the Secretary of the Conference continues to keep this work under review, in consultation as appropriate with the Faith and Order Committee, the Law and Polity Committee and the Connexional Council.

*****RESOLUTION**

54/14. The Conference received Section F of the Report.

APPENDIX

