

Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee of the Methodist Council held at Methodist Church House, on 9 September 2010

Present: Ken Wales, Martyn Atkins, Margaret Best, Christine Elliott, John Ellis, Eden Fletcher, Rachael Fletcher, Andrew Gibbs, Ian Harrison, Margaret Havers, Gareth Hill, Alison Jackson, Stuart Jordan, Mark Wakelin

In attendance: Isha Coke (Administration), Ken Howcroft, Tamar Knapton (Administration), Gareth Powell

Ian Bell, Siôn Rhys Evans, Carmila Legarda, Jonathan Pye, Doug Swanney (for relevant items only)

Nick Moore, Paul Winyard (Participating observers – entire meeting)

Apologies: Jim Booth, Adrian Burton

Welcomes: Ken Wales welcomed Isha Coke, Tamar Knapton and Paul Winyard to the meeting.

Devotions: Opening devotions were led by Ken Wales.

10.2.1 Chairman's Comments

- After Conference Ken Wales wrote to Martyn Atkins to inform him that the contribution of the Connexional Team to the Conference was outstanding. Ken Wales wanted to ensure the hard work done both before and during the Conference was noted and recorded in the minutes.
- Ken Wales noted the concern generated within the Committee by the role played by one of its members at Conference. This was discussed and the Chair agreed to have further discussions with the member concerned. Ken Wales asked the Committee members to inform him in the future of any conflicts of interest as soon as possible in order to seek advice on how to progress.

10.2.2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2010 were agreed as correct. Ken Wales thanked Pat Parkins for writing the minutes.

10.2.3 Matters arising [SRC/10/27]

SRC/10/27 was received and 3 matters outstanding were noted.

(a) 09.2.9 Pensions Trust

John Ellis informed the Committee that this issue had become quite complicated and that was why it appeared in the Matters Arising again.

(b) 10.2.5(e) Longer term budget planning

John Ellis informed the Committee that a date for a first meeting of the Stakeholders Forum had been set.

(c) 10.2.5(g) Review of SRC SOs

Ken Wales had had an initial discussion about this with Ken Howcroft and they would continue working on it.

(d) 10.2.6(b) MIC Scrutiny Update

Ken Wales informed the group that after the last session, three members of SRC, Andrew Gibbs, Adrian Burton and Andrew Moore, had engaged with MIC leaders to do some further work on this. The result was a sound plan, which did have some shortcomings, but nothing significant enough to hold it up any further. Therefore they were content for this to go ahead and looked forward to hearing about its progress.

(e) 10.2.6 (a) (ii) Methodist Entity Selection Process (Guy Chester Centre)

Martyn Atkins informed the group that the selection process had been rerun and that David Gamble had been appointed as Chair of the Trustees.

(f) Future Dates

Gareth Hill pointed out that the SRC residential dates in February fall during half term in Cornwall for a third year and he would not be able to attend. He asked that alternative dates be considered for future residentials. Ken Wales apologised that this had arisen but noted that half term occurred in different weeks in different areas.

10.2.4 RMO Way Forward [SRC/10/30]

Nick Moore introduced this paper. A careful and lengthy discussion ensued as the Committee sought to ensure it had fully grasped the points made at the Conference and weighed which of them arose from misunderstandings about the actual proposals and which needed more substantial rethinking.

Resolution 1 was amended to read:

~~“The SRC recommends to the Methodist Council that it~~ confirms its support for the original recommendations of the Team Focus review of the Resourcing Mission Office.”

The above resolution was unanimously accepted.

The SRC members however agreed that some work needed to be undertaken on the penumbral issues before a recommendation could be taken to Council. It was therefore decided to develop an “apologetics” paper to explain again the original review proposals via addressing the concerns expressed at Conference.

It was also felt that it was necessary to look at the issue of communication and regionalisation in the context of different understandings of being a Connexion. Martyn Atkins felt that the formal governance of the Church was not just a Connexional Team issue and that they needed to get the District Chairs to act as advocates. He therefore felt that maybe this should be discussed at the CLF in January.

It was agreed that this process should start with Martyn Atkins and John Ellis meeting with at least the proposer of the Conference NoM to explore his underlying concerns.

Ian Harrison queried why Resolution 2 needed to be looked at during this meeting. John Ellis informed the Committee that the interim position would be very different to the previous one and that they needed SRC to say whether they were happy with the new role. This and the subsequent resolutions in the paper were agreed.

Ken finished this item by saying that he hoped the Connexional Team felt supported by SRC and said that he valued their work and that of the RMO in Manchester.

10.2.5 WMF/MMS History Investigation [SRC/10/28]

John Ellis informed the Committee that Conference had decided that there definitely should be some work done on the accounts prior to 2007-8. This was to be overseen by a Reference Group whose members were: Dudley Coates, Peter Pillinger, Jill Baker, Stephen Radford and Donald Ker. A meeting with those most knowledgeable about the old records had been scheduled but unfortunately Dudley Coates was unable to attend, therefore they may look at rearranging it.

The Committee decided to appoint Donald Ker as the Chair of the Group and were happy for the meeting to go ahead.

10.2.6 Team Focus Evaluation Feedback

Martyn Atkins reminded the SRC that the Team Focus Evaluation had not been made public. He informed the Group that Ken Wales and he had sent the document to 10-13 people asking for their comments and around 80% had responded. The main conclusions were:

1. No one wanted to disassociate themselves from the report's recommendations.
2. Some did not agree with the comments in the report that stated that JSG were inexperienced in change management and had failed to take suitable advice from outside consultants.
3. The Report did not take into account the complexities of employment law.

Following these comments they did not feel that the report should be amended, but that the comments should be recorded in a cover note. He said the evaluation report should be presented to Council and then go to the Conference.

The Committee encouraged the General Secretary and Chair of SRC to write to previous and present staff, and others who had commented, informing them of the process, making a copy of the report available with the covering note and expressing sadness to those who were still upset. There were concerns raised about any suggestion of an apology appearing in the content of the cover letter and Martyn and Ken agreed to take advice on any employment law issues.

Some members of SRC also favoured a liturgical event for those who were still angry about aspect of the Team Focus process.

Ken Wales confirmed that SRC were not making a decision on the recommendations yet and that the matter should be raised at CLF in September first. They would then come back with a final set of recommendations.

10.2.7 WCB Way Forward [SRC/10/30], Confidential

Ken Wales welcomed Revd Dr Jonathan Pye, Principal of Wesley College.

Jonathan put forward his proposal for the closure of WCB and informed the SRC that there was to be no recruitment on validated courses in year one. The students that remained (except the Roman Catholic Deacons) would then halve every year, which would leave five students in 2012-13. He assumed that they would not teach in this year but this was subject to agreement with the University of Bristol as the validating authority. Similarly he proposed a reduction in teaching staff by 50% for 2011-2. He pointed out that some sessional staff may be needed in the second year.

He informed the SRC that some Postgraduate students had already withdrawn, and that there may be others who would wish to do the same.

Following discussion, Doug Swanney put forward an alternative approach which also recommended a two year phase down but with the site and staff released at the end of the first year i.e. in the Summer of 2011. Doug felt that if they were willing to speak to the University about the five remaining students in year three, then a conversation could also be had on the basis of handing over the eleven remaining students in year two, to see if similar arrangements could be out in place for them as well.

Doug also informed the Committee that there was a thirst in the South & South West region to talk about what next. However, until a decision was made on WCB this could not be considered as there was no overlapping funding.

After full discussion SRC voted to support a plan which:

- (i) continued through the 2010-11 academic year with the current teaching and physical infrastructure;
- (ii) negotiated with the University of Bristol to ensure that for the academic years 2011-12 and 2012-13 remaining students were supported without using Wesley teachers or plant, thus allowing an exit from the site in Summer 2011.

The Committee then proceeded to go through some of the points raised in the paper put together by Doug Swanney and Siôn Rhys Evans.

- **Resolution 3.7.2:** Gareth Powell pointed out that in SO315 (subject to 316) all SRC could do was to note that any curtailment processes needed to begin, but that the responsibility for overseeing the processes fell to Mark Wakelin. SRC thereby noted the resolution.
- **Resolution 4.4.4:** Siôn Rhys Evans asked that Andrew Gibbs be involved in any discussion with the consultants. Ken Howcroft reminded the committee that the sale of the site had to be approved by the Conference.

Resolution 4.4.4 was therefore agreed by SRC with the following amendment:

The SRC resolves to proceed to market the site of WCB with a view to identifying a potential purchaser(s) in time for the 2011 Conference.

- **Resolution 6.2.1:** SRC agreed several of the names proposed should be approached and would want to insert an SRC Council Member at a later stage.
- **Paragraph 5.2.1:** SRC were informed that they needed to do some work around this paragraph. SRC would need clarity on the trading position and the debts that were being implied. This was something that Council would need to know. Therefore Ken Wales requested there should be some further investigation done relating to the Trading Company mentioned.

Ken Wales concluded this item by thanking Jonathan Pye for attending, he understood that some of the decisions that had been made were ones that he did not concur with, but was grateful for the way he had conducted the business and for all the work he had done on this. He also thanked Doug Swanney, Siôn Rhys Evans and others in the Connexional Team for their hard work.

10.2.8 Farewell to Interim Finance Director

Ken Wales thanked Peter Fei, the Interim Finance Director for the enormous difference he had made to the work of the Connexional Team. Peter was presented with a card.

10.2.9 D&P Sub-Committee ToR [SRC/10/36]

Carmila Legarda gave a brief introduction to her paper.

The following changes were made:

- In paragraph B3 the word chairs be changed to Trustee chairs.
- In line 6 of the paragraph entitled “MEETINGS” the word “alternate” be changed to “alternative”.

The SRC approved the paper and hoped that the sub-committee would begin to run shortly.

10.2.10 SRC Representatives to Council

SRC decided to hold an email poll on the SRC Representative to Council.

10.2.11 Appointment to

(a) YPS Reference Group

Eden Fletcher was appointed into the role.

(b) SRC Consents Panel

Rachael Fletcher was appointed into the position.

10.2.12 VentureFX Recruitment [SRC/10/33]

Ian Bell presented his paper.

Andrew Gibbs raised concerns that the paper did not give any indication of whether the Church could afford to do this.

Ian Bell explained that the figures in question were £4.3 million, plus inflation, over five years for twenty Pioneers. John Ellis further explained that £2.4 million had been set aside for phases one and two. The overall proposal had been for £4.3 million and Conference had approved the overall package including the review in year three. Therefore we were asking for an additional £1.3 million to come out of the Connexional Priority Fund to be used for phase three.

Many were concerned that by taking £1.3 million from the Connexional Priority Fund in the coming year would have too great an impact on the remaining funds available for other grants and that far too often projects were endorsed without any real consideration to where the money would come from.

SRC agreed to release the funds for phase three of the project on the basis of the verbal financial information given. However they asked that they receive properly costed information for any other projects in the future.

John Ellis offered to provide an update paper for the next SRC on the financing of the Conference's major projects and this was welcomed.

Ken Wales concluded by thanking Ian Bell. He also clarified that having approved the release of the additional funding that this also included the proposal to continue to have a review in year three.

10.2.13 Addressing Team and Governance Body workloads [SRC/10/31]

John Ellis informed the Committee that a Group had met to discuss ways of easing the pressure on workloads and the paper presented to SRC gathered together some of the ideas that had come out of that Group. He explained that something would also be put together to go to Council.

The Group discussed some of the suggestions in more depth:

- **The role of Conference:** There was some discussion about whether having parallel debates at Conference was helpful and the MMS Reference Review Group was highlighted as an example of how it could work well. There was concern that certain items were discussed too regularly at the Conference.
- **Reducing the length of reports:** SRC agreed this was a good idea and could see that this had already been undertaken with the current SRC papers.
- **Fiercer prioritisation of potential agenda items:** SRC acknowledged that this was something they were trying to do in SRC meetings.
- **Delegation of Executive Powers:** Alison Jackson felt that using emails prior to meeting led to decisions being made more quickly and in a more straight forward manner. It was also felt that when things were delegated it was essential that the body in question realised that they did not lose any responsibility.
- **En Bloc:** SRC felt that very little of their business could be relegated to En Bloc if their responsibilities were to be taken seriously.
- **Lack of corporate memory:** Gareth Hill raised concerns that the corporate memory on an issue could be lost if the length of reports were reduced too much.

Ken Wales asked whether SRC wanted to say anything to Council about this matter in a separate report. He felt that this should include something about the size of the Connexional Team and the demands upon it.

Martyn Atkins explained that there was already a discussion on this and that something should go to Council. He informed the SRC that Team Focus was to be discussed at CLF and that some of the recommendations were not far from those in this paper. He therefore suggested that the discussion at CLF in September 2010 bring together the two matters and then report back to the January Council. This was agreed.

10.2.14 2010-11 Team Work Plan [SRC/10/32]

SRC were asked to send any comments on the Team Work Plan to John Ellis by Tuesday 14 September 2010. [There were none.]

10.2.15 CGC Governance Scrutiny Group ToR [SRC/10/35]

SRC were happy with the Terms of Reference and agreed the resolution.

10.2.16 Appointment of next SRC Chair

Gareth Powell informed the SRC of the procedures for appointing a Chair. He explained that if the current Chair did not want to extend his tenure then the position would be advertised.

10.2.17 Employment Tribunal Case

John Ellis provided a summary of what had happened. He explained that a previous employee had taken legal action against the Methodist Council. However, an Employment Tribunal had found wholly in favour of the Methodist Church's approach and procedures. The period in which an appeal could be initiated had not yet fully elapsed.

Ken Wales thanked the Connexional Team staff involved for their work and commitment during this painful period.

10.2.18 Provision of Legal Advice [SRC/10/37]

The SRC found the paper very useful and agreed the resolution.

10.2.19 Availability of SRC papers to Council members

John Ellis explained that the Council papers are public whereas the SRC ones are not. This was mainly because SRC papers were often exploring options that did not become adopted policies. Some Council members had asked for access to SRC papers but the Committee decided not to change the present policy.

10.2.20 YPS Overview Update [SRC/10/34]

SRC did not have time to look at this paper. Chris Elliott pointed out that this was a shame as the YPS had had a celebratory event last Friday and Jude Levermore had done a good job on this area of work. Ken Wales therefore suggested that Jude Levermore should do a presentation at the next SRC meeting.