

A proposal for a new process to elect the President and Vice-President of the Conference

MC/24/37

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| Date of meeting | 13-15 April 2024 |
| Contact name and details | The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of the Conference soc@methodistchurch.org.uk |
| Action required | For approval/decision |
| Resolutions | 37/1. The Council receives the report. 37/2 The Council directs that the proposals contained in this report be presented as policy to the 2024 Conference with draft Standing Orders for implementation in 2025. |

Summary of content

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| Subject of aims | As part of our Safeguarding policy to ensure that all recruitment follows a safer recruitment process this paper sets out how the procedure for electing a President or Vice-President sits against the safer recruitment process [Safer Recruitment Policy and Practice Guidance (methodist.org.uk)]. |
| Main points | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer recruitment policy and a checklist with comments. • The Council is asked to accept the proposals outlined and direct that they be shaped into a policy and that necessary Standing Orders be drafted. |
| Background context and relevant documents (with function) | MC/23/70 Report from the Safeguarding Committee |

A proposal for a new process to elect the President and Vice-President of the Conference

[MC/23/70] Report from the Safeguarding Committee

70/2. The Council directed the Secretary of the Conference to prepare a policy regarding the processes for the election of the President and Vice-President of the Conference, and to bring this to the Council in April 2024.

Safer Recruitment

Part of our Safeguarding policy is to ensure that all recruitment follows a safer recruitment process. This paragraph sets out how the procedure for electing a President or Vice-President sits against the safer recruitment process [[Safer Recruitment Policy and Practice Guidance \(methodist.org.uk\)](#)]. The checklist is reproduced with italicised comments.

Step 1: to produce an up-to-date recruitment and selection policy that describes the process of electing the President and Vice-President of the Conference.

Step 2: To ensure there is a Safeguarding policy, which is reviewed annually and includes a commitment to safer recruitment. There are template safeguarding policies, which include safer recruitment commitments in the model policies for church, circuit and district, available on the Methodist Church website.

Step 3: To check and update role description and person specification for the role(s). This will be a role outline for volunteer posts. To consider whether the activities specified in the role description require a criminal record check.

To note, there is currently no role description for these roles, however, SO110 outlines the main responsibilities.

Proposal 1: That there be a role description and person specification which are approved annually by the Business Committee and the Connexional Council.

Step 4: To look at the advertisement and ensure it contains:

- Details about the role
- A timetable for recruitment
- Our commitment to safeguarding
- Whether a criminal record check will be required.

Volunteer roles should be advertised in a manner appropriate to the vacancy to ensure that suitable parties have a fair opportunity to come forward and will know who to speak to if they are interested. This could be on the church noticeboard, via a bulletin, online or highlighted during verbal notices at a service.

Currently the Secretary of the Conference writes to all members of the Conference in advance of the Conference with information about the elections. However, there is no other 'advert' and therefore those who are not members of that Conference only see this information second hand.

Proposal 2: From February an advertisement should be placed on the Methodist Church website inviting nominations for both roles.

Step 5: To produce an information pack which might include:

- Information about the organisation
- Information about the role
- Recruitment timetable
- Safeguarding policy/statement
- Application form
- Safeguarding declaration (where appropriate)

The current handbook for the President and Vice-President designates includes some of these things but it requires updating.

Proposal 3: That the designate handbook be updated, details that are only for designates removed, and the handbook then made available on the website.

Step 6: To scrutinise each application carefully and fairly with reference to the criteria for the role before carrying out interviews or discussions with candidates. At present there is only a nomination with a short statement of 200 words.

Proposal 4: The nomination form should be revised to invite the proposer to set out the reasons for the proposal against the main points of the person specification. Nominations should still be supported by 10 signatures/ supporting e-mail.

Step 7: To carry out appropriate checks for the shortlisted candidates, including references. To confirm their identity and relevant certificates of qualifications/course attendance, as appropriate.

Currently no checks are made, other than the SoC ensuring willingness to stand in the election. There has been an assumption that the Conference has faith in those who propose the individuals concerned that they are suitable persons.

Proposal 5: Each nominee should be asked to provide two letters of support for their candidature. In the case of the President, one should be from a senior lay person with close knowledge of their work (eg, senior circuit steward, Synod Secretary) and the other from a ministerial colleague or District Chair. In the case of the Vice-President, one should be from a minister in the circuit where the nominee's membership is held and the other from an employer/line manager. The latter should also indicate that the employing body is aware of the nomination and is willing to support the nominee if elected (with, eg, flexibility with time off work).

Step 8: If there are several candidates, it must be ensured that all shortlisted candidates receive the same letter of invitation to interview, supplying them with all necessary information.

Step 9: Conduct a face-to-face vocational conversation for all shortlisted candidates based on an objective assessment of the candidate's ability to meet the person specification and job description.

At present there is no interview. The Secretary is required to ensure that the nominee is willing to stand.

Proposal 6: No name should be included on the ballot without a discernment conversation having taken place. (This would be with the Secretary and/or the President and Vice-President (or possibly the ex-President and Vice-President.) The conversation would ensure that all specific questions designed to gain required information about each candidate's suitability are asked, including those needed to address any gaps in information supplied on the application form.

Step 10: To make a selection of a preferred candidate based upon their suitability for the role. This selection is made by the Conference. The current system gives 24 hours for electors to decide. To move away from this might be a significant step in our understanding of how the Conference confers, however it is hard to see how elections can meet the criteria for safety if conducted entirely within the Conference.

Proposal 7: The names and supporting statements for each candidate should be submitted to the Conference Office by the second week of May and included in the Agenda.

Step 11: To inform the chosen candidate in writing that they will be offered the role and where applicable advise them that this is subject to satisfactory checks - including the relevant level of DBS certificate.

Proposal 8: That as now the Secretary informs candidates of the outcome of the election which is announced to the Conference by the Chair of the Business Committee.

Next Steps

The Council is asked to accept the proposals outlined above and to direct that they be shaped into a policy and that necessary Standing Orders be drafted. The Council is asked particular to comment on Proposal 6 and to suggest who might the appropriate person(s) be with whom those expressing interest have the discernment conversation.

Should the Council and the Conference adopt this new way of working, it can be implemented for the elections (in 2025) of the President and Vice President of the 2026 Conference. The timetable (in 2025 and subsequent years) would be:

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| January | The Conference Office revises the paperwork. |
| February | Business Committee/ Connexional Council approves the role description and there is a notice on the Methodist Church website that nominations are open. |
| March-May | Discernment/vocational conversations |
| Up to early May | Submission of nominations |
| June/ July | The Conference |

*****RESOLUTIONS**

37/1. The Council receives the report.

37/2 The Council directs that the proposals contained in this report be presented as policy to the 2024 Conference with draft Standing Orders for implementation in 2025.