

The Governance Board Meeting 016: 20th March 2023 in Edgehill

MINUTES

Present:	Apologies
Mr Tony O'Connor (Chair)	Mr David Best
General Secretary: Rev Dr Heather Morris (Convener)	Mr John Clarke
Rev David Nixon	Mr Paul Cummings
Rev David Turtle	Ms Laura Griffith
Mr Tom Wilson	Rev David Campton (Zoom)
Mr Tom Millar	Rev Nigel Mackey
Rev Harold Agnew	Ms Gillian Kingston
	Rev Dr Sahr Yambasu

In attendance:

Ms Clodhna Smyth (Secretary to the Board)

In attendance via Teams to present particular items of business:

Ms Nicola Robinson – Finance report – Item 9

1. Opening Prayer

The meeting was opened in prayer.

2. Welcome and Apologies

All were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted.

3. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting on 13th February were agreed.

4. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

David Campton declared a conflict of interest with item 9 – Sandy Row

Tony O'Connor declared a potential conflict of interest with item 9 – Dublin Central Mission.

Gillian Kingston declared a potential conflict of interest with item 13 - Covenant Council.

5. Past Decisions Review *016_23.03_5 GB Decisions Review March 2023*

- Methodist College legal position – covered as part of item 7.
- Conference accounts, consolidation of accounts and Mission audit timing were covered as part of item 9 – Finance.
- Risk Register – covered in item 10.
- Move from Local to statutory trustees ownership – this is an ongoing process , and a list of transfers is required for the next meeting **Action: SK**
- MCI Pensions review – a consultant needs to be hired, one quote received, a local supplier quote is to come to the Audit committee next month. **Action: PC**
- Religious Designation – await information from CCNI.
- Property Board – The charity legislation regarding buying property requires oversight. The Governance Board needs to set an appropriate level. **Action: For GB discussion April 2023**
- Inter-church relations review, Reserves policy and Health & Safety policies will be reviewed next month.

6. PAC

The PAC has not met or corresponded since the last meeting.

7. General Secretaries Report

Dr. Morris reported that:

- **Connexional Team** – there is encouraging Work of God going on.
- **IMYC** – significant work has been done on the children and young people strategy, and a paper is to come to the Connexional Team for review on 19th April.
- **Joan Parkinson** – served in Women’s Prison Ministry and Hydebank Wood College. Rev. Tanita Lee will continue on in this role. The President spoke of her long service and great contribution. The GB acknowledged her long-serving duty and contribution. **Action:** Write a letter to her from GB and thanks will be printed in the Blue Book, along with others who have also served. HM/DN
- **Prison Chaplaincy Remuneration**–It was mentioned that this is very poor, it is to be established if the Prison Service pays. **Action:** To be referred to the Prison & Healthcare chaplaincy as an issue. **Action: HM**

Serious incident report

The Church’s solicitor submitted this to the CCNI. A sub-group of the GB (President, General Secretary, Lay Leader and Chairman of the Governance Board) has dealt with this, and the area has now been investigated and the group is satisfied that no more action need be taken.

- The Governance Board’s preference regarding information sharing going forward was that it did not need to know the details but needed to know that due process had been followed, unless it becomes more public. Confidentiality is to be respected—details should be on a need-to-know basis only.
- The GB requested to be informed by the sub-group on an ongoing basis. **Action:** HM.

Sandy Row – BCM A proposal regarding the Sandy Row building coming under BCM ownership was submitted and **Approved**.

- **Methodist College**

Legal advice was received that the Governance Board intervenes in the management of Methodist College only if there is an issue of moral culpability and/or mismanagement, which is not the case currently, this change will be reflected in the Manual of Laws.

Conference has made changes to the Methodist College Act 3 times in the past regarding Trustee Governors – these changes now need to be formalised and included in the Act.

- **Israel/Palestine resource** – **Action:** Archbishop McDowell to be contacted **Action: HM.**
- **Property** – Working Party on Property – levels at which GB will give approval to be discussed April 23.
- **Waterford** – The issue at St. Patrick’s Gateway re the serving of alcoholic beverages will be resolved at the renewal of the current lease.
- **Safeguarding** – Ongoing vetting is now through IMYC as the Safeguarding officer is still sick. Training on safeguarding is being undertaken by Leanne Hill for Soulmates and then following on from that it will be Lindsay Conway.
- **HMRC – Implication of being a single charity** There are a number of societies who use their own charity number to claim Gift Aid, but it is not known whether they can continue to do that, or whether they need to be included as part of the MCI charity number. **Action:** Every 2 weeks a letter will be posted to try and elicit a response from the revenue authorities. **CS**
- **EH staff** – The Governance Board was asked to help to change a rhetoric relating to Comprehensive Assessment and EH staff workloads. Communications to happen along the lines of “Meet the Team”.
- Support for the Estates Manager and Finance Team is required in terms of new staff. **Action: HM**
- **General Secretary role** – The level of work required for this role is deemed to be a risk to the church. The Gen Sec. office/role/resourcing in particular is to be examined and a formal review is to take place. **Action:** TOC/TM

8. Administrative Items

- **Mallard Hub** –Permission was given to progress this provided there are no substantive legal issues.
- **Tullyboy Circuit** — permission was given to cease worship.

- **Church on the Hill** is moving to be part of the Lagan Valley Circuit and NE District.
- **Youth Link** – an inter-denominational body set up for co-ordination and fundraising, there is an ongoing conversation about its future amongst the churches.

All agreed

9. Finance Report *016_23.03_09 Financial Report folder*

The Finance subcommittee have examined the reports.

The audit is confirmed for mid-May – EY to confirm a final date.

100% of bank reconciliations complete at a Connexional level and 75% are complete at a Society level.

Missions – information will come from 2 next week when audit is finished, 2 are still to come.

EBM/NWM – audits begin this week and BCM/DCM – have been contacted.

- Missions/Societies not complying – Finance Committee wants to find out the difficulty and how they can be supported to provide timely information.
- Circuit Treasurers are to take responsibility for accounts coming in from the Societies. Finance will identify the key stages of accounts preparation and the treasurers responsible. **Action: NR**
- As per the auditor advice it is necessary to include the Missions in the consolidated accounts, however in the absence of full Mission accounts, Missions can supply unaudited/draft accounts.

Conference Process – MCI is on track to bring a good set of Management accounts to Conference. It was proposed to bring the previous year's audited accounts to Conference along with current draft accounts; Conference could then be asked for permission for the draft accounts to go to the Finance committee if there are no material differences.

- A timescale will be drawn up with key points as to who is responsible for what all the way up to Conference. **Action: NR**

The GB noted the amount of work done and information now available, and congratulated NR on her work in this.

Budget 2023

The Connexional Team and Finance subcommittee have reviewed and approved the Budget figures.

There will be a deficit going into 2023 – as the Comprehensive Assessment is already set, it was proposed this come from reserves. **Agreed**

The expected expenditure and additional staff are accounted for – income is not yet finalised.

Increases in employee salaries plus stipends plus staff costs accounts for a proportional amount of the deficit. A list was requested explaining where the big variances arise. **Action: NR**

Budget Process

Budgets – in future it is requested that the GB only see 1-2 page reports from the departments in EH.

The budget process – MCI has not yet got to the stage of regular financial reports, but this will be done by the end of 2023.

Requested – Reports from Finance with a standardised template and reduced pages.

Requested – training for members of the GB during the summer to help read the Finance reports.

Action: NR

10. Risk register *016_23.03_10 Risk Register Process March 2023*

The Risk register is a working document that will be reviewed every quarter.

Data breach information is accepted.

Cyber security risk – it was requested to get more information on what is happening with this, and the criteria required to be sent to the GB.

Human Sexuality – Summarise into one risk and re-word according to media/process.

Demographic change risk – re-word how the demographic change (disconnect in societies in terms of the amount of comprehensive assessment being raised to run the church centrally) is impacting the church on an ongoing basis. **Action: HM**

12. Policy Reviews

All policy reviews should be written in a standard format – in the 3rd person and passive tense.

12a) Anti-Bullying and Harassment *016_23.03_12a Anti Bullying & Harassment Policy review*

12b) MPPC policies x 13

All policies were accepted.

A question was asked regarding the 20 hours CMD for Ministers.

Response from the Ministries Team *Regarding the CMD, there used to be a requirement for ministers to complete a CMD return annually. This is no longer required as the DSs follow up on individual ministers' CMD in their conversations with them.*

GB commends the Ministries Team for the formation of the policies and a note of appreciation to be sent to Robin Waugh. **Action: HM**

13. Committee Reports

1. Ministers Children – the word “Children” in the terms of reference and a Euro sign is missing.
2. Methodist Historical Society – report is to be listed in a separate part of the Blue Book to make it clear that MCI doesn't have legal oversight.
3. Ministerial Pension Trustees – two have 39 years' experience and two are Ministers who are not required to be there. Write to the chairman (J. Nicoll) and ask them to take appropriate steps to renew the Board, otherwise approved.
4. Ministers Retirement Fund/ Disability Fund/Income Augmentation – On report 13e several committees are mentioned that no longer exist, references are to be removed.
5. Covenant Council – There are two more members required.
6. North West Methodist Mission – it was noted that the NW District Superintendent has a significant workload.
7. East Belfast Mission – write to them to point out that one person is a long-serving member.

It was noted that in order to augment some Council/Committee positions, expressions of interest could be sought from the wider Connexion, e.g. at Conference, on website, in Methodist newsletter. **Action:**

HM

All committee reports were received and approved.

14. Stipends and Allowances Review

A survey was undertaken and approximately half the Ministers took part. There are very complex issues so no recommendations will be ready by Conference, instead it will be ready by November 2023, as previously announced, so it can be fed into the discussion regarding the level of Comprehensive Assessment for 2024.

The issues are to be brought to the Conference Ministerial session for Ministers to input into the discussion. In the future, a separate session may be required to be held with serving Ministers for more detail to be covered. **Action: PC**

It was proposed that a Ministerial retreat be considered – have a day for spiritual input and a day for discussion of practical matters. **Action: HM**

Societies are to be informed that a 2-3% increase in stipend will happen in 2024 so they can budget appropriately. **Action: HM**

15. AOB

Comprehensive Assessment 2024

A decision was taken for the level of Comprehensive Assessment to be set at 5% in 2024.

It was generally agreed that a discussion was required regarding both the process and timings of budgets going forward, and that there are many ongoing issues for resolution that will impact the level of Comprehensive Assessment going forward.

Sligo Manse: Approval was given to sell the old Manse. Approval was given to buy the new Manse.

There being no other business, the meeting closed with the President leading prayer.

Tony O'Connor, Chair

20th March 2023