

The Governance Board Meeting 014: 19th January 2023 on Teams

MINUTES

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

In attendance:

Ms Clíodhna Smyth (Secretary to the Board)

In attendance via Teams to present particular items of business:

Ms Sarah Bourgein – Epworth – Item 9

1. Opening Prayer

Mr. Tom Wilson opened the meeting 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 were agreed, and there were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.

4. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

None

5. Past Decisions Review

MCI is moving forward on the review of all policies, and at this meeting 4 more policies (Property Strategy, Property Database, Criteria for Mission led buildings, Local trustees to Statutory trustees) will be covered by item 15 - Property Implementation.

A consultant has been hired by MCI to do a full Pension Review – this will be discussed in detail at the February meeting.

Communication of Reserves Policy – the article has been written for the newsletter and is expected to be published in February/March edition.

6. PAC

The PAC has not met since the last meeting.

7. General Secretaries Report

Dr. Morris reported that there are 3 areas of risk that MCI is facing currently:

7.1a) Safeguarding – the current Safeguarding Officer is on sick leave for the month of January. Urgent matters are being dealt with by the Chair of the Safeguarding Board Lindsay Conway, and vetting/registrations by IMYC and it was noted that resourcing is an issue as there is only the Safeguarding Officer in this department.

7.1b) Methodist College Belfast – The preparatory school Downey House is to be closed and the Board was made aware of a number of issues surrounding this, that may prove contentious. It was noted that the Governing Board of Methodist College has the full support of the Governance Board.

7.1c) Finance – the current part-time Finance officer is on sick leave for 2 months, this puts pressure on the remaining 3 members of the Finance Team as a result. HR has issued an ad for a new position of Finance Administration Officer. It is noted that resourcing is an issue as there are only 3 other members in this department, and no replies were received for a previous job posting.

7.2) Sandy Row – BCM have had a site visit and are planning a survey.

7.3) Budget 2023 – The General Secretary has made the Governance Board aware of a significant budget deficit for 2023, which will have to be met from Reserves, as the Comprehensive Assessment has already been set at Conference in June 2022.

The Methodist Church is under-resourced at Edgehill, it is mentioned annually at Conference that the General Secretary's office is under-resourced, and other departments are also.

It is noted by the Governance Board the great amount and quality of work being done at Edgehill House by an under-resourced staff.

Action: A group is to be put together to resolve this, and in order to make an informed comparison, figures are to be gathered regarding administration costs at other churches.

Action: It was proposed to get a view from Circuits & Societies regarding the current areas of investment before Conference 2023.

Action: The volume and value of work undertaken by the staff at Edgehill is not generally understood, so it was proposed that Lindsay Easson observe and catalogue a working week and do a piece in the Newsletter.

7.4) Nigeria – The Methodist Church in Nigeria has appointed a Bishop of London and Ireland without informing the Methodist Church in Ireland. This goes against the protocol of having separate representatives for each jurisdiction. The General Secretary wrote in the strongest terms to the Methodist Church in Nigeria in December 2022 and has received no response. The Secretary of Conference of Nigeria is due to be in Britain for a meeting in January and Dr. Morris plus WMP, WDR representatives hope to attend. Dr. Morris will inform Gillian Kingston of the outcome, and the matter will be raised at the World Methodist Council meeting.

7.5) Grants – A disadvantage of being a single charity is that some charitable organisations will only allow applications from one charity at a time and therefore individual societies within MCI are precluded from doing so. A case in point is Garfield Weston where two different Circuits wish to apply and only one can submit an application. Action: A meeting will take place with Garfield Weston to discuss this.

8. Administrative items

8.1. St. Patrick's Gateway – Is set up as a charity for the Methodist Church in Waterford and within it a policy that is not true to Methodist beliefs has been operating for some time.

It is proposed that this policy will cease once the current lease is finished. **Agreed**

8.2. Ethical immigration / Re-Set – Ballynafeigh have raised funds to enter into an SLA with a Christian charity called Hope into Action who provide ethical housing to refugees/vulnerable people. Due diligence and background checks have been done.

8.3 World Mission Partnership – In the past WMP have retrospectively reported on the grants they have made, and in order to improve this process it is proposed by WMP and the General Secretary that in future a standing item on the December agenda of the GB will outline the grants WMP will be making in the next calendar year. This gives more timely oversight from a Governance point of view. **Agreed.**

9. Epworth Ethical Investments

A presentation was made by Sarah Bourgein on the ethical investing made by Epworth on behalf of the Methodist Church. This had already been presented in more detail to the Statutory Trustees and the Epworth report was accepted.

10. Volunteer Policy review

Postponed until the February meeting.

11. Committee Reports

Northern Board of Education

The Governance Board commended the work that the Board is doing and expressed their particular appreciation for the length of service that some members have served. The board members are specifically thanked for their dedication, service and time to the school governing boards they serve upon. The Northern Board of Education report is accepted.

Action Point: The Northern Board of Education is to look at training and guidance for new people joining school governing boards. **Heather Morris**

13. Gurteen College and Methodist Historical Society – reports were not received; however it is to be noted that this year’s reporting schedule to the Governance Board is different and the new arrangement may not yet have been implemented.

It was discussed that due to the volume of meetings required to be attended by the President and the Lay Leader, that attendance at some simply were not possible and this could have a detrimental effect on those who serve.

Action Point: A list of Committees and Boards is to be made for which the attendance of the President, General Secretary and the Lay Leader are designated to attend, and the Chair and General Secretary will then review to see which meetings are necessary, and which can be delegated. **Action: Heather Morris/Tony O’Connor**

14. Conflict of Interest Policy Review

This policy was re-written as the original was too onerous at a local level. It was proposed that the 3 policies of Income Handling, Conflict of Interest and Anti-fraud at a local level should be read, adopted and added into the Minutes on an annual basis. **Agreed**

15. Property Implementation Report

The strapline “Every Property decision is a Missional decision” was noted with approval.

The General Secretary proposes to report back to the Governance Board with regards to the full Property Implementation report in September 2023. **Agreed**

1. A proposal that every purchase decision with regards to Property over £250k, and divestment of £400k is to be reported to the Governance Board, further discussion regarding what monetary level triggers which action, is to take place in particular with regards to responsibility to Charity Regulation. Action point: **Heather Morris/Tony O’Connor to work with Property Implementation Board and revert at the February meeting.**
2. It was noted that if the full report is accepted that the current Estates manager will need additional resources. At local level there is a lack of knowledge as to where to start with regards to Property issues, which is being addressed by the Estates manager running workshops.
3. As Conference has previously directed, the transfer from local trusteeship to statutory trusteeship is ongoing but is not without resistance; further information on this was requested by the Chair.
4. The role of the District Superintendents is essential with regards to monitoring and querying ongoing Property decisions at a Circuit/Society level.

16. Pension Fund Investment Strategy

This reflects the 3 investment pillars of the Methodist Church, i.e. Zero exposure to gambling, fossil fuels and zero profit from conflict/slavery etc.

17. Governance Board membership renewal

As per last month’s report it was agreed that the membership of the GB should be staggered so that not all the members would step down at the same time. Laura Griffith and David Campton have both agreed

to step down at the next appropriate juncture. Their willingness to do so is noted and thanks are expressed to them both for their service. Nominations for the two positions are now required and the nominations committee are to take this up. The Chair expressed his thanks to both David and Laura for their contributions and dedication.

18. There being no other business, the meeting closed with Tom Wilson leading prayer.

Tony O'Connor, Chair
19th January 2023