



ORDER PAPER

PLEASE RETAIN THIS PAPER,
AS IT MAY BE RELEVANT THROUGHOUT THE MEETING.

Papers present and absent

- Two papers previously announced will not now be brought forward at this meeting: I2 and J3.
- Two papers have come forward recently and are included: D4 from Westminster College,
P2 from Law and Polity.
- Thus the tabled papers at this meeting are: D4, J2, L1, L2 and P2.
- The Moderators have already removed from en bloc, to let the Convenor speak to it: H2, from Ministries.
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Questionnaire: Please do complete and return the Children's & Youth Work questionnaire that was with your tabled papers.

Paper P1 Complaints Policy

In the light of comments recently received, the Clerk will ask to amend the paper as follows:

- A) For the sake of fullness and clarity, in several places the term 'minister' is changed to 'minister of word and sacraments or church related community worker'.
- B) At the foot of page 120, in the fifth bullet point, after the words '... places, dates etc.)' there is added 'along with any supporting evidence to back up your complaint'.
- C) At the top of page 121, the first sentence is extended by adding 'and give you a copy of this procedure'.
- D) In that same paragraph 'twenty days' is stipulated as 'twenty calendar days'
- E) At the end of the same paragraph, there is added 'but a copy of your complaint will be shown to the respondent'.
- F) On p121, Step 3, the first short paragraph has a second sentence added: 'This shall be done as quickly as possible, but the United Reformed Church may take whatever time is necessary to appoint such a person or persons.'
- G) Also on p121, the paragraph beginning, 'They may similarly meet' has added at the end, 'If they consider this to be appropriate and both parties consent, they may also consider possibilities of restorative justice.'
- H) Also on p121, the final para in Step 3, the words 'first considered the complaint' are replaced with 'meet with you.'
- I) An extra para at the end of Step 3 reads, 'If, in the light of the evidence, the independent investigator(s) consider that your complaint is vexatious, malicious or inappropriate, they may declare it such and it shall be discontinued.'
- J) Finally, a postscript to the policy reads as follows:

General Provisions:

1. This policy shall only apply to Local Ecumenical Partnerships in so far as it relates to people or buildings under the oversight of the United Reformed Church.
 2. At any time the United Reformed Church retains the right to declare any complaint inappropriate, vexatious, or malicious, and that it may be discontinued with immediate effect.
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Paper Y1 Rules of Procedure for Electing Assembly Moderators

Some procedural concerns have been mentioned to the Clerk. This paper informs Mission Council of these, and offers some initial advice from the Clerk about possible responses:

1. Section 4 of the Structure states that matters should only be brought after the fullest consultation, and the Assembly Arrangements Committee has not been consulted.

Response:

As the matter was brought to the last meeting of Mission Council, and hence brought to the attention of the AAC on the floor of the last Mission Council, the Clerk advises that the Moderators may give the benefit of the doubt to Mr Morrell and Ms Jones, and rule that the business can continue.

2. It has been suggested that it is not in order for Mission Council to make these changes to the Rules of Procedure, because the matter is not urgent, and General Assembly meets soon.

Response:

When the business was first raised, the intention was to make changes in time for the forthcoming General Assembly, and so the business was clearly in order. Now time has moved on, this is a grey area, requiring a subjective judgement. The Clerk advises that in the interests of fairness, the business should continue, but if Mission Council is worried about its powers, Mission Council could choose to recommend changes to the General Assembly, rather than make changes itself.

3. One could argue that this proposal moves us away from the current polity, whereby Synods nominate and provide information about individuals, to a polity where individuals themselves say why they are suitable, and that this change is significant enough to be regarded as a change of polity. This sort of change should therefore be referred to Synods under paragraph 3.1 of the Structure, rather than being determined by a single decision of a central council.

Response:

Again this is not clear cut, because 'significant enough' also requires a subjective judgement. If Mission Council favours the change, but believes that it represents a change to church polity, then the most efficient way forward would be to recommend the change to General Assembly 2018. Then if the proposal received the necessary support, there would still be plenty of time to refer the matter to Synods, and to effect the change in time to use the new procedure at Assembly 2020.

END