



## Assembly Arrangements Committee Reports to and the Record of Assembly

### The Issue

The response to Assembly 2010 was positive and encouraging. The one aspect that appears to have caused real distress for some at least was the fact that we circulated Reports to and the Record of Assembly to Church Secretaries in the form of disks and not by means of hard copy.

A number of Synods (4?) and individuals have expressed disquiet about us adopting this practice. In part the argument is that not all the recipients of the disk are computer literate and that in any case reading long documents on screen is tiresome. More importantly, however, is that it is perceived to demonstrate a breakdown in the essential link between Assembly and local churches.

The North Western Synod passed the following resolution:

‘North Western Synod meeting at its Autumn Synod on 13 November 2010 requested Assembly Arrangements to reconsider the decision (a) not to send printed copies of the Assembly Reports and Record to each local church and serving minister and (b) not to send the Reports and Record in any form to serving ministers, and is concerned that this decision has increased still further the gulf between local churches and General Assembly.’

It should be noted that we ceased sending the Reports to and Record of Assembly to serving ministers some years ago. Both documents are sent to serving ministers who request it and automatically are sent to serving ministers who are members of Assembly.

### A Possible Way Forward

There was a full discussion of the issue at the Assembly Arrangements meeting in March when it was noted there was a very substantial cost difference between the different methods of circulating the Reports to and Record of Assembly. Whilst hard copies need to be available for Assembly members and those requiring to work with a permanent record, it was suggested it was not necessarily justified to print and distribute these to all local churches in the electronic age.

It was agreed that Mission Council be presented with three options

- 1) to return to the previous practice of sending hard copies to all parties (including local churches). Preliminary estimates suggest that the cost of circulating hard copies of the reports and record to all Church Secretaries might be in the region of £40,000 – a non-trivial sum in the context of the overall budget for Assembly (£300,000).

- 2) to send full hard copies just to Assembly members and other essential recipients and prepare and distribute summary versions to others. This is being costed and it is hoped to report further on this to the meeting of Mission Council in May.
- 3) to send full hard copies just to Assembly members and other essential recipients and send a CD to all others (including local churches). CDs containing the Reports to and the Record of Assembly cost £1.40 each.

Mission Council is invited to circulate these options to Synods with confirmed costings for comment at their Autumn meetings in time for Mission Council to consider responses and make a decision at its next meeting.

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