



MISSION COUNCIL

13 – 15 MAY 2013

B1

Human Resources Advisory Group (HRAG) Review of General Secretariat

HRAG replaced the Staffing Advisory Group with an agreed remit that brought together most staffing matters under this one group to give consistency and a unified approach. This group also carries as a separate remit the review of the General Secretariat agreed by Mission Council in November 2011.

This paper details work done in regard to the resolution of Mission Council agreed in October 2012 and should be read in conjunction with Paper E of that meeting. It is advised that members of Mission Council have read paper E recently. (<http://www.urc.org.uk/resources/mission-council1/papers/october-2012.html> or available from the General Secretary's office by request.)

Mission Council (October 2012), recognising the need to clarify and simplify the lines of accountability and management in Church House, resolves to explore further:

- 1) *the three roles of Church House as outlined in Paper E;*
- 2) *three teams in Church House of Ministries, Mission, and Administration and Resources;*
- 3) *the strategy proposals in the paper and the formation of a General Secretariat of the General Secretary and the three Departmental Staff Secretaries.*

Mission Council asks the Staffing Advisory Group in consultation with committees, staff and other appropriate groups to explore further the areas identified above.

The aim of this review is limited to making more effective and flexible the management of Church House. It is not about managing the Church nor its undergirding theology. As the medium term strategy group engages the councils of the Church more fully in those debates it is anticipated that nothing in this review will be a block or hindrance to it.

1. Process of exploration

HRAG has met with Conveners and Staff Secretaries of Church House, the Connective (senior staff meeting) and invited responses from committees, staff and others in response to the above. Three days of consultation were held in January 2013 when the senior staff and conveners of the committees were invited to explore what each of the suggested three departments might look like. One day gathered those involved in administration and resources, another in ministries and another in mission.

HRAG is also responsible for interim human resource provision. One important aspect of the review is to ascertain what the central URC HR requirements are. Following a Synod Moderators and Clerks meeting in late 2012 each synod has been consulted about this from a synod perspective.

Conversations with the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union and agencies about shared provision have been held but as yet have not yielded a significant way forward apart from mutual support and sharing of expertise.

2. Issues arising from the review of the General Secretariat and Church House management processes.

The review and terms of reference were agreed by Mission Council (25th-27th November 2011) and an interim report was given in March 2012 (paper Q) before the October 2012 paper E that gave rise to the resolution above.

None of these issues cited is a reflection on current post-holders but of a genuine desire to improve the functioning of Church House. The items are not in any order of significance.

These issues are:-

- 1) The unrealistic management responsibilities laid upon the General Secretariat, which is comprised of the posts of General Secretary (GS), Deputy General Secretary (DGS) and Head of HR. This was exacerbated by the resignation of the Head of HR in 2011 leading to questions as to the most effective staffing required.
- 2) The need to review the responsibilities of the General Secretariat in response to changes in Assembly to bi-annual and the subsequent work of Mission Council.
- 3) A perception that the General Secretariat is too involved in the day-to-day running of the URC and thereby unable to provide the longer term 'denominational leadership' that is required.
- 4) Recognition that the URC is a very flat organisation that leads to the GS and DGS having more staff reporting directly to them than can be effectively managed.
- 5) The vulnerability of the General Secretariat posts to events and subsequent reputation management requirements and the lack of support structures including management training and development.
- 6) The risk of any legal challenge 'nominating' the General Secretariat with the resulting legal costs, time and energy expended and damage to people.
- 7) While the current structure may be very good in developing semi-autonomous professional creative ministries it does not deal as effectively as it might with individual personal and performance difficulties (duty of care). Therefore the structure needs reviewing to enable the Church to cover both aspects with greater excellence.
- 8) There is increasing employment legislation and development of good practice. The URC must be fit for purpose to deal with these requirements.
- 9) The challenge of line management in organisational terms is to:
 - a) release the energy that comes from competent, motivated specialists
 - b) coordinate the work of a group of individual 'specialists' who see themselves as 'leaders'
 - c) deal with performance difficulties satisfactorily

There appears to be a lack of clarity about line management responsibilities and there is some confusion between roles of committee conveners and staff line managers in the URC.

Church House currently relies on (a) heavily, is weaker at (b) the co-ordination of the creative specialists, and struggles to handle (c).

3. The October 2012 resolution to explore further the three roles of Church House as outlined in Paper E

Section 1 of Paper E on the structure of the URC has been in the background and broadly informs the exploration. However it is recognised that there is no consensus on this. This structure may become clearer through the wider debate being enabled by the Faith and Order Committee on the nature of the Church. The arrow figure attached as an appendix illustrates broadly the relationship of the different parts of the structure of the URC.

Section 2 of Paper E in October 2012 gained broad agreement for the three roles of Church House as 1) providing a secretariat for General Assembly and Mission Council and those who need representatively to ‘embody’ the Church; 2) providing such service functions as local churches and synods seek, and 3) maintaining communication networks.

There is an on-going debate as to where programmes are initiated, and whether that is by staff, councils of the Church or through an external factor such as legislation. As there is a feeling in recent years of ‘initiative overload’ in the URC it is vital that there is joined up thinking and an overview approach to prevent this continuing. Therefore it is important to re-iterate that there has to be a demonstrable demand or specific requirement for a programme to be initiated.

4. The October 2012 resolution to explore further three departments in Church House of Ministries, Mission, and Administration and Resources

The January consultations suggested that these three departments/ teams did not need to be the same in structure or ways of operation. They felt that the groupings were appropriate with some tweaking, especially in relation to Communications.

HRAG has taken this on board and is therefore bringing recommendations for minimal changes which will achieve the objectives of ensuring that:

- a. no one manager has more than 4-6 staff members reporting directly to them and
- b. lines of accountability are clear ensuring effective line management that develops staff, co-ordinates the work and provides effective performance management.

4.1 Ministries of the Church Department

The current areas of committee work will initially remain the same. There would be a new Head of Ministries (in effect a replacement for parts of the role of Deputy General Secretary) who will manage the senior staff member in each area and will draw the work of the department together. The Head of Ministries would be line managed by the General Secretary.

This department would consist of the work currently covered by:

- Ministries
- Education and Learning
- Youth and Children’s Work
- Safeguarding

The job description for the Head of Ministries post would include:-

- 1) Developing and coordinating the work of the department.
- 2) Managing the senior staff members – Secretary for Ministries, Secretary for Education and Learning, Head of Youth and Children’s Work Development and Safeguarding Officer.
- 3) Supporting the General Secretary in developing the General Secretariat team to manage and lead Church House to fulfil its roles effectively as identified previously.
- 4) Acting as the staff support for the Ministerial Incapacity and Disciplinary processes (MIND) and for the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee and related reputation management in conjunction with Communications.
- 5) Normally and as appropriate deputising for the General Secretary.

4.2 Mission Team

The Mission Team was created some years ago and it is anticipated will continue to develop along the current lines as discussed and agreed by the team and committee. It is important to acknowledge the progress in team and collaborative working in the Mission Team as it has developed since its inception and the impact that it is now having for good not only in those particular areas of work but more broadly too.

The team covers the work of the following areas:-

- Church and Society
- Commitment for Life
- Ecumenical
- Interfaith
- Mission
- World Church
- Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry
- Rural

It is proposed that one of the current staff secretaries should become the Head of Mission and be line managed by the General Secretary. This title is provisional and for further discussion. The revised job description would include:

- 1) Developing and coordinating the work of the department.
- 2) Ensuring line management and duty of care, and the development of staff within the team.
- 3) Supporting the General Secretary in developing the General Secretariat team to manage and lead Church House to fulfil its roles effectively as identified previously.

HRAG recognises that there is a need for further exploration with the Mission Team as to how management is organised within the team and within the current staffing levels and recommends this as a further piece of work before the November 2013 meeting of Mission Council.

4.3 Resources Department

There would be a new Head of Resources who will also be responsible for the HR function (in effect a replacement for the previous Head of HR). This person would have both management and HR qualifications, skills and experience and would be line managed by the General Secretary.

This department would cover the areas of:

- Finance
- Human Resources
- Communications
- IT
- Facilities and events management
- Records and archives.

The job description for the Head of Resources post would include:-

- 1) Developing and co-ordinating the work of the department.
- 2) Managing the senior staff members – Chief Finance Officer, Human Resources Officer (as the Head of Resources would also function as Head of HR), Director of Communications, IT Support Manager, Facilities Manager, Archivist/Records Manager
- 3) Ensuring the provision of a comprehensive HR service to central staff and as agreed to the wider URC and to handle related reputation management in conjunction with communications.
- 4) Supporting the General Secretary in developing the General Secretariat team to manage and lead Church House to fulfil its roles effectively as identified previously.

Further work needs to be done on the internal structure of this department at all levels to ensure appropriate spans of management.

4.4 Other committees without staff secretaries

Equal Opportunities and Faith and Order Committees will remain as now as a resource to inform the life and the whole Church and will continue to report directly to Mission Council / General Assembly.

4.5 Staff who relate to other bodies

The Company Secretary of the Trust (who is also secretary to the Pension Board and the Investment Committee) would be managed by the Chair of the Trust.

5. The October 2012 resolution concerning the strategy proposals in paper E and the formation of a General Secretariat of the General Secretary and the three Departmental Staff Secretaries.

5.1 General Secretariat Team

This will be convened by the General Secretary and will consist of the Head of Ministries, the Head of Mission and the Head of Resources.

The role of the General Secretary will include:

- theological and pastoral leadership for the denomination
- operational oversight and leadership to the URC
- ensuring the implementation of the decisions and policies agreed by General Assembly and by Mission Council acting on Assembly's behalf
- overseeing the coordination of the work of Church House
- managing the 3 department heads and providing pastoral oversight to the Synod Moderators
- servicing both General Assembly and Mission Council.

In this proposal the General Secretary would be responsible for servicing the agenda-setting body for both Mission Council and General Assembly. HRAG would see a positive way forward in MCAG becoming the agenda-setting body for both General Assembly and Mission Council and for the Assembly Arrangements Committee becoming responsible for the practical 'events' management side of the meetings of councils. HRAG therefore suggests that this be considered elsewhere in the Church.

The General Secretariat team will meet regularly in order to:-

- 1) Develop, maintain and evaluate good management of Church House,
- 2) Ensure the effective accomplishment of the three Church House roles of
 - a. providing a secretariat for the General Assembly and Mission Council and those who need representatively to embody the Church,
 - b. providing service functions where a demonstrable demand or specific requirement is discerned, and
 - c. maintaining good communication networks within the Church and between the Church and wider societyin conjunction with the Connective meeting of senior staff.
- 3) Ensure the implementation of decisions of General Assembly and Mission Council.

5.2 Strategy Development Group

In the discussion at Mission Council in October 2012 it was the strategy section of paper E that led to the most discussion. It was clear that the proposal of a strategy development group did not find favour because it was seen as a potential executive body that could disempower the decision making councils of the Church. Therefore it is not part of this proposal.

It is clear that there are broader issues around vision and direction setting in the URC and the effective working of the councils that are beyond the scope of this review and will hopefully be picked up in the medium term strategy group process.

6. Financial Implications

The review of the General Secretariat was set up in 2011 before the financial budgetary restrictions of 2013 were being debated. It is not financially driven. Rather its purpose is to identify the optimum structure to enable Church House to fulfil its roles effectively. However, financial costs are a factor. The proposals contained in this paper do not save money but neither should they significantly increase it from current levels.

The Head of Ministries will be the equivalent of the current Deputy General Secretary post. The Head of Resources post combines both the management of that department and provision of an HR service alongside the current HR staff. Therefore this will be the equivalent of the previous Head of HR post. Therefore there is no increase in head count. Training costs are already contained in the budget.

While it would have been good for this reorganisation to incorporate cost cuttings, that was not its objective and the proposal brought involves these identified costs.

7. Resolution

The purpose of the following resolution is to support the ministerial and spiritual leadership of the URC by efficient and effective Church House management activities with the associated operational and organisational leadership of the various departments (Terms of Reference of Review of Church House management processes Mission Council 25-27th November 2011)

Mission Council resolves to:-

- 1) Establish a General Secretariat Team, convened by the General Secretary, consisting of the General Secretary, Head of Ministries, Head of Mission and Head of Resources with responsibility to:
 - a. Develop, maintain and evaluate good management of Church House,
 - b. Ensure the effective accomplishment of the three Church House roles of
 - i. providing a secretariat for the General Assembly and Mission Council and those who need representatively to 'embody' the Church,
 - ii. the provision of service functions where a demonstrable demand or specific requirement is discerned, and
 - iii. maintaining good communication networks within the Church and between the Church and wider society.
 - c. Ensure the implementation of decisions of General Assembly and Mission Council.
- 2) Establish three strands of work - Ministries, Mission and Resources - that are managed internally and consist of:
 - a. a Ministries of the Church strand with a staff post of Head of Ministries,
 - b. a Mission strand with a staff post of Head of Mission,
 - c. a Resources strand with a staff post of Head of Resources who will also be responsible for the provision of the Human Resource service in Church House and for the Church.
- 3) Instruct HRAG
 - a. to enable and facilitate the implementation of parts 1 and 2.
 - b. to include a revision of the job description of the General Secretary and the development of job descriptions and person specifications for the three 'Head of...' posts.
 - c. to work with the Mission Team to identify the way forward in the further development of the Mission Team with a leader and appropriate internal management processes. This to be within current Mission Team staffing levels and for report at the November 2013 meeting of Mission Council.
- 4) Rescind its resolution of October 2012 agreeing the appointment of a Human Resources Manager.

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Human Resources Advisory Group

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Appendix 1

THE NATURE OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE URC

