



MISSION COUNCIL

13 – 15 MAY 2013

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Improving our General Assembly: Proposal to amend the Standing Orders

The Assembly Arrangements Committee has been considering ways to make the business of the Assembly more efficient and effective, given that the new agreed budget does not allow for any lengthening of the Assembly. I am most grateful for the help of members of the Committee in the preparation of this document.

In order to help achieve this objective the Committee proposes that all resolutions before the Assembly be put into one of three groups: A – resolutions which will be taken en bloc and decided by majority vote, B – resolutions which will be taken individually and decided by majority vote and C – resolutions which will be decided by the consensus process.

This approach attempts to respond creatively to the widespread view in feedback from the 2010 and 2012 Assemblies that while the consensus process had many advantages for some major pieces of business where the Assembly was able gradually to shape a key future policy, using the consensus process for some other business had not been the best use of time and had contributed to the amount of unfinished or rushed business. The use of en bloc business was trialled successfully at the 2007 Assembly. In Group A would be resolutions that are formally required at Assembly but are essentially for the record and all the work has been done elsewhere. Examples might include: the annual accounts, which have already been scrutinised in detail in the Finance Committee and received a professional auditor's certificate; or the appointment of a URC representative to an ecumenical body; or noting a report from an Assembly Committee simply reporting on its past work.

In Group B might be resolutions where Mission Council has already been used to test the mind of the Church in earlier discussions and no evidence has emerged that the final proposals being put to Assembly are widely controversial; or resolutions where the general principle has been agreed at a previous Assembly and is now being applied in a particular area.

The existence of Groups A and B should allow much more debating time for Group C resolutions, which would be the key areas for the Assembly to focus on in its work. These would include major and strategic questions where a high degree of ownership from Assembly members is critical and where difficult and perhaps potentially divisive issues need to be worked through under God without a sense of rush.

Those resolutions which the Assembly was content to address in Group A would be voted on without the opportunity for questions or debate. If this pattern were to be agreed, it would be the intention to include with the Book of Reports a note which would explain this and invite members of Assembly to raise with the originators of the resolution(s) before the start of the Assembly any questions they may have about one or more of the resolutions which have been placed in Group A. The note would also explain that if, after that, there are still concerns such that six members of the Assembly believe that one or more of the resolution(s) should be taken separately, then they would be removed from Group A.

It should be noted that, as is currently the case, any resolutions which would make a change to the Basis or Structure would be taken by majority vote and would therefore automatically be placed in Group B.

In order to save resources it is further proposed that the draft minutes of each day be no longer distributed to all members of Assembly, but instead that they be posted on a secure section of the Assembly web-site which would be available only to those present (because of the possibility that the first draft could subsequently be materially changed) and additionally that a small number of copies would be printed and made available within the Assembly hall. It is, of course, not the intention to inhibit those who wish to review the draft minutes from doing so, but experience suggests that few currently avail themselves of this opportunity, and that the number who do so does not justify the cost and considerable logistic difficulties involved in their printing. By far the majority of corrections/amendments received relate to errors in names and/or titles. If this change were to be agreed it is proposed that once the Roll of Assembly is complete (two weeks before the start of the Assembly), it would be sent by email to all members of Assembly. The covering message would invite members to give to the Clerk during the meeting of Assembly written notice of any errors. The email would also give the opportunity to remind members that once the Roll is complete there can be no substitutions, and that, even if a member is prevented from attending at the last moment, his/her name remains on the Roll, which is distinct from a record of attendance. Additionally, a few printed copies of the Roll would be available at the Assembly in case any did not receive it by email.

Mission Council is asked to consider approval of these two changes to the way the Assembly is conducted.

If Mission Council indicates approval then in order to effect the changes a change to Standing Orders will be required. Revisions to the Standing Orders are normally taken at the start of a meeting of the General Assembly, and they then take immediate effect. This timing would be too late in this case since both these changes would need action before the start of the Assembly. There is provision for Mission Council to agree changes to the Standing Orders "in case of urgency" (Standing Order 13b). I invite Mission Council to consider approving the following revised set of Standing Orders **FOR 2014 ONLY**. Then, at the end of the Assembly, I propose to invite members of Assembly, in the light of the experience of working in this way, to decide whether to adopt them for the future. If Mission Council agrees, the Moderators elect suggest that the practice of grouping resolutions into en bloc, majority voting and consensus is adopted for Mission Council business in the period leading up to the 2014 Assembly. A resolution to this effect will be presented to you if you agree the proposed changes.

In my view it would be in order for Mission Council to approve this revision of Standing Orders for 2014 because at the end of Assembly in 2012 decisions concerning the 2014 Assembly were remitted to Mission Council. There were two major concerns: many were concerned that the business was too rushed on the last day, and there was a need to significantly reduce the cost of the Assembly. The rearrangement of the way the business is conducted (red type changes) would address the first concern. The blue type changes would reduce costs. I commend these alterations to Mission Council.

There are three further alterations to the Standing Orders which I am now proposing. These could, unlike those described above, be taken to the Assembly at the start of business and take immediate effect. However, I suggest that to ask the Assembly to consider some changes to Standing Orders at the start and others at the end of business would be a cause of confusion, and so I am proposing that these changes are treated in the same way as the others. That is, Mission Council would approve them for 2014 and then the Assembly would be invited to adopt them at the end of the 2014 Assembly.

The first of these would require that the Moderator should make a statement at the start of a consensus process if s/he judges that the matter is urgent and must be resolved at the current meeting of the Assembly. This would replace the current provision which permits the Moderator to so declare if,

following the working through of the process, there is no agreement. This change appears in green type.

The other two would simply correct small errors. When the Assembly became biennial the necessary changes to the Standing Orders failed to remove the word "annually" from Standing Order 3a. I propose that this now be corrected. It is shown in turquoise type. Also in turquoise type is the removal of a reference to district councils in Standing Order 3d.

In order to come to a view on this matter you may need to review the current Standing Orders. They are to be found in the resources section of the General Assembly website. This is linked from the main URC website.

There follows a draft of the proposed Standing Orders for 2014.

Margaret Carrick Smith

11th March 2013

RESOLUTION 1

In order to assist the Assembly to conduct its business in an efficient and effective manner, Mission Council, in accordance with Standing Order 13b., resolves to amend the Standing Orders by accepting the changes in red, green, turquoise and blue type shown in the draft Standing Orders contained within Paper XX, thus creating the Standing Orders which shall be in force for the 2014 meeting of the General Assembly.

RESOLUTION 2 (to be presented if Resolution 1 is passed)

Mission Council agrees that the Standing Orders in use for the November 2013 and March 2014 meetings of Mission Council shall be those from the 2012 Assembly amended by the changes shown in red type in the draft contained within Paper XX.

Standing Orders of General Assembly 2014

1. The Agenda of the Assembly

1a. At its meetings the Assembly shall consider reports and draft motions prepared by its Committees which include the Mission Council or by synods, and motions and amendments of which due notice has been given submitted by individual members of the Assembly.

1b. For the good ordering of General Assembly's time, the Moderators for that Assembly, in consultation with the General Secretary and the Clerk, shall group the draft motions into three Groups which shall determine the manner in which the Assembly shall consider them: A – en bloc, B – majority voting and C – consensus. All matters covered by section 3(1) & (2) of the Structure of the United Reformed Church shall be placed in Group B. In the case of any other matter the Moderator may rule at any time that a motion be taken from Group B and placed in Group C.

1c. The motions in Group A shall be taken en bloc. Notice in writing to the effect that one or more of the motions included in Group A should be considered separately may be given to the General Secretary by the close of business on the first day of the meeting of the Assembly. If such notice, which must be signed by at least six members of the Assembly, is duly received, then the motion(s) in question shall be removed from Group A. It shall be for the Moderators, in consultation with the General Secretary and the Clerk, to determine in which of Groups B and C any such separated motions should be placed. When the single motion to approve Group A is before the Assembly, the vote shall be taken immediately, the motion being determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Assembly present and voting as indicated by a show of voting cards.

1d. The motions in Group B shall be determined by majority vote, and standing order 2 shall not apply.

1e. The motions in Group C shall be considered by means of the consensus decision making process set out in standing order 2.

1f. The Assembly Arrangements Committee shall prepare before each meeting of the Assembly a draft order of business, and submit it to the Assembly as early as convenient in the programme.

1g. Motions arising from a report which have been duly seconded and submitted by individual members of Assembly under rule 4b shall be taken at a point in the business determined by the Moderator on the advice of the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee.

1h. If notice has been given of two or more motions on the same subject, or two or more amendments to the same motion, these shall be taken in the order decided by the Moderator on the advice of the Clerk.

1i. The Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee may, during the meeting of the Assembly, propose that the order of business be changed.

2. Consensus decision making

2a. Those motions in Group C shall be determined by a process of decision making by consensus. For these purposes the following standing order 2 will apply and the standing orders 4, 5d, 5e, 5f, 6b, 6c, 6e will not apply.

2b. The process of consensus:

Consensus means a decision of the council reached unanimously, or where a small minority of members of the council is willing to accept a proposal that is not their first preference.

Agreement means a decision of the council where, after careful consideration of the options, a small number is unable to accept the majority opinion but agree to stand aside so that the matter may be resolved.

2b.(1) At each stage of the process the moderator will clarify the nature of the session, that is whether it is for information, discussion or decision making.

2b.(2) The Information Session:

This session aims to inform the Assembly on the issue to be considered. *At the start of this session, if s/he judges that the matter before the Assembly is urgent, requiring decision during the current meeting of the Assembly, the Moderator shall inform the Assembly that this is the case and advise that if following the Consensus procedures there is continuing disagreement it may be necessary to move to a majority decision under standing order 2b(9)vi.*

A range of options may be presented by different people who shall speak in favour of their option. Those presenting issues, reports or proposals may speak for no more than five minutes unless the Assembly agrees to an extension of time. members of Assembly are then free to ask questions on the issue or seek for clarification or further information.

2b.(3) The Discussion Session:

This is the opportunity for discussion of various viewpoints and vigorous debate on different opinions. Speakers may speak for no more than three minutes.

2b.(3a) All those present may contribute.

2b.(3b) The methods used may include prayer, buzz groups, group discussions, speeches to the whole council, time for thinking during a break etc. The Moderator may invite Assembly to indicate opinions by the use of coloured cards at this stage.

2b.(3c) The Moderator shall ensure that those who have different backgrounds or who disagree or who are unsure are given space to contribute to the debate, as well as those who are enthusiastic.

2b.(3d) The Assembly may meet around tables so that small group discussion can happen quickly and easily.

2b.(3e) As the discussion session proceeds possible ways forward for the Church are developed until a specific proposal is reached.

2b.(4) The decision session:

Only those Assembly members present may contribute to this session, they may speak for no more than three minutes.

2b.(4a) Discussion continues with speakers outlining the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal. At all times, speakers are encouraged to suggest a way forward for the Assembly, rather than merely speaking with passion for a pre-determined view.

2b.(4b) Minor changes of wording may be agreed as the discussion proceeds. It is important to hear from those indicating disquiet or disapproval as well as those who are enthusiastic.

2b.(4c) The proposal shall be displayed throughout the discussion in such a way that all can see the text and any progressively agreed changes to it.

2b.(4d) If there is a major new insight expressed, the Moderator may determine that it is appropriate to move back into a discussion session.

2b.(5a) After summing up where the Assembly seems to be heading, the Moderator checks whether the Assembly is nearing consensus using one or more questions such as the following:

i) What is your response to this proposal? (inviting a show of indicator cards)

ii) Do you believe we have consensus in support of this proposal?

iii) Do you believe we have consensus not to support this proposal?

2b.(5b) If there is strong but not unanimous support:

i) Who supports the proposal?

ii) Who does not support the proposal as your first option, but is prepared to accept it? Are you prepared to have the issue declared resolved by consensus?

iii) Who is not prepared to accept the proposal?

2b.(6) Where some members of Assembly indicate an unwillingness to accept a proposal there shall be further discussion and then the Moderator shall seek to ascertain that they accept that they have been heard and agree to live with the outcome.

2b.(7) The Moderator shall ask:

2b.(7a) are you prepared to have the issue declared resolved by agreement? If so they may choose to record their dissent.

2b.(8) Who is not prepared to accept the proposal?

2b.(9) Continuing disagreement

Assembly may, at the discretion of the Moderator, look for further possibilities including:

i) adjourning the discussion to another time or place perhaps with more work before reconsideration;

ii) asking the Moderator to continue to work on the issue with relevant people until the next Assembly;

iii) referring the issue to another council or group to deal with;

iv) deciding the issue is unnecessary/inappropriate to continue dealing with;

v) declaring that there are diverse views which Christians may hold with equal integrity;

vi) if the issue is urgent moving to majority decision, **but only if notice has been given under standing order 2b.(2).**

2c. The Moderator

2c.(a) The role of the Moderator is very important.

The Moderator:

- assists the Assembly to discern the will of God as far as possible
- is alert to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as members contribute
- pauses for prayer or buzz group reflection as appropriate
- encourages trust and integrity in contributions
- ensures care and support for those whose honesty or minority voice makes them vulnerable
- invites members to respond to speeches showing indicator cards, and reflects the mood of the meeting as it becomes apparent
- suggests or encourages creative modifications of a proposal, picking up insights expressed
- summarises discussion from time to time to assist in focusing the discussion.

2c.(b) The Assembly and Moderator may be assisted by a facilitation group. This will be appointed at the beginning of each Assembly by the Assembly. It will:

- enable group work, collate responses from groups and report back to the council
- help and support the Moderator
- be responsible for the display of the text under discussion.

2d. Coloured cards

2d.(1) Coloured cards are not essential in consensus decision making but they are helpful.

Each member receives two cards:

- i) Orange – held at the end of a speech, so that the Moderator can see, indicates warmth towards a point of view or approval of a proposal.
- ii) Blue – held at the end of a speech, so that the Moderator can see, indicates coolness about what has been heard or disapproval of a proposal.

2d.(2a) Cards held crossed indicate to the Moderator it's time to move on to the next subject.

2d.(2b) Cards should be shown only at the invitation of the Moderator and held so that the Moderator can see them. They indicate response to what has just been said. They help the Moderator to gauge the strength of feeling for various ideas, and to invite speeches from those who are unsure or cool towards the proposal.

2.e Changes of order

Changes of order may be raised by any member of Assembly at any time during the meeting and must refer to the proceedings of the council. The Moderator asks the member to state their change of order. The Moderator rules on it immediately, or asks for a decision by the Assembly via a simple majority vote.

Changes of order include:

2e.(1) Out of order – the speaker is digressing from the matter being discussed.

2e.(2) Closed session – that the matter in hand is sensitive and should be conducted in private. This is voted on immediately without discussion. It can be raised more than once during a discussion. If it is agreed, all those who are not members of the council must leave. Members must treat the subsequent discussion in the strictest confidence and must not divulge its content or process to non-members.

2e.(3) Adjournment of the discussion – this is voted on immediately without further discussion. It can be proposed more than once in a discussion. It cannot be brought by a person who has already spoken. When the discussion is resumed the person whose speech was interrupted has the right to speak first.

2e.(4) Personal explanation – a member feeling that some material part of their former speech has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may ask to make a personal explanation.

2e.(5) Objection – a member may raise an objection if the remarks of a speaker are deemed offensive or derogatory. On such an objection being raised the Moderator shall immediately rule as to whether the remarks are offensive or derogatory and if the ruling is in favour of the objection may require the speaker to withdraw the remark. Should the speaker refuse to do so the Moderator may require the speaker immediately to terminate their speech.

3. Presentation of business

3a. All reports of Committees, together with the draft motions arising there from, shall be delivered to the General Secretary by a date to be *{the word “annually” omitted}* determined, so that they may be printed and circulated to members in time for consideration before the date of the Assembly meeting.

3b. A synod may deliver to the General Secretary not less than twelve weeks before the commencement of the meeting of the Assembly notice in writing of a motion for consideration at the Assembly. This notice shall include the names of those appointed to propose and second the motion at the Assembly.

3c. A local church wishing to put forward a motion for consideration by the General Assembly shall submit the motion to its synod for consideration and, if the synod so decides, transmission to the Assembly, at such time as will enable the synod to comply with Standing Order 3b above.

3d. A member of the Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion (which notice must include the name of a seconder) to be included in the Assembly agenda. If the subject matter of such a notice of motion appears to the General Secretary

to be an infringement of the rights of a synod *{the words “or a district council” deleted}* through which the matter could properly have been raised, the General Secretary shall inform the member accordingly and bring the matter before the Assembly Arrangements Committee which shall advise the Assembly as to the procedure to be followed.

3e. Proposals for amendments to the Basis and Structure of the URC, which may be made by the Mission Council or a Committee of the General Assembly or a synod, shall be in the hands of the General Secretary not later than 12 weeks before the opening of the Assembly. The General Secretary, in addition to the normal advice to members of the Assembly, shall, as quickly as possible, inform all synod clerks of the proposed amendment.

4. Motions and amendments

4a. A report presented to the Assembly by a Committee or synod, under rule 1, shall be received for debate, unless notice has been duly given under rule 3d of a motion to refer back to that Committee or synod the whole or part of the report and its attached motion(s). Such a motion for reference back shall be debated and voted upon before the relevant report is itself debated. To carry such a motion two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. When a report has been received for debate, and before any motions consequent upon it are proposed, any member may speak to a matter arising from the report which is not the subject of a motion.

4b. During the meeting of the Assembly and on the report of a Committee, notice (including the names of proposer and seconder) shall be given to the Clerk of any new motions which arise from the material of the report, and of any amendments which affect the substance of motions already presented. The Moderator shall decide whether such motion or amendment requires to be circulated in writing to members before it is discussed by the Assembly. During the course of the debate a new motion or amendment may be stated orally without supporting speech in order to ascertain whether a member is willing to second it.

4c. No motion or amendment shall be spoken to by its proposer, debated, or put to the Assembly unless it is known that there is a seconder, the exception to this being motions presented on behalf of a Committee, of which printed notice has been given.

4d. A seconder may second without speaking and, by declaring the intention of doing so, reserves the right of speaking until a later period in the debate.

4e. It shall not be in order to move a motion or amendment which:

i) contravenes any part of the Basis of Union, or

ii) involves the church in expenditure without prior consideration by the appropriate committee, or

iii) pre-empts discussion of a matter to be considered later in the agenda, or

iv) amends or reverses a decision reached by the Assembly at its preceding two meetings unless the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that changed circumstances or new evidence justify earlier reconsideration of the matter, or

v) is not related to the report of a Committee and has not been the subject of 21 days' notice under 3d.

The decision of the Moderator (in the case of i, ii, iii, and v) and of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary (in the case of iv) on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

4f. An amendment shall be either to omit words or to insert words or to do both, but no amendment shall be in order which has the effect of introducing an irrelevant proposal or of negating the motion. The Moderator may rule that a proposed amendment should be treated as an alternative motion under Standing Order 4k.

4g. If an amendment is carried, the motion as amended shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the substantive motion upon which any further amendment may be moved. If an amendment is rejected a further amendment with a different outcome may be moved.

4h. An amendment which has been moved and seconded shall be disposed of before any further amendment may be moved, but notice may be given of intention to move a further amendment should the one before the Assembly be rejected.

4i. The mover may, with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly, alter the motion or amendment proposed.

4j. A motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer with the concurrence of the seconder and the consent of the Assembly. Any such consent shall be signified without discussion. It shall not be in order for any member to speak upon it after the proposer has asked permission to withdraw unless such permission shall have been refused.

4k. Alternative (but not directly negative) motions may be moved and seconded in competition with a motion before the Assembly. After any amendments duly moved under Standing Orders 4f, 4g and 4h have been dealt with and debate on the alternative motions has ended, the movers shall reply to the debate in reverse order to that in which they spoke initially. The first vote shall be a vote in favour of each of the motions, put in the order in which they were proposed, the result not being announced for one until it is announced for all.

If any of them obtains a majority of those voting, it becomes the sole motion before the Assembly. If none of them does so, the motion having the fewest votes is discarded. Should the lowest two be equal, the Moderator gives a casting vote. The voting process is repeated until one motion achieves a majority of those voting. Once a sole motion remains, votes for and against that motion shall be taken in the normal way and in accordance with Standing Order 7.

5. Timing of speeches and of other business

5a. Save by prior agreement of the officers of the Assembly, speeches made in the presentation of reports concerning past work of Assembly Committees which are to be open to question, comment or discussion shall not exceed five minutes.

5b. Save by the prior agreement of the officers of the Assembly, speeches made in support of the motions from any Assembly Committee, including the Mission Council, or from any synod shall not in aggregate exceed 45 minutes, nor shall speeches in support of any particular Committee or synod motion exceed 12 minutes, (eg a Committee with three motions may not exceed 36 minutes). The proposers of any other motion of which due notice has been given shall be allowed an aggregate of 10 minutes, unless a longer period be recommended by the officers of the Assembly or determined by the Moderator. Each subsequent speaker in any debate shall be allowed five minutes unless the Moderator shall determine otherwise; it shall, in particular, be open to the Moderator to determine that all speeches in a debate or from a particular point in a debate shall be of not more than three minutes.

5c. When a speech is made on behalf of a Committee, it shall be so stated. Otherwise a speaker shall begin by giving name and accreditation to the Assembly.

5d. Secretaries of Committees and full-time Executive Secretaries who are not members of Assembly may speak on the report of a Committee for which they have responsibility at the request of the Convener concerned. They may speak on other reports with the consent of the Moderator.

5e. In each debate, whether on a motion or on an amendment, no one shall address the Assembly more than once, except that at the close of each debate the proposer of the motion or the amendment, as the case may be, shall have the right to reply, but must strictly confine the reply to answering previous speakers and must not introduce new matters. Such reply shall close the debate on the motion or the amendment.

5f. The foregoing Standing Order (5e) shall not prevent the asking or answering of a question which arises from the matter before the Assembly or from a speech made in the debate upon it.

6. Closure of debate

6a. A member of Assembly may deliver to the General Secretary not less than 21 days before the date of the meeting of the Assembly a notice in writing of a motion that the General Assembly, for the better consideration of a specified resolution and its related documents, goes into a committee of the whole Assembly. Provided that the Moderator, Clerk and General Secretary together decide that this rule may appropriately be applied in the case of the said resolution, the motion shall be presented immediately following the opening speeches in support of the primary motion. For such a motion to be carried, two thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. Committee procedure enables members to speak more than once and exploratory votes to be taken on particular points or suggested changes. The number and length of speeches shall be at the discretion of the Moderator. After discussion in committee and decision on any proposed changes the Clerk shall draw the attention of the Assembly to any changes to the original text which have been agreed.

The Moderator shall then declare the committee stage to be ended, and the Assembly shall proceed to hear a closing speech from the mover of the motion under discussion and proceed to a vote on the motion, subject to any further motion under Standing Order 6. The decision of the Moderator with the Clerk and the General Secretary on the application of this Standing Order shall be final.

6b. In the course of the business any member may move that the question under consideration be not put. This motion takes precedence over every motion before the Assembly. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion or amendment under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule.

Should the motion be carried the business shall immediately end and the Assembly shall proceed to the next business.

6c. In the course of any discussion, any member may move that the question be now put. This is sometimes described as “the closure motion”. If the Moderator senses that there is a wish or need to close a debate, the Moderator may ask whether any member wishes so to move; the Moderator may not simply declare a debate closed. Provided that it appears to the Moderator that the motion is a fair use of this rule, the vote shall be taken upon it immediately it has been seconded. When an amendment is under discussion, this motion shall apply only to that amendment. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. The mover of the original motion or amendment, as the case may be, retains the right of reply before the vote is taken on the motion or amendment.

6d. During the course of a debate on a motion any member may move that decision on this motion be deferred to the next Assembly. This rule does not apply to debates on amendments since the Assembly needs to decide the final form of a motion before it can responsibly vote on deferral. The motion then takes precedence over other business. As soon as the member has given reasons for proposing it and it has been seconded and the proposer of the motion under consideration has been allowed opportunity to comment on the reasons put forward, the vote upon it shall be taken, unless it appears to the Moderator that an unfair use is being made of this rule or that deferral would have the effect of annulling the motion. To carry this motion, two-thirds of the votes cast must be given in its favour. At the discretion of the Moderator, the General Secretary may be instructed by a further motion, duly seconded, to refer the matter for consideration by other councils and/or by one or more committees of the Assembly. The General Secretary shall provide for the deferred motion to be represented at the next Meeting of the General Assembly.

6e. The motions described in Standing Orders 6b, 6c and 6d above are exceptions to Standing Order 4c, in that they may be moved and spoken to without the proposer having first obtained and announced the consent of a seconder. They must, however, be seconded before being put to the vote.

Precedence as between motions under 6a, 6b,6c and 6d is determined by the fact that after one of them is before the Assembly no other motion can be moved until that one has been dealt with.

7. Voting

7a. Voting on any motion whose effect is to alter, add to, modify or supersede the Basis, the Structure and any other form or expression of the polity and doctrinal formulations of the United Reformed Church, is governed by paragraph 3(1) and (2) of the Structure.

7b. Other motions before the Assembly shall be determined by a majority of the votes of members of the Assembly present and voting as indicated by a show of voting cards, except

i) if the Assembly decides before the vote that a paper ballot be the method of voting or

ii) if the show of cards indicates a very close vote, and the Moderator decides, or a member of Assembly proposes and the Assembly agrees, then a paper ballot shall be the method of voting.

7c. To provide for voting in the case of a paper ballot, and to assist in taking a count of votes when the Moderator decides this is necessary, the Nominations Committee shall appoint tellers for each Assembly.

8. Questions

8a. A member may, if two days' notice in writing has been given to the General Secretary, ask the Moderator or the Convener of any Committee any question on any matter relating to the business of the Assembly to which no reference is made in any report before the Assembly.

8b. A member may, when given opportunity by the Moderator, ask the presenter of any report before the Assembly a question seeking additional information or explanation relating to matters contained within the report.

8c. Questions asked under Standing Orders 8a and 8b shall be put and answered without discussion.

9. Points of order, personal explanations, dissent

9a. A member shall have the right to rise and call attention to a point of order, and immediately on this being done any other member addressing the Assembly shall cease speaking until the Moderator has determined the question of order. The decision on any point of order rests entirely with the Moderator. Any member calling to order unnecessarily is liable to censure of the Assembly.

9b. A member feeling that some material part of a former speech by such member at the same meeting has been misunderstood or is being grossly misinterpreted by a later speaker may rise and request the Moderator's permission to make a personal explanation. If the Moderator so permits, a member so rising shall be entitled to be heard forthwith.

9c. The right to record in the minutes a dissent from any decision of the Assembly shall only be granted to a member by the Moderator if the reason stated, either verbally at the time or later in writing, appears to the Moderator to fall within the provisions of paragraph 10 of the Basis of Union.

9d. The decision of the Moderator on a point of order, or on the admissibility of a personal explanation, or on the right to have a dissent recorded, shall not be open to discussion.

10. Admission of public and press

Members of the public and representatives of the press shall be admitted to the Assembly unless the Assembly otherwise decides, and they shall occupy such places as are assigned to them.

11. Circulation of documents

Only documents authorised by the General Secretary in consultation with the Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee may be distributed within the building in which the Assembly is meeting.

12. Record of the Assembly

12a. A record of attendance at the meetings of the Assembly shall be kept in such a manner as the Assembly Arrangements Committee may determine.

12b. The draft minutes of each day's proceedings shall be made available in an appropriate form normally on the following day. They shall, after any necessary correction, be approved at the opening of a subsequent session. Concerning the minutes of the closing day of the Assembly the Clerk shall submit a motion approving their insertion in the full minutes of the Assembly after review and any necessary correction by the officers of the Assembly. Before such a motion is voted upon, any member may ask to have read out the written minute on any particular item.

12c. A signed copy of the minutes shall be preserved in the custody of the General Secretary as the official record of the Assembly's proceedings.

12d. As soon as possible after the Assembly meeting ends, the substance of the minutes together with any other relevant papers shall be published as a "Record of Assembly" and a copy sent to every member of the Assembly, each synod and local church.

13. Suspension and amendment of standing orders

13a. In any case of urgency or upon proposal of a motion of which due notice has been given, any one or more of the Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting, provided that three-fourths of the members of the Assembly present and voting shall so decide.

13b. Motions to amend the Standing Orders shall be referred to the Clerk of the Assembly for report before being voted on by the Assembly (or, in case of urgency, by the Mission Council). The Clerk of the Assembly may from time to time suggest amendments.