

Paper A1

Assembly Arrangements Committee
Finance and Future Planning

United Church 2015
Church 2015
Reformed Church 2015
Church 2015



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Assembly Arrangements Committee Finance and Future Planning

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	The Revd James Breslin breslin@newcastleurc.freeserve.co.uk
Action required	Decision on the financing of Assembly
Draft resolution(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, resolves to instruct the Assembly Arrangements Committee to book all accommodation for future Assemblies. 2. Mission Council requests synods to pay to the central funds of the Church the difference in the cost of accommodation for their representatives between the £50 <i>per diem</i> grant already agreed and the true cost incurred for the 2016 Assembly 3. Mission Council requests synods to meet the cost of travel for their representatives attending the 2016 Assembly.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Finance of the recalled Assembly in June 2015. Finance of Assembly 2016 Reports and future planning.
Main points	As resolutions.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council, March 2014, Paper A
Consultation has taken place with...	The synods regarding finance and the Assembly committee convenors regarding reporting.

Summary of Impact

Financial	Increased cost to the synods.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	None.

General Assemblies 2014-15-16

1. Having now completed the accounts for the recalled Assembly, which met in Carrs Lane Church, Birmingham, the committee is pleased to report that, contrary to our initial expectations, the cost of the Assembly was slightly under the budget of £35,000. This is in considerable part due to the diligence and generosity of the team of volunteer helpers and the ministers and congregation of Carrs Lane Church.
2. The committee has given some thought to how best to manage the costs of future Assemblies, noting that the one third reduction of the budget previously agreed has created a number of problems both for the committee and for the synods. At Cardiff, the committee, other than through a *per diem* grant of £50 *per capita*, ceased to be responsible for accommodation or evening meals except for staff and members of Assembly appointed directly by the Assembly. It also set up and managed a fares pool intended to equalise costs for travel across the whole Church. This was not entirely successful. It created considerable problems in its administration and led to a considerable increase in the costs to the synods. While we do not have a complete total of the grants made by synods to those whom they appointed to membership of the Assembly we are aware that at least two synods paid out over £5,000 and that the total cost to the synods was probably close to £30,000.
3. The committee is also aware that while the decision to leave the finding of suitable accommodation in Cardiff to individual members was practicable, although in fact it was mostly arranged by synods, this would not be the case in Southport. In this smaller community the provision of accommodation for a large conference has had to be managed centrally and we are able to report that we have booked a sufficient number of rooms to accommodate the whole of the Assembly and the 'What do you think?' pre-Assembly youth meeting. This will however cost more than the accommodation grant previously agreed.
4. Enquiries were made to the synods as to their willingness to find from their resources the £100,000 reduced from the Assembly budget and, while the responses varied considerably, two elements were clear. The first was that the synods did not wish to subsidise the cost of the Assembly to that extent. The second was that they were as one in agreeing that the cost of attending the Assembly should not fall on its individual members.
5. Therefore the Assembly Arrangements committee proposes to abandon the fares pool but to return to the central booking and allocation of accommodation. It will continue to pay the £50 *per diem* grant from its budget but the difference in cost will be charged to the synods. In 2016, the difference in accommodation costs referred to above will involve an overall sum of £18,000 spread amongst the 13 synods. The committee has been careful not to use the most expensive hotels in Southport. The committee will make no contribution towards the cost of travel but expect that to be arranged and/or paid for by the synods. In most cases breakfast will be provided in the hotel and lunch will be provided in the conference centre. A coffee bar will be available throughout the day and evening meals will be the responsibility of individual members and will not be provided in the conference centre.

6. The committee reminds Mission Council that it is primarily a service committee charged with providing the Church with what it wants from its General Assembly. Although on several occasions attempts have been made to clarify the wishes of the Church with regard to the Assembly it has proved difficult to obtain clear guidance. The desire of the Church to live within our means and to avoid unnecessary extravagance conflicts with the entirely understandable desire that the Assembly should be an inspirational event which can serve as a showpiece for the whole of the United Reformed Church, whilst, at the same time functioning as a business and legislative body. In order that we might seek greater clarity in planning for the future we have agreed that Dr Graham Campling will analyse the response forms from the 2016 Assembly.
7. An approach was made from a committee concerning the expectation that committees should present their report to the Assembly in two parts, one dealing with work completed and the other with work planned. Although no other committee complained directly, it was reported that other committees had raised concerns. The Assembly Arrangements committee, having consulted with the Head of Communications, is pleased to advise convenors that two-part reports are not required. A single report is required, and this to be submitted no later than 4 April 2016. Where it can be submitted earlier this will be much appreciated.
8. The Head of Communications has let convenors know her expectations about the length of their reports. If convenors find that they have more to say than this, they should consult the Head of Communications with care and in good time.