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They've asked me to be **a committee convenor**

This information has been prepared for those who are considering taking up the offer of the role of committee convenor to one of the 11 standing committees of the General Assembly which have an associated staff secretary, as well as those already in role. Some of it may also be helpful for convenors/chairs of other United Reformed Church committees, boards, sub-committees and task groups

Role summary:

Responsible, on behalf of General Assembly (GA), for leading and overseeing the development and implementation of the committee's responsibilities/work in conjunction with the committee and staff and for planning, organising, enabling and convening the committee meetings.

Context

Assembly committee convenors are appointed either by General Assembly (GA) or Mission Council (MC) acting on behalf of General Assembly and are ultimately accountable to GA. Convenors oversee their committee's work responsibilities and maintain oversight of their implementation.

However, since most committees sit within a departmental structure, the convenor also relates to the relevant Deputy General Secretary (DGS), and the staff secretary and may, on a day-to-day basis, liaise/work with them both. (All staff secretaries are line managed by one of the three DGSs.)

A convenor must also be aware of how the committee's responsibility sits within the total life of the denomination; how it relates to other committees and personnel and also to be sensitive to areas of common interest, overlap or potential conflict. The frequency of committee meetings varies from committee to committee but will generally be between two and five meetings per year.

Key relationships

Successful convenors develop a good working relationship with their staff secretary – it is a vital part of the role – and the convenor, staff secretary and committee members serve as a team, sharing the aim of serving and supporting the local churches by delivering the work required by GA.

Although the convenor needs to have a general awareness of the day-to-day work of the department, the responsibility for operational matters rests with the staff secretary and ultimately the General Secretariat.

The roles of all parties are clear:

- The staff secretary and the appropriate DGS, in consultation with the convenor, will set priorities and develop detailed work plans to implement the policies agreed by the committee and the Assembly (or Mission Council acting on its behalf).
- Any matters concerning the administration of the department which arise in the wider church should be directed to the staff secretary and/or the appropriate DGS.
- Suggestions for changes in policy should be directed to the committee, and the convenor and staff secretary will together decide how best to consider these.
- In relation to any serious issues with staff relationships or apparent policy conflicts, the convenor should consult the General Secretary in the first instance.

Role of convenor and staff secretary at GA and MC

Convenors of the eleven General Assembly committees are members of GA and MC and will normally speak for the committee in both Councils.

If addressing GA or MC, the convenor will almost always be accompanied by the staff secretary – and sometimes another senior member of the department's staff team. In preparing to present material to GA or MC the convenor and staff member(s) will agree the role each will play to ensure their combined contributions command confidence by their clarity, coherence and sensitivity.

Role and responsibilities

General Assembly/Mission Council

1. Ensure on behalf of GA that the committee's remit is effectively carried through within the strategy of the Church, and hence that the strategy for the work of the committee is developed and implemented in accordance with the directions of GA.
2. Represent GA and MC to the committee to ensure the directions of those councils are fully considered.
3. Represent the committee, its remit and concerns through the Church's communication channels to the wider Church, to GA and MC, and within the departmental structure at Church House.
4. Prepare reports as necessary for presentation to GA/MC to:
 - a. inform GA/MC on the work of the committee;
 - b. explore options for future work; and
 - c. bring resolutions to GA/MC for which a decision is required.

The committee

1. Manage the work/life of the committee in an efficient and effective manner – attending and chairing meetings, arranging a deputy as necessary.
2. In conjunction with the staff secretary act, as necessary, as the channel of communication between the committee, the General Secretariat, staff secretaries and the Councils and other committees of the church.
3. Give leadership, inspiration and direction to the committee, ensuring appropriate induction, involving and giving support to committee members, especially new members, and drawing on their knowledge, skills and experience.

Staff

- Maintain regular contact with the relevant Staff Secretary and other posts related to the work of the committee, to give support and guidance, ensure common understanding of work in hand, facilitate committee meetings and ensure the maximum use of their knowledge, skills and experience.
- Maintain links with others, particularly the relevant DGS, to ensure work plans and priorities are coordinated in a realistic and balance way.
- Contribute input for the staff secretary's annual appraisal to their line manager.
- Be involved in the recruitment – and induction – of staff members as appropriate.

The wider church

1. Participate as required in other wider aspects of the life of the church, particularly as requested by GA/MC or an Assembly officer.
2. Be aware of the URC policies on employment and other matters such as equal opportunities, bullying and harassment, and health and safety as they relate to the committee's remit and ensure that these policies are observed.

Data protection

- Take reasonable steps to ensure that all data, (paper and digital including emails) is gathered, processed and destroyed in accordance with data protection legislation and the United Reformed Church's Records Management Policy.
- Ensure that all committee members understand the data protection requirements relating to data and records and have personal email accounts to which only they have access.

Committee archive preservation

This work is undertaken in conjunction with the Sta Secretary and will include the preservation of at least:

- Papers circulated for meetings of the committee;
- Minutes of committee meetings;
- Other relevant material that may have been provided to convenor or sta secretary as background information for items on the committee agenda.



