

LOCAL CHURCH LEADERS CONSULTATION TASK GROUP

Explanatory note for Church Support Network meeting, 12 March 2019

At the meeting of the CSN Group on 12 March 2018, there was a facilitated discussion of *Working together more effectively—possibilities and pitfalls*. One of the conclusions was

'that the question of a network of local churches should be pursued jointly by Church Growth Trust, Counties, GLO, and Partnership; they should look to consult a group of local church leaders, and also younger leaders, about any proposals which they formed, and they would report back at appropriate moments to CSN.'

This note and attachments report on progress with this remit.

In the spring and summer, representatives of the four bodies had a number of discussions, principally in order to make arrangements for a consultation meeting with leaders of local churches, as they had not previously been consulted directly about strengthening networking for the benefit of local churches. The consultation took place on 12 November 2018. The record of that meeting is to be made available at churchsupportnetwork.uk/

The key substantive conclusions of that meeting were:

*There was **broad consensus** that the time was opportune (and not to be missed) to strengthen the network of, and networking between, independent evangelical churches which are practically related to Church Growth Trust, Counties, GLO, and Partnership and which those bodies seek to serve. That was likely to require, among other things,*

- *more visible and representative leadership;*
- *setting out vision and creating a “standard” for churches (and church leaders) to rally to, identify with and want to belong to, with the aim of gathering, supporting and planting churches;*
- *clarification of ethos, distinctives, and identity, on the basis of the centrality of Christ and concern for the gospel and mission, and open-ness to those who share the ethos and objectives but not necessarily the background;*
- *closer, more seamless working between the bodies to provide resources for churches, enhance coherence of activity, avoid duplication between them, and aid presentation to others;*
- *provision of opportunities and structure for building relationships between churches; and*
- *better communication with the constituency by all available means to build trust and provide what they need.*

It would require a necessary modicum of resources to achieve these objectives. Any changed structures should be kept as lean as possible and there was some resistance to setting up an extra body.

The consultation wished to be kept fully involved and set up a Task Group to develop proposals to give effect to these conclusions. The Group comprises one representative of each of the four organisations, and four local church leaders selected (though Partnership has lately asked to be represented by two people).

As requested, the Task Group prepared papers, including a report setting out proposals, by the end of January. They also agreed that it would be helpful to take advantage of local consultation meetings in February and March which Partnership had already agreed to hold for its own purposes, and the two papers attached are being used in these consultations. The full Task Group Report is also attached. The papers and the report are being made available to those who were invited to the 12 November consultation.

The intention is that the Task Group should review its report and recommendations in the light of the consultation (including any comments from the CSN Group, and individual bodies if they wish to make them) and that the final papers should be put to a further meeting of the 12 November consultation group, probably in May.

Assuming that there is a consensus to proceed with the proposals, further detailed work would need to be done in the summer, to allow the enhanced networking body to be launched, in the autumn of 2019 or possibly the spring of 2020.

7 March 2019