

**THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND - MINISTRIES COUNCIL
COUNCIL**

121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN

Wednesday 12 December 2018

DRAFT MINUTE

PRESENT:

Convener: Neil Glover

Vice-Conveners: John Dent
Eleanor McMahon
Bob Mallinson
Sarah Ross

Members & Observers: 29 Members recorded in the Register of Attendance

Staff in Attendance: Craig Renton plus 6 staff as recorded in the Register of Attendance

Apologies: Apologies were noted in the sederunt

ACTION

42 Opening Worship

The meeting was opened with prayers and apologies were noted.

43 Any Other Business and Matters Arising

None

44 Minutes

The Minutes of the Ministries Council meeting held on Wednesday 7 November 2018 were approved subject to the rewording of the statement about Priority Areas hoping to appoint a Vice Convener in March 2019, to clarify the meaning.

SW

45 Convener's Report

4.1 Radical Action Plan – feedback not positive on the whole at presbytery conference – reported back to group and awaiting next steps. Priority Areas submitted a short paper to the team in collaboration with Path of Renewal and Go For It. The matter was discussed with Catherine Skinner (CS) and we concur that Ministries need to be part of solution, not the problem.

Neil Glover (NG) to look through plan and have a conversation with CS. RAP framework very helpful but sequence for General Assembly important – also need to integrate this with JECG.

NG

4.2 Children's Ministry – following NG's conversation with an interested Minister, a discussion ensued on whether there is a need to place more focus on children's ministry i.e. making a new specialist ministry? – do not want to lose sight of integration of 'whole people of God'. The Council expressed significant interest in supporting this development in future, whilst appreciating that it could not be classed as a priority at present. Lezley Stewart (LS) to share with M&D.

LS

4.3 Stipend and Salary – strongly petitioned for 2.5% rise – however, agreement reached was 2%. The matter will be revisited in December due to a number of process issues. NG wants to preserve the value with respect to inflation and compared to average pay rises. CoA Finance Group have also rejected the 2019 budget and so will need to revisit.

4.4 Sacramental Ministries – a paper was tabled summarising the proposed deliverance to instruct the Ministries Council, Legal Questions Committee and Theological Forum (with any other relevant parties) to bring detailed proposals for alternative routes to ordination to Word and Sacrament to the General Assembly of 2020, based on the principles outlined in the joint report of the Panel on Review & Reform, the Theological Forum, the Ecumenical Relations Committee and the Legal Questions Committee to the General Assembly of 2019.

Two written responses received to date in response to the paper are both largely negative with underlying concerns about the reasons for this, the need for this, and some of the theological assumptions being made.

At the meeting, concerns expressed included

- tight deadline for response
- needs to be discussed with RIT
- extent of demand for this?
- Local need is being pushed out to national/presbytery-wide for approval – another national tier
- Needs to be brought to GA to avoid going around in circles

Marjory MacLean (MM) felt it was impossible to comment or contribute without seeing the full paper and there was real need for clarity in language used as any confusion could lead to us asking for something we already have in place (could be room for this category under her leadership in her linkage?) This proposed deliverance does not remotely describe this and needs to be rewritten to avoid a potential negative impact. She was also more positive about an approach which focussed around authorising an elder to act on behalf of a Minister.

The general discussion/concern centred around the overall lack of clarity and also implications for OLMs and their identity.

It was felt we should hold on to the role of recognised ministers. Elders not mentioned – currently have to tell Presbytery if elders conduct service. Should be remembered that baptism just as important as communion.

Eleanor McMahon (EM) felt that the implications of deliverance in its present wording would be potentially catastrophic for recruitment.

Ute Jaeger-Fleming (UJ-F) noted that there are options for doing this in the German Churches which could be learned from.

NG to look again at wording of deliverance and take comments back to Panel Review & Reform with our concerns.

4.5 Deployment of MDS

NG presented paper to the meeting.

Numbers had risen sharply (150 – 190) in last 12 months. There are financial implications but this shouldn't be the primary issue.

Next steps – as outlined on page 5 of paper – summarised.

Cap made in the past created negative impact so we are looking at alternative methods, but cap may still be required.

NG explained that although savings had been made from a reduction in number of ministers, this had been used up by stipend increases. We are at a balanced level – but the margin is tight. An overall decrease in income is the real cause.

Tony Stephen (TS) asked if the issue was a cost one – if so, we shouldn't blame it on something else.

Craig Renton (CR) said that whilst money is a factor, employment legislation is significant as there is no control on the effectiveness of line manager. Looking into training managers on site, skills check and other means of proving in court that line management are effective.

NG felt a clear issue to be putting posts in Priority Areas against ethos of Priority Areas planning, or putting PA posts elsewhere.

It was felt that putting a cap on MDS now would result in Presbytery planning coming to a halt.

The implication that there are many unfilled posts was unfounded as DG confirmed that there are few vacancies – the confusion may be because Presbyteries simply haven't gone to advert for whatever reason. He also felt that this was an opportunity to ask how we want to use MDS in the future.

There was concern that 2020 plan would still be temporary and that we need a more holistic approach – cap on ordained posts? This should be a holding position whilst we consider more broadly what forms of ministry are affordable in 5-10 year timeline.

Tom MacIntyre (TM) said there is a nervousness in Shetland where MDS posts are critical following recent changes.

Council in support of creation of Working Group. Amendment to Part 2 'attempting not to cause long-lasting'.

Decision making criteria to December 2019 – agreed as target.

Keep financial or leave in posts re radical action plans etc? Sarah Ross felt strongly that it should be about mission of church, it cannot just be about financials.

Following Agreed:-

keep a) in – Mission

but b) – we do not know what is in Radical Action Plan – instead mention consistency with policy of GA? Agreed to drop b)

c) large number of posts are MDS posts – double weighting for PA population. Agreed that c) remains

d) remains

- e) remains
- f) agreed
- g) need clarity of where group reports to

46. Finance

5.1 Management Accounts - summarised and emphasis made that we don't think about income enough as an organisation – more strategic/long term focus required.

Dunfermline request for Grant Funding – approved – to be conveyed to congregation.

Draft Budget 2019 – Convener felt that the budget was sound but nervous about investment value at year end due to current market fluctuation. It should be regarded as a Draft pending approval by Assembly.

Restricted Reserves – paper approved as presented.

47. Education and Support (EM)

E&S Committee not met since last Council meeting, but work ongoing.

Candidates Conference received very positive feedback.

Average age of probationer now 48 – value on life experience is positive story, but we need to attract younger as well as more mature applicants.

6.1 Long Term Ill Health Consultation Report

Any Council members with potential conflict of interest were asked to leave the room after the initial summary was outlined.

EM summarised the motivation for the consultation, namely the link between Long Term Illness Act and Illness Protection i.e. 12 months vs 24 months – there is a variance in how Presbyteries deal with this. We are trying to establish a means of getting them to connect and provide an equitable base for Ministers across the country. Would be an increase in our Income Protection premium, but a decrease in what we pay in Stipends before Ill Health activates.

This is not about cutting benefits – but provides certainty and reduces anxiety to those on long term absence and recognises that Ministry remains a unique occupation.

Only 53 responses received, out of 700. Approx 30 broadly agreed, 20 did not.

Those who came to the consultation tended to have experience of this. The question is one of balance – needs of a Minister and family v Congregation v Presbytery.

If income protection activates at 12 months mark, not every Minister will be entitled.

The process of a Presbytery decision on dissolving pastoral ties is a very sensitive issue. New proposal would address this with expertise and would be more confidential and professional as will be handled by the insurance company, not by Presbytery.

12 month stage is very sensitive in certain cases due to waiting times for consultations and treatment – could extend pastoral tie beyond payment of stipend?

Should not make cost savings a feature of this process – the difference between 18 and 15 months does not make a huge difference – more important to think about balance.

In essence, there is no retirement through ill health. If fit to return to work, insurers will help do this – the only other option is to stay in scheme until retirement age.

It was asked if the insurance company pays income protection, but is also providing service to help get back to work – surely a conflict of interest?

LS confirmed that IP providers assess medical information and if that suggests person is fit to work, then can support that to happen. It is the medical advice that supports the final decision. If there is insufficient medical evidence, then the claim would not be covered

Ministries Council can appeal decisions and can also renegotiate every 2 years.

Those beyond state retirement age are not eligible and would therefore be included in the 15 month cover. Stipend would be paid in full between 12-15 months but we recover a third from insurance company.

Threshold is up to State retirement age.

Ian Taylor (IT) reminded the Council that not all Ministers entitled to assistance from Housing & Loan – and a lengthy debate then ensued around the eligibility for assistance.

Need Ministers to understand the limits of the benefits – if we provide clarity then it will help people form these decisions.

H&L did discuss whether they could open up to pre-retirement Ill Health, but decided to stick to original purpose.

Ishbel Smith (IS) wanted it noted that she was very unhappy with such a burdensome task being put on non-Ministers of Council to vote on this (like the Stipend decision) as it is such an important matter than affects so many people.

Jane Howitt (JH) raised concern about the ‘state’ of NHS and delays in getting diagnosis etc – is it wise to cut from 24 to 15 months?

LS said that if Presbyteries could decide not to cut pastoral tie for up to 24 months, it would mean we would have to pay stipend – to take into account treatment times.

Decisions Agreed

Bring forward policy to 12 months instead of 24.

Reduce full stipend paid to 15 months

Council to introduce new legislation

Formation Framework

Carried forward to February meeting – but NG to circulate questionnaire in order to get feedback from all Council members.

6.2 Recruitment Review Project – initial feedback positive – difficult to plot for those who didn’t get through.

Blake Stevenson summarised findings and were complimentary of our Recruitment Support team. **NG**

How do we ensure we are capturing feedback from those opting out during recruitment process?

Will provide further update to February Council meeting.

48. Partnerships & Development

7.1 SR summarised Highlights Report as circulated.

MDS numbers to agree assumptions on how we calculate going forward. Stipends may rise to 2.5% for 2019. **LS**

Assumptions agreed

Omitted to include Planning Act, not controversial, will bring to February Council meeting in

ACTION

readiness for General Assembly.

49. Property Disposal

Paper outlining Property Disposal policy was presented and approved.

NG

50. Path of Renewal

Incorporated into remit of JECG and branch of P&K to prove the model works and show that we are serious about learning from it.

Alan Hamilton (AH) Convener of the PoR Steering Group, advised the Council that the Steering Group was left with little option but to agree that its work should end at G19. The Steering Group would be pleased if its recommendations were approved.

Sarah Ross (SR) reminded Council this is a movement, not a programme – and is a huge supporter of Path of Renewal.

EM – what learnings can we feed into training programme and Ascend?, otherwise it is silo working.

Change 2nd bullet to ‘Agree to 3rd tranche of Path of Renewal, beginning Summer 2019’ (as budget had been agreed

All agreed

OLM consultation has been distributed and some responses already received

SR/DG

51. Priority Areas Highlights Report

Report approved as tabled.

52. Council Secretary’s Report

Craig Renton provided a brief verbal update in Jayne Scott’s absence.

53. The main Council Meeting then closed in order to convene a Closed Session to discuss:-

54. Nomination of Ministries Council Convener

55. Staffing Matters

The discussion which took place on these items is noted in a **Record Apart.**

56. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Wednesday, 13 February 2019**

from 10.30 – 3.00pm

at 121 George Street, Edinburgh

ACTION