

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
COUNCIL OF ASSEMBLY
10 April 2017

MINUTES

The Council of Assembly met within the Church Offices, Edinburgh, on Monday 10 April, and was constituted with prayer. A list of those attending is attached to this Minute as Appendix I.

80. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted.

81. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

82. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Mr Grant Macrae, Convener, Audit Committee, joined the meeting for this item of business.

82.1 Minutes of Audit Committee

The Council received the Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting of 30 January 2017 (AC3 2016-2017).

82.2 Report of Audit Committee

Mr Macrae presented the Committee's report which set out its main activities during the 2016-2017 session covering both the internal and external audit functions. The Committee had reviewed the draft Annual Accounts and Trustees' Report 2016 at its meeting on 28 March, noting that the external auditors had indicated that an unqualified report would be issued. It was agreed that the draft Letter of Representation, which had also been considered by the Committee, would be tabled later in the meeting for approval by the trustees.

The Council noted that, following a tender process by the Audit Committee during the year, PwC was recommended as the statutory external auditors for the Unincorporated Councils and Committees (UCC). The Council approved this appointment.

With regard to the risk register for the UCC, Mr Macrae acknowledged progress made in updating the register over the past year, noting the challenge of mitigating some of those risks which extended beyond the Council of Assembly's remit.

The Convener expressed thanks to the Committee for its ongoing work on behalf of the Church.

With regard to the Scheme of Delegation, Dr Scott advised that he and the Solicitor had had a preliminary discussion about reviewing this documentation in order to present it in a more helpful format. Further work would be taken forward on this as soon as possible.

83. FINANCE

83.1 Draft Annual Accounts and Trustees' Report

Mr Bob Cowan, Deputy Treasurer, joined the meeting for this item and spoke to the Annual Accounts and Trustees' Report. The Council noted the reclassification of a number of items

within the 2015 Statement of Accounts; these had not had a material effect on the net movement of funds.

With regard to Note 29 in the 2016 Accounts, whilst the subsidiary undertakings in Israel/Palestine were showing net losses, the World Mission Council received income from these at a level of around £250k each year. It was agreed that the Note should be amended for clarity. The Council noted that the World Mission Council would be seeking General Assembly approval to undertake a strategic review of the Church's presence in Israel/Palestine.

Mrs Macintosh spoke to the financial analysis section of the Trustees' Report, highlighting that initial analysis of congregational income in 2016 was showing a decline in offerings. This, along with the Church's age demographic, would be mentioned in the Council's Supplementary Report to the General Assembly.

A number of amendments to the Trustees' Report were then agreed. Dr Scott indicated that the Council would be provided with a draft of next year's Trustees' Report at an earlier stage in the process to allow more time for discussion and amendment.

Mr Watt confirmed that the 2016 Accounts were consistent with the regular management accounts presented to the Finance Group and the Council. It was noted that the external auditors, PwC, had given an unqualified opinion following visits to the Church Offices and to Charis House. Members approved the Trustees' Report and the Annual Accounts, and granted permission to the Convener to sign the Accounts and the Letter of Representation on behalf of the Trustees.

83.2 Minutes of Finance Group

The Council received the Minutes of the Finance Group meetings of 6 March (FG7 (2016-2017)) and 3 April (FG8 (2016-2017) draft).

83.3 Finance Group Report

The following matters were highlighted:

- a) World Council of Churches (WCC) General Assembly 2021: The Council noted the Finance Group's concerns with regard to supporting a potential bid by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) to host the 2021 WCC General Assembly, with Glasgow being the proposed location. The Ecumenical Officer reported that, since the Finance Group meeting, other member churches of CTBI had come to a view on the matter. Whilst the Council was supportive in principle of the proposal, it agreed that the Church of Scotland was not in a position to commit to supporting the bid based on the limited financial information currently available.
- b) Interfaith Post Funding: The Finance Group had been asked by the Council in February to include funding in the 2018 budget for an interfaith post, believing that there was no funding available to extend the existing temporary post until the end of 2017. Members now noted a written update from the Secretary which explained that more detailed examination of the 2017 budget had revealed that £40,000 had been set aside against the post of Interfaith Officer, anticipating that a more permanent arrangement would be needed when the temporary appointment came to an end on 31 May 2017. The Council agreed that, subject to the General Assembly responding positively to the report on interfaith work, and given that there was a budget in place, a recruitment process for the permanent post of Interfaith Officer should be taken forward. Furthermore, it was agreed that the temporary post be extended to 31 December 2017 or until a permanent appointment process was completed, whichever was sooner.
- c) Management Accounts to 28 February 2017: The Council noted the management accounts to 28 February 2017.

83.4 Procedure for Approval of Sensitive Payments

The Council considered a proposal for the establishment of a special financial arrangements group which would have delegated responsibility to deal with proposed payments to members of staff in the employment of the Central Services Committee where these were potentially sensitive and where personal confidentiality required to be maintained. The group would comprise only trustees, namely the Convener and Vice-Convener of the Council of Assembly and the Convener of the Finance Group, with all three required to deal with each case. Support for the work of the group would be provided, as required and as appropriate, by the HR Manager, the Secretary to the Council of Assembly, the General Treasurer or the Solicitor. The group would provide periodic reports to the Council on its working but would not provide information on the detail of decisions taken.

The Council noted a number of considerations which would have to be borne in mind by the group of trustees, and these would be set out in more detail in a formal remit for the group. In particular, the Solicitor recommended that any decision to make or agree to compromise, rather than to press or defend a claim, must be based on a reasoned assessment of the probable outcome and the balance of likely advantage to the Church, such that the trustees could be satisfied that doing so was in the best interests of the Church.

The Council discussed whether the proposed procedure should be extended to take in Ministries Council cases also. It was noted that the Audit Committee had undertaken a review of the Ministries Council's procedures in this area and, following improvement, had concluded that these were now robust. The Council was content for the Ministries Council to continue to deal with its own special financial arrangements, given that the Convener of Ministries was also a trustee.

The proposal was then agreed.

84. THEOLOGICAL FORUM

The Very Rev Professor Iain Torrance and Ms Nathalie Mares, Convener and Secretary of the Theological Forum respectively, joined the meeting. The Council noted the written report and questions were invited.

With regard to the Forum's discussion about the Westminster Confession, Professor McGowan asked whether this had come about in response to a General Assembly instruction and whether the Forum had engaged people with a range of opinions on the matter. Professor Torrance explained that the Forum's remit allowed it to bring reports of its own choosing. In this case, it had merely entered into a conversation with an individual who had a continuing interest in the matter. The Forum was not planning to bring a report on this to the General Assembly at the present time, though the Assembly may instruct it so to do.

With regard to the make-up of the Theological Forum, Professor Torrance explained that the Forum was not just a discussion group and that its members needed to be able to contribute more than merely a viewpoint. Whilst PhDs were not a requirement, members did have to be articulate, learned and committed to serving the Church. The Forum did not self-appoint, but rather the Nomination Committee brought names forward to the General Assembly for approval. Professor Torrance spoke of the importance of ongoing study and training in order to maintain excellence and to ensure that the ministry was well-served with those who had an in-depth knowledge of secondary literature.

Professor McGowan raised the issue of theological balance on the Forum, noting that there was no one currently in the membership who was easily recognised as belonging to the more conservative side of the Church. Professor Torrance noted that it was not always easy to predict the views that members would represent, whatever theological position others might assume them to represent. The Forum was no different from other bodies in the Church in

terms of the nomination process and names could be brought to the Nomination Committee from a wide range of people and backgrounds.

The Council noted that the Forum would be asking the General Assembly to instruct the Legal Questions Committee to undertake a study of the matters which would require to be addressed in any new legislation permitting Ministers and Deacons to officiate at same-sex marriage ceremonies, with a view to presenting a Report to the 2018 General Assembly.

The Council noted the Forum's plea to Councils and Committees to involve the Forum in the earlier stages of their work on theological papers, rather than at the end of the process.

85. FORWARD PLANNING AND KEY PROJECTS

85.1 Annual Operational Plan

The current operational plan was available to members on the portal. An updated document for the 2017-18 session would come to the next meeting.

85.2 Building Developments

An up-to-date report on progress made towards the development of the national Church office buildings was contained within the draft Supplementary Report to the General Assembly.

86. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

86.1 Supplementary Report to the General Assembly

Members considered the Council's draft Supplementary Report to the General Assembly.

Mr Watt spoke to the Indicative Budget 2018 which was incorporated. He highlighted that it was proposed to maintain congregational contributions and the Presbytery allowance at current levels. A budget largely in line with 2017 was therefore proposed, with no inflationary increase incorporated. The Council agreed the Budget for transmission to the General Assembly, noting that the detailed 2018 Budget was due to be agreed by the Council in December 2017.

Following some minor amendments, the Supplementary Report was agreed.

86.2 Heart and Soul

The Convener confirmed that volunteers were in place to staff the Council's marquee at the Heart and Soul event on 21 May 2017.

87. REPORTS FROM COUNCILS

87.1 Mission and Discipleship Council Presentation

Mr Smith gave a brief update on the Mission and Discipleship Council's current work. He highlighted that a meeting with a representative from Ipsos Mori had taken place to explore the possibility of taking forward a bespoke survey of people outside the church. Mr Smith suggested that this project could feed into the next stage of the strategic planning process. It was agreed that the Strategy Group would consider this option.

It was noted that the development of a volunteer policy was still outstanding. It was agreed that the Senior Management Team would look into progressing this matter.

Mr Smith reported that recent *Going for Growth* and *Community of Faith* conferences had been fully subscribed.

87.2 Church and Society Council Update

The Council noted the written update report. The booklet *Sanctuary in Scotland – Information on Refugee Issues for Faith Groups in Scotland*, produced by Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, was tabled for members. Dr Johnstone highlighted that sufficient

additional funding had been secured from ecumenical partners for the Refugee Development Worker post.

With regard to the statement in the paper that an integrated approach across the Church to key social and political issues was needed, Dr Johnstone clarified that the Council was seeking to work in an integrated way to address and respond to important issues and was not suggesting that there would always be a unanimous opinion.

The Council was considering bringing a Supplementary Report to the General Assembly on the role of the Church in the context of constitutional change and uncertainty.

87.3 World Mission Council

Mr Cunningham reported on contact from the World Mission Council's mission partner in Cairo following the most recent attacks on Coptic Christians in Alexandria and Tanta, Egypt. Messages of support had been sent on behalf of the Church of Scotland.

The World Mission Council was engaged in conversations with partners in relation to the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Dr McPake indicated that the Ecumenical Relations Committee had also been engaging with others in this regard.

87.4 Property Sales and Purchases

The Council considered the following requests:

- a) Sales, Social Care Council: The Council agreed that the Social Care Council could proceed to sell 6 Myrtle Park and 8 Nutberry Court, both in Glasgow, and the Beechwood Annexe, Inverness.
- b) Lease of Land, Social Care Council: The Council noted that the Social Care Council was now proceeding to enter into a lease from Renfrewshire Council for a site for the provision of a school facility. Approval had previously been granted in this regard.
- c) Barmulloch Church, Ministries Council: The Council noted that this church building was redundant. It was agreed that the Ministries Council could proceed to sell at market value, noting that the existing tenant, Barmulloch Community Development Corporation, had indicated an interest in buying the property.

88. STRATEGY GROUP

The Strategy Group had met on 20 March and a further meeting was scheduled for 8 May.

89. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 February 2017 were approved.

90. MATTERS ARISING

90.1 Ministries Council – Safeguarding (Min 71.1)

Mrs Scott advised that a reporting scheme cycle had been established by the Ministries Council in an effort to improve the safeguarding documentation process and record-keeping. It was acknowledged that there may be an argument for providing church e-mail accounts to certain congregational office-bearers, including Safeguarding Co-ordinators, but that there were significant costs and implications to consider, not least the need to provide ongoing technical support for users.

90.2 Church of Scotland Guild (Min 71.2)

It was noted that Dr Scott had met with the General Secretary of The Guild and that they were intending to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss possible opportunities for increased co-operation between the Guild and the Council.

91. GOVERNANCE

91.1 Minutes of Governance Group

The Council received the draft Minutes of the Governance Group meeting of 13 March (GG5 (2016-2017)).

91.2 Governance Group Report

The following matters were highlighted:

- a) Glasgow: St George's Tron: An update on this matter would be provided to the June meeting.
- b) Boys' Brigade Scotland: A helpful meeting had been held between representatives of the Council and of the Boys' Brigade Scotland on 16 March with a further meeting scheduled for October.
- c) Complaints Handling Procedure: The Council considered a draft Complaints Handling Procedure for use by the Unincorporated Councils and Committees and other relevant constituent parts of the Church. Following discussion and minor amendment, the Procedure was agreed. The Solicitor would contact the relevant agencies of the Church in this regard.

91.3 Restricted Funds Reorganisation Application

The Trustees agreed the proposed application for a restricted funds reorganisation in relation to the Springfield Bequest, noting that the current purposes of this fund were in connection to the Fund for the Maintenance of the Ministry at Springfield Church, Fife. It was intended to seek power to use the funds to support ministry and outreach, including the provision, maintenance, repair, renewal and upgrading of heritable property and facilities for ongoing mission of the Church in the united parish of Ceres, Kemback and Springfield which formerly constituted the parish of Springfield. Mr Watt asked that the Finance Group be given sight of such applications in advance of the full Council in future.

92. STAFFING

92.1 Minutes of Staffing Group

The Council received the draft Minutes of the Staffing Group meeting of 13 March (SG7 (2016-2017)).

92.2 Report of Staffing Group

The following matters were highlighted for approval:

- a) Intern, World Mission Council: The Council agreed this new temporary post.
- b) Temporary Posts, Mission and Discipleship Council: The Council noted that the Staffing Group had approved a number of temporary, one year fixed term replacement posts in the Mission and Discipleship Council in the period since its meeting on 13 March, namely: Senior Administrator – Resources (maternity cover); Senior Administrator – Church Without Walls; Senior Administrator – Worship and Online Resources; and Executive Assistant (from part-time to full-time).

92.3 Senior Management Team

The Council noted the written update report.

92.4 Central Services Committee Constitution and Remit

The Council considered an updated draft of the Constitution and Remit for the Central Services Committee. It was noted that the workforce plan was still to be drawn up, and that this would, in time, form a baseline from which the Committee would be able to evaluate future proposals for appointments. The Constitution might, therefore, have to be amended

to reflect that plan. With that condition, the Council approved the Constitution and Remit with immediate effect.

93. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2017-2018

The Council noted the schedule of meetings for the next session. Members were asked to advise the Secretary of any difficulties in relation to the proposed date for the overnight meeting in September 2017; alternative dates would be considered if necessary.

94. WORDS OF THANKS

The Convener expressed words of thanks to those whose membership of the Council was concluding at the General Assembly, namely Mr Bailey, Dr Chalmers, Miss Fox and Dr Morrison.

95. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.30am, Monday 19 June 2017.

The Meeting was closed with Prayer.

APPENDIX I

COUNCIL OF ASSEMBLY

10 April 2017

Sederunt:

Rev Ian Alexander
Mr Peter Bailey
Dr Sally Bonnar
Very Rev Dr John Chalmers
Mr John Corrigan
Miss Catherine Coull
Rev Iain Cunningham
Miss Elizabeth Fox
Mrs Isobel Hunter
Rev Dr Martin Johnstone
Ms Anne Lamont
Rev Prof Andrew McGowan
Mrs Anne Macintosh
Ms Mary Macleod
Rev Dr John McPake
Rev Jayne Scott
Rev Dr Martin Scott
Rev Norman Smith
Rev Alan Sorensen
Mr Bill Steele
Mr David Watt

Apologies:

Rev Dr Alister Bull
Mr Roger Dodd (General Trustees)
Rev Graham Duffin
Rev Dr John Ferguson
Mr Rob Flett
Rev Dr Richard Frazer
Rev Neil Glover
Very Rev Dr Angus Morrison

In Attendance:

Dr John Dent
Mrs Viv Dickenson
Mr Grant Macrae (*item 82*)
Mrs Lesley Hamilton-Messer
Ms Nathalie Mares (*item 84*)
Very Rev Prof Iain Torrance (*item 84*)
Mrs Pauline Wilson