

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

COUNCIL OF ASSEMBLY

19 February 2018

MINUTES

The Council of Assembly met within the Church Offices, Edinburgh, on Monday 19 February 2018, and was constituted with prayer. A list of those attending is attached to this Minute as Appendix I.

71. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted.

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

73. AGREE AGENDA

The Agenda for the meeting was agreed.

74. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

74.1 Draft Report to the General Assembly

Members considered the Council's draft Report to the General Assembly. The following matters, in particular, were discussed:

a) Section 1 – Introduction

- *Section 1.6:* It was agreed that the Together We Pray initiative should be repeated in 2018. Members noted that the Church of England's '*Thy Kingdom Come*' programme of prayer was continuing to be well received and that there could be opportunities for ecumenical working in the gathering of new resources.

b) Section 4 – Stewardship and Finance

- Individual Councils were asked to speak to the General Treasurer to ensure that any financial information within their Reports to the General Assembly was consistent with this section of the Council's Report.
- *Section 4.4:* It was agreed to make reference to the joint conversations between the Church and Society Council and the Investors Trust on fossil fuels and investments. It was further agreed that the Council's Investment Policy would be placed on the Church's website and a web link (url) added to this section of Report.

c) Section 2 – Strategic Planning

Alongside this section of the draft Report, members considered the draft Strategic Plan, noting the changes which had been incorporated since the last meeting. The following points were noted:

- Alternative photographs for the Strategic Plan booklet would be sought to ensure that the images were both aspirational and relevant to the Church of Scotland context.
- The booklet would be issued in the second mailing to all commissioners to the General Assembly.

- Members discussed whether to align the wording on the front page of the booklet with the Venn diagram and the related text within the draft Report. It was agreed to proceed with what was currently in print, in the hope that the various nuances would appeal to a wider audience.
- The timeline of goals set out in Appendix 1 of the draft Report was thought to be unrealistic in certain aspects and the Council agreed amendments to ensure that the timeframe presented was achievable. It was acknowledged that the Council would be bringing progress reports to each General Assembly until 2028, taking into account any issues arising in the implementation of the stated goals.

d) Section 3 – Property Review: Future of National Church Offices

Liam Fennell, Head of Estates, joined the meeting for this discussion. Alongside this section of the draft Report, members considered a business plan including estimated costings for each of the options. The following points were noted:

- Raymond Young, Chairman of the General Trustees, expressed concern that the proposals were not yet at a stage where the General Assembly could make an informed decision. In particular, he was concerned that there was, as yet, no detailed assessment of risk. It was noted that the General Trustees held the building on behalf of the Council of Assembly. Whilst they were not the beneficial owners, they were concerned with ensuring that any proposals were prudent.
- As to whether the Council should make a clear recommendation against Option 3 (relocation) within the Report, Isobel Hunter was of the view that it was premature to rule out any of the options. She spoke of (1) the need for further consideration of terminal values; (2) the potential distraction to the Church of proceeding with Option 2 at a time when the Strategic Plan would require to be implemented; (3) being sensitive to, and in line with, the wider Church in terms of moving towards having sustainable, and probably fewer, buildings; and (4) the opportunity cost of proceeding with a project which would be a drain on resources. It was noted that the Senior Management Team had been of the view that Option 3 should not be pursued any further.
- The Council remained of the view that the ‘do nothing’ option was not viable nor responsible. Raymond Young was clear that the building was in need of work to bring it up to an acceptable standard.
- Concern was expressed that the figures presented had not, as yet, been ‘audited’. Furthermore, it was suggested that a formal statement was needed to provide the Trustees of the UCC with an assurance in relation to balance and fairness in the appraisal of options.

Whilst acknowledging that the Council had been instructed to bring forward recommendations to this year’s General Assembly, members concluded that it would not be possible to do so within the timeframe and that more detailed work required to be undertaken. It was therefore agreed that the Secretary would amend the draft accordingly, with the removal of much of the detail contained within section 3.5, and circulate this by e-mail for approval. The final version would seek an instruction from the General Assembly to continue the programme of work with a view to presenting a further report on the matter in 2019. It was further agreed to retain all of the current options in light of the discussion.

e) Section 11 – Membership of Councils and Committees:

The Council agreed section 11 of the draft Report, which was seeking an adjustment to Standing Orders to reduce the number of ordinary members serving on the Social Care Council from 28 to 22, noting the arguments set out in a paper presented by Bill Steele.

f) Deliverance

The draft Deliverance was amended to reflect the changes made to the draft Report.

Following additional minor amendment, the Council agreed the Report and proposed Deliverance.

74.2 Joint Report on Local Church Review

The Council considered the draft Joint Report from the various agencies tasked with taking forward the General Assembly's instruction concerning local church review. Following minor amendment, the Council approved the Joint Report, noting that the Secretary had circulated the draft to the other reporting bodies for their approval also.

74.3 Timetable

It was noted that the Council's Report to the General Assembly would be taken on Saturday 19 May, with the exception of section 2 (Strategic Plan) which was scheduled for Monday 21 May.

75. ASSEMBLY ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

Judith Pearson, Convener of the Assembly Arrangements Committee, joined the meeting and spoke to the written report. She highlighted the Committee's endeavours to ensure that commissioners to the General Assembly were confident about the role and better enabled to participate. A new film and leaflets were being produced in this regard and were expected to be finalised in March. Commissioners would also be encouraged to propose people for membership of the Committee to Nominate the Moderator.

It was noted that the Committee was no longer working with Edinburgh First in the marketing and letting of the Assembly Hall, so this work was being covered by staff. The University of Edinburgh's plans to carry out a programme of refurbishment at New College were not yet finalised, but may impact on the availability of the Hall as a venue. A capital expenditure plan was being prepared by the Committee for upcoming work within the Hall. It was noted that the proposed plans were likely to exceed the Committee's budget. The General Treasurer indicated that the refurbishment budget for the Hall may be rather unrealistic, and she agreed to look at this. Raymond Young advised that the General Trustees were planning to develop an overall buildings strategy which would include the Assembly Hall as these were held by the General Trustees on behalf of the Committee.

76. GOVERNANCE – OSCR CIRCULAR TO CHARITIES

The Vice-Convener spoke to a circular issued to charities by the Office of the Scottish Regulator for Charities (OSCR) following recent media reports of abuses connected to some charities working in the international aid sector. The circular was intended to remind charities of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and notifiable events and to ensure that these matters were properly considered by charity trustees at the earliest opportunity.

The Solicitor confirmed that the Church of Scotland had been committed to ensuring appropriate safeguarding measures were in place across the organisation for a period of some twenty years. A procedure for dealing with notifiable events had also been established. It was noted that, in light of the OSCR communication, a note would be sent to congregations to confirm that these matters were covered within existing procedures.

The Council asked the Solicitor to prepare a paper for consideration at the April meeting, taking into account the complexities of the Church structures and the potential implications in terms of liability and risk. It was agreed that the paper should include possible scenarios from a range of areas of work. It was suggested that these matters might also be considered in the anticipated training session for trustees. The Solicitor agreed to investigate whether

PVG checks should be obtained for the trustees of the UCC, and whether there were any additional implications in relation to the Church's close relationship with Christian Aid.

77. COUNCILS' BUSINESS

77.1 Mission and Discipleship Council

The Council noted a written update from the Mission and Discipleship Council.

77.2 World Mission Council

Iain Cunningham spoke to the written update from the World Mission Council, highlighting lessons learned from that Council's strategic review process. He encouraged the Council of Assembly to see through its Strategic Plan and to consider how best to ensure that the regular turnover of Council members did not become a barrier to change.

Members noted that the Africa Group had produced a Special Report on *Lessons for Scotland from the Christian Faith in Africa* which would be submitted to the General Assembly. Iain Cunningham advised of the proposed section of Deliverance instructing the Council of Assembly to consider the recommendations of the Report and the best way of sharing these with congregations and Presbyteries.

With regard to the *Let Us Build a House* project, the Council noted that legislation in Nepal meant that the money gathered from congregations for this project could not be passed on as intended without significantly impacting on grants from the government there. The World Mission Council was planning to engage with donors with regard to a proposed alternative use for the money raised.

77.3 Church and Society Council

The Council noted a written update from the Church and Society Council.

77.4 Panel on Review and Reform

The Council noted that Graham Duffin would be standing down as Convener of the Panel on Review and Reform in May. The Council discussed the Panel's intention to seek a General Assembly instruction for a review of the Ministries and Mission Contributions system. Members were of the view that such a review would be better placed within the context of implementing the Strategic Plan. It was therefore agreed that the Council would refer to the matter in its Supplementary Report, and the Panel's Convener would invite the Panel to consider removing that section from its proposed Deliverance.

78. THEOLOGICAL FORUM

The Council noted a written update from the Theological Forum. It was noted that a risk register should be prepared by the Forum, in line with all of the Councils and Committees of the Church. The Secretary would contact the Convener of the Forum to indicate this.

79. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 December 2017 were approved.

80. MATTERS ARISING

80.1 Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) Review (Min 64.1)

The Ecumenical Officer referred to a newspaper article which referred to the review of ACTS, though the review report had not been released into the public domain. The Council asked to be kept apprised of developments in relation to this review, noting that there may require to be decisions taken by member churches in advance of the General Assembly. It was noted that the next meeting of ACTS was scheduled for 28 February.

80.2 Organisational Review (Min 64.2)

The Council agreed to postpone consideration of this matter until after the General Assembly.

80.3 Secretary, Mission and Discipleship Council (Min 65.2b)

This interim Council Secretary position had been filled by Angus Mathieson by way of a secondment arrangement.

81. FINANCE**81.1 Minutes of Finance Group**

The Council received the Minutes of the Finance Group meeting of 5 February (FG6 (2017-2018)).

81.2 Finance Group Report

The Council noted the management accounts to 31 December 2017.

With regard to visa costs, the Council noted the Group's consideration of a proposal from the Ministries Council to pay visa fees and all other fees associated with applying for the long term right to settle and all UK nationality fees of those who were becoming ministers of the Church and who were coming to the UK from outside the EU and the European Economic Area. The Finance Group had declined to approve the proposal on the grounds that, while the Ministries Council was correctly responding to a General Assembly instruction to consider this, more thought needed to be given to the effects on other employees across the Church of implementing a policy of support simply for ministers. There was a need for a policy which covered the entirety of the workforce to avoid a perception of discrimination in favour of some and against others. The Group had also been anxious about the budgetary implications of any new policy.

81.3 Restricted Funds Reorganisation Applications:a) Mr and Mrs Stuart Millar Symers Fund

The Trustees agreed to the restricted funds reorganisation in relation to the Mr and Mrs Stuart Millar Symers Fund, noting that OSCR had approved the proposed scheme to apply the funds held to support the Services to Older People provided by the Church of Scotland Social Care Council.

b) The Kerr Lectureship

The Trustees agreed to the restricted funds reorganisation in relation to The Kerr Lectureship, noting that OSCR had approved the proposed scheme to apply the funds held in terms of the framework set out in the Declaration of Modified Trust Condition Pertaining to The Kerr Lectureship.

81.4 Property Sales and Purchases

The Council agreed to the sale of a house owned by the Ministries Council which had provided accommodation for an Associate Minister in Nigg.

82. CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE (CSC)**82.1 Minutes of CSC Meeting**

The Council received the draft Minutes of the Committee's meeting of 14 December 2017.

82.2 CSC Executive (Staffing)

The Council received the draft Minutes of the Executive Committee's meeting of 12 February 2018. There were no staffing matters requiring Council approval at this time.

83. SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

It was noted that the SMT had met on two occasions in January and had considered separately the draft Strategic Plan and National Offices Project.

84. AUDIT

The Council noted the draft Minutes of the Audit Committee's meeting of 27 November 2017. A summary of the items considered at the Committee's January meeting were noted.

85. COMMUNICATION – YEAR BOOK EDITOR

The Council considered a paper on the appointment of a new Editor for the Church of Scotland Year Book. It was agreed to appoint David Stewart, an Elder in Edinburgh: Corstorphine St Anne's, to this position.

86. CORRESPONDENCE

The Convener shared a positive message of support which had been sent to the Council from a Parish Minister at Christmas.

87. PLANNING FOR NEXT MEETING

The Convener advised that the additional meeting called for 19 March would allow time for consideration of the draft Annual Report. A photograph of the trustees would be taken for inclusion in that publication. The meeting was expected to conclude at lunchtime.

88. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.30am, Monday 19 March 2018.

The Meeting was closed with Prayer.

APPENDIX I

COUNCIL OF ASSEMBLY

19 February 2018

Sederunt:

Ian Alexander
Russell Barr (am)
Sally Bonnar
David Brackenridge
John Corrigan
Catherine Coull
Iain Cunningham
Viv Dickenson
Graham Duffin
Richard Frazer
Alistair Gibb
Neil Glover
Isobel Hunter
Martin Johnstone
Anne Lamont
Andrew McGowan
Anne Macintosh
Mary Macleod
Ruth MacLeod
John McPake
Norma Rolls
Jayne Scott
Martin Scott
Norman Smith
Alan Sorensen
Bill Steele
David Watt
George Whyte
Ronald Wright
Raymond Young

Apologies:

Elaine McCloghry

In Attendance:

Liam Fennell (*item 74d*)
Judith Pearson (*item 75*)
Pauline Wilson