

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
COUNCIL OF ASSEMBLY
18 September 2017

MINUTES

The Council of Assembly met within the Crutherland House Hotel, East Kilbride, on Monday 18 September 2017, and was constituted with prayer. A list of those attending is attached to this Minute as Appendix I.

20. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Convener welcomed Mrs Norma Rolls, a new trustee, and Mr Raymond Young, Chairman, General Trustees, to the Council. Miss Tamsin Dingwall and Mr Grant Petrie from the National Youth Assembly were welcomed to the meeting.

21. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

23. AGREE AGENDA

The Agenda for the meeting was agreed.

24. STRATEGY

Time had been allocated during the previous day for a comprehensive discussion of the draft strategic plan diagram which had been prepared by the Strategy Group; a separate note of that discussion had been taken. The Convener invited Miss Dingwall and Mr Petrie to offer their reflections on the emerging plan, primarily in relation to the references to young people. Mr Petrie welcomed much of what was in the draft, but suggested that it did not adequately promote the full involvement and integration of young people within the life of the Church. For example, he suggested that the document might include a reference to developing young people's gifts for leadership roles. Miss Dingwall highlighted that, by singling out young-people within the Strategic Plan, there was a danger of pigeon-holing or patronising them, though she recognised that young people may have particular support needs through the transition from childhood into adulthood. Members acknowledged that many of the young people involved in the Church held positions of responsibility in their workplaces but were not always regarded as adults within the life of the Church. Under the 'active discipleship' heading, it was agreed that the text of the 4th outcome be amended to read: "*The Church is a place where all ages experience belonging, choose to engage and grow in faith*". Dr Johnstone spoke of allowing young people to thrive and flourish – not only within the Church, but in society. He suggested that the Plan might be too inward-looking in this regard at present. Mr Cunningham referred to the Church Without Walls Report which talked about shaping church around the gifts of the people; in reality, however, the eldership was often the only route available.

Words of appreciation were expressed to the Strategy Group for the work undertaken to bring forward this draft Strategic Plan, and to the Convener for steering the discussion. Further work on the Plan would be taken forward in light of the Council's consideration of

the draft over these two days. A revised diagram and accompanying narrative would be considered by the Council on 16 October in a special meeting.

25. GENERAL TRUSTEES

Mr Young, Chairman of the General Trustees, updated the Council on the 'Way Forward' group which was developing a strategy for the General Trustees. It was anticipated that the focus would be on reduction and improvement. A comprehensive database of church buildings was being set up and Presbyteries would be able to access data relating to congregations within their bounds.

In response to a question concerning the disparity of resources across the Church's congregations, Mr Young reported that out of the total £1.9m in grants paid by the General Trustees in 2016, £1.05m had been given to congregations in Scotland's most deprived urban and rural areas to target those most in need. It was acknowledged that charity legislation did not allow for the granting of money from one congregation to another in light of their separate charitable status.

26. COUNCILS' BUSINESS

The following reports were noted:

26.1 Church and Society Council

Dr Frazer spoke to the written report and the appended paper which provided an overview of the Church and Society Council's work clustered around the Speak Out themes. It was intended that such overview reports would be produced at regular intervals throughout the year and shared with Department Heads and external partners to seek to ensure increased collaboration. Dr Johnstone emphasised the vital connection between local and national issues, with each informing and impacting on the other; the Speak Out themes were deeply-rooted in the local.

With regard to fossil fuels divestment, the Council was continuing to work with the Investors Trust and the Pension Trustees in the drafting of a report to the 2018 General Assembly. Whilst acknowledging that society was dependent on fossil fuels at present, Dr Frazer hoped that the Church would be proactive in effecting change towards a low carbon future.

A review of the Council's work in the area of education was progressing, with evidence gathered from a wide range of partners to inform the discussion. Members recognised that the education environment was evolving and that more relevant methods of engagement by the Church were needed. Sensitivities around this area of work were noted.

Mrs Dickenson suggested that there was potential for joint working between the Church and Society Council and the Social Care Council in relation to the health and well-being field of activity.

26.2 World Mission Council

Mr Cunningham reported that the recent conference around the theme 'Women in the World Church' had been well received by delegates. A related booklet was available from the World Mission Council. The Council's theme for the 2018-19 session would be Interfaith Engagement.

It was noted that the strategic review of the Council's work in Israel/Palestine was underway and that each of the thirty-four partner activities in that region would be considered within this evaluation.

In response to a question about the resource days for ministers scheduled for November, Mr Cunningham explained that there would be further such events organised for wider participation.

26.3 Ministries Council

Mr Glover advised that the Ministries Council's draft development programme would come to the Council in November.

26.4 Mission and Discipleship Council

Dr Johnstone gave a brief update on behalf of the Mission and Discipleship Council, indicating that the Scottish Storytelling Centre merited renewed consideration in order to ensure that an appropriate strategy was in place.

The Council wished to place on record its thanks to the Rev Dr Alister Bull for the work he took forward during his time in post. It was noted that Dr Johnstone was continuing to lead the Mission and Discipleship department on an interim basis. This arrangement would be kept under review.

27. VICE-CONVENER NOMINATION PROCESS

The Convener invited the trustee members to submit names by 6 October in relation to the forthcoming vacancy in the Vice-Convenership of the Council. It was agreed that, should more than one name be put forward, a vote would be held on 16 October in order to bring forward a name for consideration by the Nomination Committee in January.

28. MINUTES

The Minutes and Record Apart of the Council meeting held on 19 June 2017 were approved.

29. MATTER ARISING**Council and Sub-Group Membership (Min 9)**

It was agreed that Mrs Norma Rolls would serve on the Governance Group. Two vacancies on the Central Services Committee remained unfilled. With regard to the Communications Reference Group, Ms Ruth MacLeod advised that the Group had met in June and that she would be organising a further meeting. Dr Bonnar asked that the Council be notified if the Group's membership required to be augmented with a second trustee.

30. FINANCE**30.1 Minutes of Finance Group**

The Council received the draft Minutes of the Finance Group meeting of 4 September (FG2 (2017-2018)).

30.2 Finance Group Report

Mr Watt highlighted the following matters:

- a) Management Accounts to 31 July 2017: The Council noted the management accounts to 31 July 2017, with Mr Watt highlighting instances of overspending within certain budgets.
- b) Mission and Renewal Fund Statement and Forecast: The Council noted that there had been no unrestricted legacies received in the current year to date and that this had impacted on the Mission and Renewal Fund balance. There was likely to be a subsequent impact on 2019 budgets as this Fund was ordinarily used to support spending. This situation raised questions as to whether budgets should presume legacy income going forward and whether any work was being carried out to promote legacies. It was noted that the current review of stewardship might touch on this matter, though it was apparent that a more in-depth consideration of legacy promotion was needed.
- c) Property Review: The discussion under Minute 30.2b prompted a question as to the affordability of the options under discussion in relation to the property review. Mr Watt

emphasised that this would be a key factor in determining which of the options could be taken forward.

- d) Scottish Churches Housing Action: The Council noted a paper from Mrs Dickenson which provided a helpful overview of Scottish Churches Housing Action's (SCHA) organisational activities and its relationship to the Church of Scotland. The Finance Group had been dealing with a request for an increase in the Church's annual contribution to SCHA and then with subsequent correspondence from SCHA's Convener. The Group had been of the view that this organisation was not sustainable, particularly in relation to its pension liabilities, and that further information was needed on SCHA's activities and financial position before a decision could be taken on providing the requested additional support.

Mrs Dickenson's paper explained that SCHA was launched in 1995 as a new initiative bringing the main churches in Scotland together in their work to tackle poor housing and homelessness. It was a company limited by guarantee and a recognised charity. The Church of Scotland was one of twelve member denominations and networks, with each one invited to appoint a member to the SCHA Board. Dr Johnstone advised that SCHA had played a significant role in ensuring that the voice of churches in Scotland had been heard in this sphere. He suggested that the organisation might welcome additional support for a period of time to allow for the development of a sustainable business model. Members were supportive of partnership working wherever possible, and welcomed this approach, whilst recognising that the pension concerns would require to be considered further.

In the course of discussion it was suggested that Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS) might be in a position to provide additional support to SCHA, though it was not due to meet for several months. This raised a concern about potential double-funding, given that the Church of Scotland paid annual membership contributions to ACTS. The General Trustees were in discussion with SCHA regarding the potential use of obsolete church buildings, though these talks were at an early stage; it was suggested that, in light of this, the General Trustees might be willing to offer some practical support.

Noting all of the issues, it was agreed that the annual contribution be increased to £12k for 2017 and 2018, subject to receiving a revised business model. Dr Scott indicated that he had been invited to attend the SCHA's Annual General Meeting and would raise the Council's concerns in that forum.

30.3 Determination of Stipends and MDS Salaries for 2018

Mr Cunningham and Mr Sorensen declared an interest as Parish Ministers in receipt of a stipend and left the meeting while this item was discussed. (Dr Frazer was not present by this point in the meeting). Staff members, with the exception of Dr Scott, Mrs Macintosh and Rev Jayne Scott, also left the meeting, along with Mr Petrie and Miss Dingwall. Mr Glover remained in the meeting in his role as Ministries Council Convener, but declared that he was a Parish Minister in receipt of a stipend and would not, therefore, have a vote.

The Council's remit in this matter was to *"determine annually the stipend rate, having regard to the recommendation of the Ministries Council, said determination to be made by the voting members of the Council of Assembly with the exception of those members in receipt of either a salary or stipend from the Parish Ministries Fund."*

Members considered the Ministries Council's recommendation that stipends for Parish Ministers be raised by 1.5% from January 2018 on all five points of the stipend scale. The voting members discussed the recommendation, suggesting that a longer term strategy for stipends be developed by the Ministries Council. Furthermore, it was anticipated that the

overall strategic plan would inform a prioritisation exercise and then impact on the allocation of resources.

On a vote being taken for or against the 1.5% increase, eleven members voted in support of the recommendation, with none voting against, and the Council resolved accordingly.

30.4 IT New Servers

The Council considered a tabled paper outlining the case for an upgrade to the server infrastructure which hosted all of the IT systems and services with the exception of e-mail. Mrs Skinner advised that the current server was presenting risks in terms of security and possible unrecoverable hardware failure. Three suppliers had been approached in order to identify the best solution. The preferred option was for a converged Nutanix system running on Nutanix hardware from XMA at £102,000. This cost included hardware and software support for five years and installation, configuration and migration services, equating to a cost of just over £20,000 per year. It was noted that members of the Finance Group had met briefly on 17 September to consider the detail, having requested more information at the Group's meeting on 4 September. It was proposed that the funds would come from the IT budget and a special grant, with depreciation spread over three years. The Council agreed to proceed with the recommended solution.

30.5 Restricted Funds Reorganisation Applications

The Trustees agreed the proposed applications for the following restricted funds reorganisations:

- a) The Kerr Lectureship: The trustees agreed this application, noting that this was necessary in light of the major changes in the Church and in the teaching structure for theology within the Scottish Universities since the fund was established in 1888.
- b) Mr and Mrs Stuart Millar Symers Fund: The trustees agreed this application, noting that the Duneaves Eventide Home had been closed but that the Social Care Council wished to use this Fund to support its Services to Older People in other such homes throughout Scotland.
- c) Miss Mabel D Wilkie's Bequest: The trustees agreed this application, noting that the Ryehill Hostel had been closed but that the Social Care Council wished to use this Fund to support its Adult Care Services throughout Scotland.

31. GOVERNANCE

31.1 Minutes of Governance Group

The Council received the draft Minutes of the Governance Group meeting of 11 September (GG2 (2017-2018)).

31.2 Governance Group Report

Miss Coull highlighted the following matter:

Policy on Circulation of Charity Requests to Ministers: A recent request to the Ministries Council from a large charity to circulate their annual appeal letter to all Church of Scotland Ministers had highlighted the need for a policy in relation to such requests. The Council agreed to adopt the following policy:

With respect to charitable appeals, the national bodies of the Church of Scotland will not circulate letters to Ministers, Session Clerks or Congregational Treasurers using the e-mail system. Such charities remain at liberty to circulate appeal letters using information which is already in the public domain (eg in the Year Book).

32. CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE (CSC)

Mr Brackenridge reported.

32.1 CSC Meeting of 15 June 2017

The draft Minutes of the Committee's meeting of 15 June were noted.

32.2 CSC Executive (Staffing)

The draft Minutes of the CSC Executive meeting of 28 August 2017, dealing with staffing matters, were noted.

33. SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Council noted the written update report.

34. COMMUNICATION

Ms Ruth MacLeod, Interim Head of Communications, shared her initial observations from her short time in post.

35. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Council would meet at **11am** on Monday 16 October 2017 in the Church Offices, 121 George Street, Edinburgh for an Extra-Ordinary Meeting to consider the strategic plan. Tours of the Church Offices would be available from 10am that day and members were invited to contact Mrs Pauline Wilson if they wished to attend for this. The next Ordinary Meeting would be at 10.30am on Monday 20 November 2017.

The Meeting was closed with Prayer.

APPENDIX I

COUNCIL OF ASSEMBLY

18 September 2017

Sederunt:

Rev Ian Alexander (pm)
Dr Sally Bonnar
Mr David Brackenridge
Mr John Corrigan
Miss Catherine Coull
Rev Iain Cunningham
Mrs Viv Dickenson
Rev Dr Richard Frazer (am)
Mr Alistair Gibb
Rev Neil Glover
Mrs Isobel Hunter
Rev Dr Martin Johnstone
Ms Anne Lamont
Mrs Elaine McCloghry
Mrs Anne Macintosh
Ms Mary Macleod
Ms Ruth MacLeod
Rev Dr John McPake
Mrs Norma Rolls
Rev Jayne Scott
Rev Dr Martin Scott
Rev Alan Sorensen
Mr Bill Steele
Mr David Watt
Rev Dr George Whyte
Mr Ronald Wright
Mr Raymond Young

Apologies:

Very Rev Dr Russell Barr
Rev Graham Duffin
Rev Prof Andrew McGowan
Rev Norman Smith

In Attendance:

Miss Tamsin Dingwall
Mr Grant Petrie
Mrs Catherine Skinner
Mrs Pauline Wilson