

CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

May 2015

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.

REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1 The Central Services Committee's (CSC) remit relates primarily to managing the Church Offices in George Street, overseeing the delivery of central services to departments within these Offices and operating as one of the employing agencies of the Church.

1.2 The Committee includes in its membership the Secretary to the Council of Assembly, the General Treasurer, the Solicitor of the Church and the Human Resources Manager. It receives regular reports from the Facilities Manager and from the Property, Health and Safety Manager.

1.3 The General Assembly of 2014 agreed to discharge the Central Services Committee and reallocate its work to other bodies. Powers were delegated to the Council of Assembly to determine the date on which this would take effect in light of unresolved pension technicalities. These matters are still ongoing, as will be outlined in the Council of Assembly's Supplementary Report to this General Assembly. At the time of writing, the CSC continues to meet and deal with matters in line with its remit.

2. Human Resources (HR)

2.1 Pay Award

2.1.1 In late 2014, the CSC started its annual consultation on pay with Unite the Union, the trade union which has

bargaining rights for CSC employees. Information on the Church's financing of pay was shared with union representatives and the discussions were felt to be positive and constructive. After some weeks of negotiations, the CSC's final offer of a consolidated pay award of 1.25%, with a minimum payment of £400 (benefiting those at lower rates of pay) was accepted by Unite in January 2015 following a ballot of its members. The award was implemented in February 2015, backdated to 1 January 2015.

2.1.2 After difficulties with pay negotiations the previous year, both CSC and Unite had committed themselves to making improvements to the pay negotiation process, to ensure an earlier start and to introduce greater transparency and better communication. Both sides in this year's pay round have acknowledged the improvements.

2.2 Staff Survey

A staff survey had been scheduled to be carried out in the last quarter of 2014 but the CSC decided to postpone it to early 2015 in the light of other strategic priorities. The previous survey was carried out in 2012. Work has now started on the commissioning of the follow-up survey. It will seek staff views on a range of workforce issues and the CSC will use the results to design improvements to

working conditions and to inform organisational development planning.

2.3 Termination of Recognition and Procedural Agreement with Unite

2.3.1 The CSC was presented, in the summer of 2014, with a request from a significant number of staff that the 2006 Recognition and Procedural Agreement with Unite should be terminated. That Agreement includes provision for such termination on the serving of six months' notice (by either side) but the CSC decided to seek more evidence of the views of staff before taking a decision. A confidential ballot was organised and both the trade union and representatives of those staff who were seeking change were encouraged to provide information on their respective positions. The ballot of the 220 staff saw an 80% turnout and a vote of 93 to 80 in favour of an end to the Agreement. The CSC decided to recognise the majority view and served formal notice in November 2014 to Unite for termination of the Recognition and Procedural Agreement. The Agreement remains in force during the notice period but will terminate on 25 May 2015. The CSC wishes to thank those members of staff who served as union representatives over the eight years of the Recognition Agreement. It can be a thankless task but they have been absolutely committed to serving their members and to working with management, when possible, in the best interests of the Church and its office staff.

2.3.2 At the time of writing, arrangements are in hand for the setting-up of a Staff Association, with the same bargaining rights. Staff are being consulted on the terms of its establishment. It is anticipated that the Staff Association will come into being on 30 May 2015.

2.4 Policy Development

Several new policies were developed and implemented during 2014. Some were designed to introduce clarity and consistency to staff management practice in some areas and others to reflect changes in employment legislation. The policies implemented include Extended Leave,

Flexible Working, Induction, Shared Parental Leave and Working with Volunteers.

2.5 Employee Engagement

A staff suggestion scheme was developed and implemented during 2014. The Good Ideas Group has been set up and a number of suggestions have been made, some of which have been adopted. An example is a change of the annual leave year.

2.6 Learning and Development

2.6.1 The Learning and Development Advisor facilitated a very well attended and participative *Learning at Work* week in November. Activity was themed around health in the work place and included a variety of learning events, group activity and a fundraising event for malaria nets. The team stair-climbing challenge was particularly well-supported. The week continues to be an excellent way of encouraging departments to share, learn, engage in common activity and focus on development opportunities both for individuals and for teams.

2.6.2 The development of both leadership and management programmes progressed significantly this year. Five managers participated in a pilot development, *New Manager's Toolkit*, designed to equip those new to line management with a range of consistent and practical tools and techniques. A *Coaching for Leadership Programme* has been developed in partnership with an external provider. A full evaluation and assessment of impact will take place for both programmes.

2.7 Review of Appraisal Process

Forty members of staff took part in a number of focus groups considering the development of a new appraisal process. A trial project is underway and is expected to be rolled out to staff in the next few months.

3. Information Technology (IT)

3.1 Data Protection and Network Security

3.1.1 The main focus for the IT Department in the past year has been on information security to ensure that the Church will remain compliant with developments in Data Protection legislation. It is essential that the personal

information we hold on individuals is accurate, secure and protected from unauthorised access.

3.1.2 Security testing was carried out by external organisations on a number of Church web sites, the internet connection, firewall and the wireless network in the Church Offices, and steps have been taken to address the security risks.

3.1.3 To ensure that the information held is accurate, an exercise was undertaken to contact everyone whose details are held on the Consolidated Information System (CIS) database. Prior to this, a data cleansing exercise was undertaken to try to eradicate duplicate and out-dated records as far as possible. The lessons learned from this exercise will help inform the redevelopment of the CIS application to reduce the risk of holding inaccurate information. This redevelopment is being carried out to improve information quality, meet the changed user requirements and address support issues with the current application. When complete, it is anticipated that there will be an annual saving of approximately £14,000 in support costs. The CSC thanks all those people in the Church who have responded to the request to check the information held about them.

3.1.4 An improved email spam filtering facility has been installed, reducing the risk of hackers using email as a method of compromising the network security. This facility generates a daily report to every email user with a list of all blocked messages sent to them, allowing the user to identify any that may have been blocked in error and to request their release.

3.1.5 As part of the security review a policy has been introduced to allow only encrypted USB storage devices to be used for copying files from computers in the Church Offices. This means that information held on these devices cannot be accessed without a password.

3.2 Internet and E-mail Developments

3.2.1 A new leased line connection was installed in the Edinburgh offices for the provision of internet access and email. The bandwidth of this connection is ten times the

previous connection, increasing from 20 Mb/s to 200Mb/s. The annual cost of this connection was reduced by £2,500.

3.2.2 The new connection has allowed for the provision of over 1,000 churchofscotland.org.uk email addresses to ministers and parish staff. To deliver this service, new server and storage hardware was installed in the Church Offices and user logins and mailboxes were created for each user. The email service provides ministers with the same facilities as are available to staff in the Offices, with emails automatically checked for viruses and filtered for spam.

4. Central Properties Department

4.1 The Central Properties Department has continued to work through its wide ranging brief and provide a proactive service. The Department has responsibility for the following:

- management of properties owned by certain of the Councils and Departments of the Unincorporated Councils and Committees;
- delivery of new build projects for Ministries Council;
- delivery of major refurbishment programmes;
- management of facilities and procurement of work equipment;
- health and safety for the Central Services Committee and other Councils of the Church.

4.2 Arbitrations

The department has the responsibility for managing the administration of the arbitration process in cases of readjustment. Since the last report, no arbitrations have been required.

4.3 Major Works

In the last year one major building project has been completed: the repair and upgrading of the former Balornock Church Building for Wallacewell New Charge Development. At the time of writing, work is progressing on a number of projects including identification of a site for a New Charge on the west side of Inverness and the

development of a suitable design for the new church building.

4.4 Furlough Housing

The stock of Furlough Housing is managed on behalf of the World Mission Council. The properties are maintained and managed to a high standard.

4.5 Health and Safety

4.5.1 The CSC has an obligation, as an employer, to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and has the services of suitably qualified personnel through the Central Properties Department. The health and safety strategy continues to be developed to address the particular risks faced by the Committee. The strategy is one of development, audit and review to ensure appropriate revision of the policy as and when required. A major review was completed in the last year.

4.5.2 There are many strands to the health and safety process but it may be worth noting the following:

4.5.2.1 Statutory Testing

The scheduled testing in accordance with statutory requirements, eg electrical installations, gas appliances, asbestos management etc are on-going. Over the preceding year a number of areas of testing have been retendered in accordance with good practice.

4.5.2.2 Training

The programme of health and safety training for staff was further developed through 2014 and delivered as required. A revised strategy is in the process of being rolled out in partnership with the Human Resources Department.

4.5.2.3 Accidents and Incidents

In the period covered by this report, one incident required to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. A number of non-reportable accidents occurred but were of a minor nature. These were dealt with as they arose and, where necessary, in conjunction with the appropriate Council/Department.

4.5.2.4 Safety Committee

The Staff Safety Committee meets on a regular basis and has developed a useful role in the oversight of health and safety within the Offices.

4.5.2.5 Commitment

The CSC is committed to working in partnership with staff and their representatives, Councils and Departments in continuing the development of the health and safety policy, to ensure a healthy and safe environment for all staff, volunteers, visitors, contractors and others.

5. Facilities Management

5.1 Environmental and Waste Management

As of 1 April 2015, businesses in central Edinburgh are required to store their waste inside the property and put it out onto the street only during specified one-hour timeslots. At the time of writing these timeslots have not been announced, but no problems are foreseen for the Church Offices.

5.2 Energy Management

Consumption figures show a 7% decrease for electricity and a 13% increase for gas for the last year due to a colder spring period. Consumption is carefully monitored and every opportunity is taken to save energy.

5.3 Maintenance Works

Essential maintenance is carried out in the Church Offices to ensure safe conditions for visitors and staff and to meet the requirements of our insurance policy. The boiler plant replacement works will be carried out in the summer. A programme of re-decoration and carpeting of meeting rooms and office space continues. Following one or two alarming incidents in the reception area, the access control system was moved to the front door and an entry buzzer system installed, in line with advice from Police Scotland and the Health and Safety Department. It is hoped that this will improve security in the reception area and, consequently, throughout the building. We are grateful to those many visitors to the building who have accepted the slight resulting inconvenience with equanimity.

5.4 Café Lounge

The Café Lounge continues to be used by staff members for breaks and lunch. Vending machines provide drinks and confectionery. Refurbishment works are planned for 2015 to refresh the space and make it more suitable for use for informal meetings, whilst keeping its primary function as a break area.

5.5 Property Lets

Anta continues to rent the shop premises at 117-119 George Street; Palcrafts UK Ltd rents the ground floor premises of 123 George Street for its Fairtrade shop, Hadeel; and the Royal Caledonian Education Trust continues to rent office space. The Church of Scotland Insurance Services Ltd recently moved into an office on the second floor of 121 George Street. The Committee is grateful for the extra income these lets provide.

6. Law Department

6.1 As in previous years, property related matters have formed the bulk of the work of the Law Department with a healthy number of purchases, sales, leasing and other transactions being completed. The Department's Property for Sale page on the Church's website at www.cofsproperties.org.uk continues to generate considerable interest, there having been for example 57,591 individual "hits" on the page during November 2014.

6.2 The pace of property law reform did not slacken during the year with the coming into force of new land registration procedures in December which required staff in the Department to get to grips with a large number of practical, procedural and substantive legal changes affecting all property sale and purchase transactions. In addition, the Scottish Government has announced its intention that all property, title to which remains recorded in the Register of Sasines – which includes the majority of property owned by the Church – should be registered within the Land Register within ten years. This is an ambitious target both for the Registers of Scotland and for organisations such as the Church with a large number of individual properties, many with very complex and

specialised title deeds. The greatest impact will be in regard to congregational property and the General Trustees, mindful of the resourcing implications for the Department, have agreed to undertake, in collaboration with the Committee and the Council of Assembly, an assessment of the Department's needs over the next five to ten years.

6.3 Part of the Department's role is to provide legal services to the Assembly's Councils and Committees. Work for the CSC has included the renegotiating of an extension to the lease relating to the shop at 117-119 George Street and the preparation of a licence for the occupation of office space in the Church Offices by the Church of Scotland Insurance Services Limited.

6.4 The Department has sought to provide information in as accessible a form as possible to congregations on changes in the law affecting them and of risks such as the dangers to those working at height in church premises. In the past, this information has mainly taken the form of circulars downloadable from the website. During 2014, it was decided to trial Data Protection training in the form of a downloadable webinar. Thanks are expressed to those who have provided feedback on the webinar which was mainly favourable and which will be very useful for the developing of similar resources in the future. In addition, the solicitors in the Department are happy to go to speak to Presbyteries or groups of Presbyteries where more hands-on advice and training is felt to be helpful. A number of such sessions took place over the year.

6.5 The Solicitor's membership of the Churches Legislation Advisory Service and her role as Secretary of its sister body, the Scottish Churches Committee, are useful in providing an early "warning" of legislative and compliance changes. The input of that Committee, together with that of the General Trustees, in relation to the development of the new Small Organisations Exemption Scheme for water and wastewater charges proved successful in securing improvements to the scheme as originally proposed. Inevitably there will be winners and losers. In particular, the proposed upper gross income limit for exemption has

been increased by the Scottish Government from £75,000 per annum, as originally proposed, to £200,000 with 50% only of wholesale charges to be payable by congregations with a gross income up to £300,000. The new arrangements will have come into effect on 1 April 2015 with transitional support for those no longer eligible until March 2017.

7. Financial Management

The Committee takes seriously its responsibility for managing a substantial budget. It is grateful to the managers and staff of the various departments under its control who work so hard to contain costs and eliminate

deficits. We are pleased to report that most of our departments – Central Properties, Facilities, Human Resources, Information Technology and Law – performed to budget or achieved slight underspends; one department reported an overspend because of unforeseen expenditure.

In the name of the Committee

BILL STEELE, *Convener*
DAVID BRACKENRIDGE, *Vice-Convener*
PAULINE WILSON, *Administrative Secretary*