

BASIC INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL NEW MEMBERS

NAME OF COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE: Church and Society Council

BRIEF SUMMARY OF AREA OF WORK:

The Church and Society Council, working through congregations and with civil society and decision makers, exists to build relationships that might create a world free from poverty and injustice. In this work the Council seeks to be: prophetic, missional, relational and to root its work in the Christian faith.

Over the next 15 years, through its Speak Out work plan, the Council will focus on seven key areas in which these relationships can find expression. These are:

- Through local communities – Where we will work to build local communities where people flourish
- Through politics – Where we will work to create a way of doing politics differently, a more inclusive, representative and participatory politics
- Through our economy – Where we will work to create an economy driven by equality
- Through international relations – Where we will work to build global friendships and peace
- Through the environment – Where we will work to care for creation
- Through children and young people – Where we will work to invest in young people to enable and allow them to grow
- Through Health and social care – where we will work to ensure the health and wellbeing of all

By building relationships in these areas the Council will seek to change attitudes, establish partnerships, encourage practical action, and shape policy to create world that looks a bit more like God hopes and intends. We have a particular commitment to do this alongside people who struggle against poverty and injustice.

NAMES OF CONVENER AND SECRETARY:

Convener: Rev Dr Richard Fraser

Vice-Convener: Pauline Edmiston

Vice-Convener: Wendy Young

Secretary: Rev Dr Martin Johnstone

NUMBER OF MEMBERS: 36

Convener and Vice-Conveners, Appointed by the General Assembly

28 Appointed by the General Assembly

1 each from the Guild and Social Care Council

4 co-opted members representing the EMU Covenant (Episcopal, Methodist and United Reformed Churches working together in Scotland), the Salvation Army in Scotland, the United Free Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland.

FREQUENCY, TIMING AND VENUE OF MEETINGS:

Five Council meetings per year: June (overnight), September, November, February (overnight) and April.

Day meetings are normally held at the Church Officers in Edinburgh and overnight meetings at the Conforti Institute in Coatbridge. Meetings are normally held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays.

Council members are also strongly encouraged to participate in working groups, committee work and to attend other events that are organised by the Council and its partner organisations.

DETAILS OF SUB-COMMITTEES, TASK GROUPS ETC:

The **Business Committee** acts as the Council executive, planning agendas, scrutinising accounts and budgets and making policy recommendations to the full Council. The Committee meets two weeks before each Council meeting, and also on the day of the Council's report to the General Assembly where it considers any notices of motion or other issues that may have arisen.

The **Education Committee** has oversight of the Church's work in schools and further education colleges by supporting teachers, providing resources for Religious and Moral Education, training and supporting chaplains, leaders of Religious Observance / Time for Reflection and co-ordinating the church representatives on local authority education committees.

The **Society Religion and Technology Project Committee** is made up of Council members and others with an interest in science and ethics and the work of the Church in this area. It advises on issues for future research and study and supports generally the work of the SRT Project.

The **Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office Advisory Group** meets every six to eight weeks when Parliament is sitting. Each of the eleven participating denominations has one seat on the Advisory Group.

Council members frequently represent the Church of Scotland on ecumenical and civic groups as and when the need and opportunity arises.

EXPECTATIONS OF MEMBERS:

As a Council member, you are expected to:

Prepare diligently

- Read and study papers and reports conscientiously so that you can thoughtfully respond to the work being undertaken.
- Be aware of what staff and working groups are doing in the name of the Council

Debate Constructively

- Respect differing opinions and alternative approaches
- Recognise the full range of views and ideas available to the Council in the development of ideas and decision-making

Challenge Rigorously

- Engage fully with the proposals and issues facing the Council

Decide boldly

- Make big decisions when they need to be made

As a Council member you can expect:

Professional support

- Helpful staff able and willing to offer information or advice on any aspect of the Council's work; staff have particular areas of expertise and will be able to answer your question or explore an issue – you will be informed who the most appropriate person is for each subject.
- Tasks and projects undertaken by the Council to be completed to the highest standards.

Competent administration

- Meeting dates, times and venues to be agreed at least four months in advance

- Aim for papers to be circulated two weeks before Council meetings, with occasional supplementary papers circulated one week before. Papers will only be tabled at meetings in exceptional circumstances

Relevant information

- Papers and e-mails should state clearly their purpose and what action, if any, is required and what consequences any action may have.
- News, details and proposals to be circulated by e-mail for comment or agreement which is timely, informed and balanced, and focused on necessary policy decisions.

As a Council member you are expected to contribute to work:

Help provide leadership and vision

- Ensure that the Council is working to its remit and mission statement
- Oversee the work of the Council Secretary
- Sign-off on new policy and the Council's Annual Report to the General Assembly
- Have stewardship of the Council's finances, through agreeing budgets, scrutinising accounts and setting strategic work priorities
- Pray for those involved in the life of the Council and for its work

Contribute to collective decision-making

- Attend Council meetings (five times per year), and be a member of at least one of the Council's working groups
- Respond to e-mail requests for opinions or feedback
- Share in debates about policy issues when you have ideas or information

Work in co-operation with staff

- Participate fully in policy working groups, by being an active member including attending meetings, conducting research, writing papers and using your particular gifts to further the work of the Council.
- Develop policy through the research, drafting and agreeing of reports

Represent the Council, and the Church

- Ensure that the work of the Council is communicated to appropriate individuals and groups within the local congregation and Presbytery
- Volunteer, if appropriate, for appointment to other groups (Church of Scotland, ecumenical or civil society bodies) in order for the Council's views to be represented and as a sign of the Council's commitment to work in partnership with others whenever possible

GENERAL SKILLS/EXPERIENCE SOUGHT:

Experience of and interest in one or more of community development, politics, economics, international relations, environmental issues, youth work, education, health and social care, science, technology, ethics and theology; ability to reflect on these areas in the context of the Christian faith, interest in the broad range of the Council's remit.

PARTICULAR SKILLS SOUGHT FROM 2017:

As the Council implements its Speak Out work, we are particularly keen to ensure that our membership includes people with ongoing direct experience of struggling against poverty and injustice. We are committed to changing our ways of working to accommodate this.