

CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

May 2016

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

The General Assembly:

1. Receive the Report.

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REPORT

1. Introduction

1.1 The Central Services Committee's (CSC) remit relates primarily to operating as one of the employing agencies of the Church; it also has responsibility for the management of the building at 121 George Street, Edinburgh, and for overseeing the delivery of some central services to departments within the Church Offices.

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 Head of Human Resources. It receives regular reports from the Facilities Manager, the IT 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 but the Council of Assembly hopes to be able to address them in its Supplementary Report to the Assembly. At the time of writing, the CSC continues to meet and to deal with the matters in its remit.

2. Human Resources (HR)

2.1 Employee Council Committee

The CSC reported in 2015 that it had decided, after a period of consultation with staff and a ballot, to terminate

the 2006 Recognition and Procedural Agreement with Unite the Union. A new staff representative body, the Employee Council Committee, has now been set up with rights to consult and negotiate with the CSC on behalf of all staff on a range of employment issues, including pay. Employee Council Committee members volunteered to serve, training was provided and both the Constitution and the formal Joint Negotiating and Consultative Executive (JNCE) partnership with the CSC were recognised with effect from 3 September 2015. The JNCE meets monthly.

2.2 Pay Award 2016

2.2.1 In autumn 2015, the CSC started consultation on the payment of a pay award for 2016 with the Employee Council Committee. A commitment had been given to greater transparency on the finances relating to pay awards and the negotiating meetings were attended by the Acting General Treasurer. The final offer from the CSC of 1.25% on all pay points was rejected by the Employee Council Committee and a "Failure to Agree" process was therefore invoked. As a result of this process, the CSC increased its final offer to 1.5%, with associated conditions of a freeze on any job re-evaluations for six months, and a temporary delay on recruitment for all posts to ensure affordability. This offer was accepted by the Employee Council Committee in February 2016 following a ballot of all staff, with 64% of staff voting in favour of the award.

The award was implemented in March 2016, backdated to 1 January 2016.

2.2.2 Both the CSC and the Employee Council Committee acknowledged that future negotiations would be eased by earlier discussions at the start of the budgeting process and that a policy on pay would provide a useful guide. That work is now in progress.

2.3 Staff Survey 2015

A follow-up staff survey was commissioned and it took place in April 2015. The CSC worked with an external project partner to ensure confidentiality. It was encouraging that 62.5% of staff completed the survey, which looked at a range of topics including wellbeing, reward and recognition, job satisfaction and motivation, management and leadership and internal communications. The second phase of the survey was the holding of small focus groups specifically to consider the low scoring areas. The final phase was an all staff event, held off-site, to share the full findings with staff and to identify actions for moving forward. Since then, an organisational action plan has been published identifying options and opportunities for review, change and development.

2.4 Policy Development

Several new HR policies were developed and implemented during 2015. Some were designed to introduce clarity and consistency to staff management practices and others to reflect changes in employment legislation. They included policies on internships, whistleblowing and managing sickness absence.

2.5 Learning and Development

2.5.1 The Learning and Development Advisor facilitated a highly participative Learning at Work Week in November. Learning at Work Week has become an established event in the staff development programme and activity this year was themed around self-led learning. There was a total of 141 attendees across eight events, which included an historical walk learning event, introductions to coaching

and learning styles, a guest speaker on the issue of homelessness and a very popular all staff quiz.

2.5.2 Internal Communications became an area of focus following the findings in the Staff Survey and the HR Department hosted an Internship for a period of six months. As a result, a programme designed to encourage good working relationships and positive work-based communication was initiated and has been well received. Activity in this area has included the development of a new electronic monthly staff newsletter "Hub Buzz", a review of the content on the staff intranet site to make it more engaging, monthly "Connect" events where Departments are encouraged to host a coffee morning to showcase some of their work, and excellent progress towards achieving the NHS Health Scotland Healthy Working Lives Award.

3. Information Technology (IT)

3.1 The IT Department spent time this year installing a new version of the Church's Consolidated Information System (CIS) and on work to ensure that the data is being held in compliance with data protection legislation. The new version of the CIS application was developed and delivered in-house and on schedule by the IT Development team; this has resulted in an annual saving of £14,000 in support costs previously paid to an external supplier.

3.2 Information security continued to be a major focus of the team's work prompted by concerns from the Solicitor of the Church about various potential risks. The hard drives in all of the laptops being used by Church Offices staff have been encrypted as part of the ongoing security review. This ensures that in the event of a laptop being lost or stolen the files stored on the hard drive cannot be accessed without the required encryption key. A similar exercise was started for the computers used by Presbytery Clerks. This exercise required alternative software to be identified, tested and then installed. Unfortunately, the software resulted in a number of failures, with computers becoming unusable until the IT Department took steps

to restore them to a working state. There had been no such failures during the testing phase but the sheer variety of hardware and Windows operating systems being used by Presbytery Clerks had made it difficult to test every possible variation in advance. Given the risk of losing important information, it was decided to put a temporary halt to further installations of the software so that alternative options could be assessed. This exercise continues. In the meantime, we remain grateful to Presbytery Clerks for their patience and understanding.

3.3 A new managed print contract for the Church Offices was put in place in the course of the year. This will result in a saving of approximately £90,000 over the five year term of the contract. The IT Department in the Church Offices worked with the IT team from CrossReach and the Law Department to award a three year contract for the provision of landline and mobile telephony services for both the Church Offices and Charis House. In addition, a new telephone system was installed in the Assembly Hall and a new wi-fi facility is due to be installed in time for the General Assembly. A new internet connection is due to be installed at the Scottish Storytelling Centre in April 2016.

3.4 The IT Department has been working closely with the project leaders of the Business Continuity and Risk Management projects mentioned in the report of the Council of Assembly. Microsoft Azure Cloud Service is being used to store an off-site copy of Church of Scotland data. This copy will be used to restore IT services in a disaster recovery event. Further work will be carried out in the coming year to check that the recovery can be completed in a timely manner and that people can access the data when it has been restored to alternative servers. The Department is expecting to have a lead role in the Information Security aspects of these projects.

3.5 The Department arranged in the course of the year for the installation of ceiling-mounted projection equipment in the main meeting rooms in the Church Offices. This has made the use of information technology in meeting rooms much easier, particularly for

administrative staff and for those making PowerPoint presentations. The Department continues to support the video-conferencing equipment which is available within the Offices and stands ready to assist with any extension of this technology which may be recommended.

4. Central Properties Department

4.1 The Central Properties Department has continued to work to its wide-ranging brief and to provide a professional and proactive property and safety service. The Department has responsibility for:

- management of properties owned by the Councils and Departments of the central administration, with the exception of the Church Offices, CrossReach properties, the Assembly Hall and the Moderator's flat for which different arrangements apply;
- delivery of new build projects, mainly for the Ministries Council;
- delivery of major refurbishment programmes;
- management of facilities and procurement of work equipment for the properties overseen by the Department;
- health and safety for the Central Services Committee and other Councils of the Church, excluding Social Care for which different arrangements apply.

4.2 Arbitrations

The Department has responsibility for managing the administration of the arbitration process in cases of congregational readjustment. Since the last report, one arbitration has been undertaken.

4.3 Major Works

In the last year one major building project has been commenced: the construction of a new building and facilities for Church House, Glasgow. Church House is a registered charity in Bridgeton, working in the area since 1942 after being founded by the then parish minister to provide activities for and build positive relationships with children and young people. It retains a strong link with the congregation of Glasgow: Bridgeton St Francis in the East,

and is one of the sponsored projects of the Presbytery of Glasgow. Work is also progressing on a number of projects, including the 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. A suitable site has now been identified and negotiations by the Law Department are ongoing to conclude the purchase.

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 so that Mission Partners and their families returning to Scotland on regular deputation have attractive and comfortable temporary accommodation. Furlough housing can sometimes be made available for short-term lets for other overseas visitors to the Church of Scotland.

4.5 Health and Safety

4.5.1 The CSC has an obligation, as an employer, to comply with the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. Two members of the Department's staff have health and safety qualifications and the CSC therefore has ready access to professional advice and guidance. The health and safety strategy, as in previous years, continues to be developed in key areas to address the particular risks faced by employees and others. The strategy is regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains appropriate, effective and up-to-date. In order to satisfy statutory obligations in relation to specific subjects a number of areas of work have been reviewed in their entirety over the last two years. Action plans were then developed and implemented to address areas of concern. These included:

- management of Legionella risk;
- upgrading and review of the Asbestos Register;
- fire risk assessments;
- work equipment.

4.5.2 There is a regular programme of testing in accordance with statutory requirements; this covers, for example, electrical installations, gas appliances and asbestos management. In the course of the last twelve

months, a number of external contracts for this testing were awarded after a retendering process, in accordance with good practice.

4.5.3 The programme of health and safety training for staff was further developed through 2015 and delivered as required.

4.5.4 It is encouraging to report that, in the period covered by this report, no incidents required to be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. A number of non-reportable accidents occurred but were of a less serious nature. These were dealt with as they arose and, where necessary, in conjunction with the appropriate Council/Department.

4.5.5 The Safety Committee meets on a regular basis and continues to play an important part in the oversight of health and safety within the Offices. The CSC appreciates particularly the contributions made by the elected staff representatives.

4.5.6 The CSC is committed to working in partnership with staff and their representatives, Councils, Committees and Departments in ensuring a healthy and safe environment for all staff, volunteers, visitors, contractors and others.

5. Facilities Management

5.1 Environmental and Waste Management

Staff in the Church Offices are to be commended for their co-operation with a strict waste management regime: there are a reduced number of waste paper bins in offices and all waste has to be separated at the recycling points on each floor. Food waste is collected separately. Changeworks, an Edinburgh-based social enterprise, is the new waste contractor for the Church Offices, following disappointing performance by the previous contract holders.

5.2 Energy Management

Consumption figures show a 7% increase for gas and a 9% decrease for electricity in 2015, compared to figures

from 2014. However, new, more efficient gas boilers were installed towards the end of 2015 and it is expected that figures for 2016 will show a decrease in gas consumption. Energy usage is carefully monitored and every opportunity is taken to save energy. An Energy Management Group, comprised of senior officials from both the Church Offices and Charis House, oversees policy in this area and shares good practice. The Church Offices also has a staff Green Group, with volunteers from throughout the building who have a particular interest in the environment. It meets several times a year to discuss ways that the Church Offices can be made as environmentally friendly as possible, looking at issues such as energy management, waste recycling, cycling to work and training for drivers in reducing petrol consumption. A group of keen staff cyclists again entered the annual Pedal for Scotland event, raising over £600 for Christian Aid.

5.3 Maintenance Works

Urgent repair and maintenance work is carried out as necessary to the Church Offices but significant projects are, for the moment, in abeyance pending the conclusion of a review of the Church Offices instructed by the Assembly of 2015, the conclusions of which will be included in the Supplementary Report of the Council of Assembly. The boiler plant replacement works were carried out in the summer of 2015; the project took slightly longer than planned and staff had to endure some weeks of limited heating in what turned out to be a cold autumn. However, the new boilers are more energy-efficient and offer greater user-control and data reporting. The staff break area formerly referred to as the Café Lounge was refurbished in May 2015. The usable space was extended and seating booths and an informal meeting area were added, in an effort to ease pressures on our increasingly busy ground floor meeting rooms. The space is available for use by visitors to the building as well as by staff. Staff voted to rebrand the area 'The Hub'. It is used for regular staff breaks and lunches but also for events such as the monthly charity coffee mornings hosted on a rota by departments.

5.4 Property Lets

The Church Offices currently has four tenants: Anta, Palcrafts UK Ltd, the Royal Caledonian Education Trust and the Church of Scotland Insurance Services Ltd. The Committee is grateful for the extra income these lets provide.

6. Law Department

6.1 The major part of the Department's work is property related whether in the form of purchases, sales, leasing and other conveyancing-type transactions or with regard to requests for property related advice and assistance. Problems such as defective building work, car park disputes, bats and septic tank outfalls are sadly a source of difficulty from time to time for many congregations and the ability to obtain advice without getting a solicitor's bill hopefully eases the stress for office bearers. The Department also offers an estate agency service for the sale of Church properties and during the year introduced a number of innovations including a "Property of the Week" feature on Facebook which has attracted a healthy number of "hits".

6.2 In conjunction with the General Trustees, further work has been carried out to scope the considerable work which will be required to implement the Scottish Government's decision to require that all property held on Sasine titles should be registered in the Land Register by 2024. This has involved discussions with the Registers of Scotland and an evaluation of the costs/benefits of proceeding by way of voluntary registration or waiting for what is termed "Keeper Induced Registration". The latter is likely to be cheaper in terms of registration and other costs but could result in less accurate registration entries depending on the exact mechanism adopted. Work on this continues.

6.3 During the year a number of the solicitors spoke at events organised by Presbyteries and other bodies on legal issues such as data protection, water charges and charity law. Meeting office bearers whether at "roadshows" or less formally at Heart and Soul is always

rewarding and feedback is very helpful in tailoring the circulars available via the website and other resources on legal issues of interest to congregations. Unfortunately the “compliance burden” on congregations shows no sign of abating and the Solicitor and her staff are keen to do what they can to lessen the load.

6.4 As well as providing legal services to the Assembly’s Councils and Committees, the Department is responsible for a number of administrative functions such as servicing trusts and appeal bodies and processing documentation such as OSCR change of name and constitution forms. Another such area of “backroom” work is that related to the Delegation of Assembly in issuing new constitutions. This is mainly carried out by the Solicitor’s Personal Assistant, Moira Wilson, in a diligent and meticulous fashion.

6.5 The Committee is glad to note that Mary Macleod has been nominated to replace Janette Wilson as Solicitor of the Church. Janette (who is only the third Solicitor of the Church since the Department was set up in 1938) acquired during her 35 years working for the Church a huge knowledge of the institution and the specialities of civil law so far as it affects the Church’s numerous activities. Mary, with her previous experience as Depute Solicitor, will be a safe pair of hands and a worthy successor to lead the Law Department into the future.

In the name of the Committee

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

ADDENDUM

Bill Steele

The Committee noted with pleasure – and some consternation – the nomination of its Convener, Bill Steele, as the next Convener of the Social Care Council. Pleasure because we know that he has a real heart for the work of CrossReach as well as possessing the business skills to support the Social Care Council as it faces challenges over the next few years. Consternation because the Central Services Committee thereby loses its hard-working, dedicated and experienced Convener just at a time when structural change is being contemplated. Bill has been a member of the Committee since 2010, serving as one of its Vice-Conveners before being appointed as Convener in 2014. He brought to its work a detailed knowledge of the building industry and a real ability, therefore, to engage closely and effectively with the property management elements of the CSC’s work. As Convener, he also willingly took on the HR aspects of the Committee’s brief, chairing pay negotiation meetings and engaging with staff representatives at various consultations. The CSC may be one of the smaller committees in the Church structure but the work can be challenging and it requires its office-bearers to demonstrate understanding, empathy and a creative approach to problem-solving across a number of diverse areas. No-one ever doubted Bill’s commitment to the staff; his bluff demeanour imperfectly conceals a real concern for the people who work in the Church Offices, and the Committee, as well as the staff, have benefited. Bill is an elder and Session Clerk at Alvie and Insh, Kincaird, and is heavily involved in the life of the congregation as well as in the work of the Cairngorms Christian Centre; he has combined all this with membership of the Social Care Council. It is normal for a retiring Convener to go with the best wishes of the Committee for a more relaxing future but this, in Bill’s case, would be an idle wish. Instead we seek for him God’s rich blessing as he takes up his new and challenging position at the Social Care Council; we shall pray for him.

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