

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

COUNCIL OF ASSEMBLY

18 March 2019

MINUTES

The Council of Assembly met at St Cuthbert Parish Church, Lothian Road, Edinburgh, on Monday 18 March 2019, and was constituted with prayer. A list of those attending is attached to this Minute as Appendix I.

113. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Convener welcomed those present, including Chloe Clemmons, attending for the Secretary of the Church and Society Council; Craig Renton, attending for the Secretary of the Ministries Council; and Catherine Skinner who was in attendance. Apologies were noted.

114. AGREE AGENDA

The Agenda of the meeting was agreed.

115. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

116. MINUTES

The Minute of the Council meeting held on 18 February 2019 (COA6 2018-2019) and the Minute of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 22 February 2019 (COAExtra2 2018-19) were approved.

117. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising which were not otherwise covered on the agenda.

118. GENERAL ASSEMBLY

118.1 Corresponding Member

The Corresponding Member for the Council of Assembly was yet to be confirmed. Any Member who wished to serve in this capacity was asked to advise Carron Lunt.

118.2 Heart and Soul 2019

The Convener was grateful for those who were willing to serve as roaming ambassadors at the Heart and Soul event. More volunteers were sought.

118.3 Statistics

The Council received details from congregational statistical returns and ministry statistics for inclusion in the Council's report to the General Assembly. The lack of dedicated research focus is identified within the Action Plan. The Council is aware that there is room for improvement in this area.

Pauline Wilson joined the meeting for item 118.4.

118.4 Annual Report and Accounts 2018

The Council considered the draft Annual Report and Accounts 2018 and the following comments were noted:

- Fewer images have been used this year in order to reduce the cost of production.

- Clarity was sought on the total amount which the Church has raised for Christian Aid.
- It should be highlighted that CrossReach is pleased to report that a majority of clients of services for older people were local authority rather than private clients.
- The Church (Social Care Council) is a core participant in the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry and would seek to make provision, with appropriate advice, in relation to any contingent liabilities.
- Include mitigation of the risk of having several senior staff in acting roles along with acknowledgement that there are gaps in the senior management structure.

Pauline Wilson, Executive Officer, was thanked for producing the draft Annual Report Narrative section of the Annual Report before leaving the meeting. Discussion continued around the Finance Review and Annual Accounts.

- The point should be made that the charities group was in deficit and not the charity itself. The Church has failed to set a balanced budget due, for the most part, to an inability to set priorities.

The General Treasurer and wider team were thanked for producing the Financial Review and Annual Accounts. The revised Annual Report and Accounts 2018 would come to the April Council meeting for discussion and final approval.

118.5 Supplementary Report

The Supplementary Report to the General Assembly will include financial reporting as well as proposed regulations for the Growth Fund, as set out in the Radical Action Plan. The Supplementary Report will be brought to the Council in April for approval.

119. FINANCE

119.1 Finance Group Report

David Watt reported that much of the recent Finance Group meeting had been around the Indicative Budget 2020 and that details would be reported in the Supplementary Report to the General Assembly.

119.2 Minutes of Finance Group

The Council received the Draft Minutes of the Meeting of 4 March (FG8 2018-19).

119.3 Indicative Budget 2020

A summary paper on the Indicative Budget 2020 was received which reflected initial discussions with the Councils. The General Treasurer reported that progress was not being made towards a break-even budget. Although the Council was intent to demonstrate a downward trajectory in the level of deficit it was noted that much work has been done already to scrutinise expenditure and to closely monitor reserves. Clearly laid out policies would assist. Further to discussion at the December meeting, the Councils, Committees and Departments had been invited to engage in a prioritisation exercise with reports to be brought the Council in June. The legacy position had allowed deferral of some difficult decisions and legacies were being reduced in the budget. The General Treasurer agreed to discuss use of the Mission and Renewal Fund with the Councils ahead of the April meeting.

Viv Dickenson, Secretary to the Social Care Council, highlighted the difficulties for CrossReach in preparing an indicative budget for 2020 such as the timeline for local authorities declaring figures and the ongoing discussions around potential settlements as well as the National Care Home contract.

There were challenges for the Trustees in making suggestions of what work might cease in order to make savings and it was suggested that the potential for increased income through

the efforts of the stewardship team. Details of the issues would be outlined in the Supplementary Report to the General Assembly.

The Convener confirmed that a letter had been received on the morning of the meeting from Greenock and Paisley Presbytery in relation to Ministries and Mission contributions. This would be reported on later on the agenda under correspondence.

Review of the Ministries and Missions system continues to be an active item on the Council's work plan as outlined in their Report to the General Assembly.

Discussion on the Indicative Budget 2020 was suspended until following the items which had been given an Order of the Day.

Angus Morrison, Boyd Robertson and Pauline Wilson joined the meeting for item 120.

120. GAELIC GROUP

Angus Morrison, former Convener of the Gaelic Group, confirmed that he was excited by the increasing potential of the work and the Group was grateful to the Councils for their support. A written report was received which set out how the work of the Group is closely linked with that of the Councils as well as offering details of costings and priorities and a commitment to do further work on this. A great deal of work has been done by the group to establish funders and applications would continue for external funding. A grant of £30k has been awarded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, with £24k of this money received in December 2018. £15k has been offered from the now widened Alexander John Macleod Fund (the trustees of which are the voting members of the Ministries Council). These two grants combined would allow a Gaelic Officer to be appointed for one year on a consultancy basis, and would also cover elements of work specified in the written report. In addition it was noted that the Church offered staff support for the Group and administrative support and coordination of meetings of the Group along with related costs. An estimate of costs should be shown in the budget for 2020. Due to significant pressures on the budget a critical part of the work for a Gaelic Officer would be to identify sources of funding for future work.

As mentioned at the previous Council meeting the implementation of the Gaelic Language plan was aspirational. A Gaelic Officer would be able to tease out what would be possible to deliver in the Plan. Whilst noting that funding had been secured Elaine McCloghry, Head of Human Resources, expressed concern with setting up a consultancy arrangement when the headcount was being closely managed for staff of the Central Services Committee.

Boyd Robertson, Acting Convener of the Gaelic Group, welcomed the opportunity to interact with the Council and wished to emphasise the great value placed on the contributions of Pauline Wilson to the ongoing work. The Group would not seek to replicate the aims of the Scottish Government around the Gaelic language and would look to arrest decline and invest in Gaelic language medium.

Richard Frazer shared the positive experiences of his own congregation which has a Gaelic service each Sunday and had seen an increase in numbers and interest and awareness in the Gaelic language.

The Council gave permission to the Group to proceed to appoint a consultant for a period of one year, to be paid from the grants received for this purpose. The Council further agreed that the work planned for the period 2020-2023 should be progressed using the funding which was already in place:

- the provision of Gaelic resources for Thy Kingdom Come, including a translation of a prayer journal and a short Gaelic podcast;

- the production of an audio version of the four Gospels taken from the 2017 translation of the New Testament; and
- holding a national event for Gaelic speaking ministers and learners from across the denominations to further consider the needs and ways of promoting Gaelic ministry and mission and to offer support and encouragement to Gaelic speaking ministers and anyone who would like to improve their Gaelic for use within a church context.

This permission was given on the proviso that any call on Church money would be fully understood, discussed and agreed before any work was done in any area of the Gaelic Language Plan. It was noted that, whilst there would be an opportunity to learn about the language and the culture there was no compulsion for staff to learn to speak Gaelic or any commitment given to train staff to speak Gaelic.

Elements contained within the Gaelic Language Plan for the period 2020-2023 would be fully costed and prioritised.

The Convener thanked the representatives of the Gaelic Group for producing a written report and for being in attendance.

121. MEETING OF TRUSTEE MEMBERS

The discussion which took place under this item is contained in a Record Apart.

Christine Cavanagh joined the meeting for item 122.

122. PANEL ON REVIEW AND REFORM

An update report was received and the Council was pleased to note that the Panel had identified 20% of savings in the 2019 budget after revising plans for conferences and sharing costs with Path of Renewal.

The Council expressed appreciation for the ongoing work of the Panel. Jenny Adams, Convener of the Panel on Review and Reform, was thanked for the joint working with various different Councils and Committees, in particular around Sacramental Ministries.

123. FINANCE – CONTINUED

123.1 Indicative Budget 2020 - Continued

Discussion resumed on this item following on from items on the agenda which had been given an Order of the Day.

The indicative budget assumes grant payments at a similar level although there was ongoing review of grants to ensure that they meet the Church's charitable objectives. There has also been the Funds Review which has resulted in many restricted funds reorganisation applications. The Council considered a proposal from the Finance Group to reduce the grants budget. A reduction to unrestricted grants would be useful as a cut in grants from restricted funds results in the accumulated revenue building up. The General Treasurer also highlighted that there were discretionary funds used for grants which might be used for other purposes. It was noted, however, that the Councils had already scrutinised their budgets and explored the possibilities for savings and to release restricted funds. Also, the General Assembly determines the programme of work for the Councils and it was suggested that any cuts prior to decisions by the General Assembly would be premature as savings may be achieved out of those changes. Notwithstanding the authority of the General Assembly and the work already done to identify savings, the Council was determined to reduce the deficit.

Concern was expressed that discussions during the meeting had been around budgets and not on strategic priorities which offer innovative work for the Church and exciting new areas of mission.

123.2 Funds Reorganisation Application

Details of proposed funds reorganisation were provided. Noting that the details had been scrutinised by the Finance Group, the applications for reorganisation of 11 funds were agreed.

123.3 Funds Reorganisation Resolution

Further to recent applications for funds reorganisation, authorisation was granted to the Convener to sign the necessary documentation, on behalf of the Trustees, to pass the final resolution for:

- a) Hope Bursary
- b) Lee Bursary
- c) A J McIntyre Bursary
- d) McMillan Trust
- e) Rathder Fund

123.4 Pensions Forum

The Council received the Note of the meeting of 21 February 2019.

124. COUNCILS' BUSINESS**124.1 Church and Society Council**

Richard Frazer, Convener of the Church and Society Council, was pleased to report that external funding had been sourced for posts.

The Church of Scotland recently hosted the Eurodiaconia Annual General Meeting. Representatives from European Churches and Christian NGOs attended the conference which offered the opportunity to discuss shared concerns about social justice and to reaffirm ties between nations.

124.2 Ministries Council

The Ministries Council continued to work on written guidance for operating protocols in consultation with the Church Solicitor and Norma Rolls, Convener of the Governance Group. This would be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the Ministries Council.

125. AUDIT COMMITTEE**125.1 Minutes of Audit Committee**

The Council received the Draft Minutes of meeting of 29 January (*AC3 2018-19*)

126. GOVERNANCE

The Council received a written report from the Governance Group. The Group was disappointed not to be able to meet with the Convener and Secretary of the Housing and Loan Fund during the meeting on 11 March 2019 and will now arrange a special meeting with them.

The Service Level Agreement (SLA) and Data Processing Agreements have been signed off by the Boys' Brigade and work would progress for similar agreements with the Girls' Brigade. The SLA with the Boys' Brigade states that negotiations would commence on 1 June 2019 regarding the level of charges to be made for the service provided by the Safeguarding Department. There were difficulties in confirming the costs and proposals would be discussed at the June meeting of the Governance Group.

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations will be involved in delivering some of the modules for Trustees' Training. It was noted that provisional dates for the training were 29 and 30 May 2019.

126.1 Minutes of Governance Group

The Council received the Draft Minutes of Governance Group Meeting of 11 March (GG5 2018-19).

127. CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**127.1 Minutes of Central Services Committee (CSC)**

The Council received the Draft Minutes of meeting of 14 February (CSC4 2018-19). It was noted that Graham Beddoe started as Payroll Manager on 12 March 2019.

127.2 Minutes of CSC Executive Committee (Staffing)

Anne Lamont, Vice-Convener of the Central Services Committee, offered a verbal update on the Executive Committee (Staffing) meeting of 11 March 2019.

128. SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

There was nothing further to report from the Senior Management Team at this time.

129. COMMUNICATIONS

There was nothing further to report on communications at this time.

130. CORRESPONDENCEa) Greenock and Paisley Presbytery

A letter had been received on the day of the Council meeting from the Presbytery Clerk to say that Greenock and Paisley Presbytery:

- “1. urges the Council of Assembly to introduce a more equitable and sustainable system for funding the needs of the church;*
- 2. recommends that any such a system should recognise the significant burdens being placed upon congregations by the current system of allocations;*
- 3. suggests that any system introduced should place some form of limit on what can be taken from congregations when they are in vacancy;*
- 4. believes that no increasing burden should be placed on congregations without a rationalisation of the central programmes and Councils of the church”*

b) Radical Action Plan

An email communication with comments on the Action Plan was received which was broadly supportive of the direction of travel.

c) DRAE (DIAKONIA Region Africa Europe) Conference

An invitation had been extended to the Council's of the Church to attend the DRAE Conference on 19-24 June 2019 at Queen Margaret University, Musselburgh. The theme will be *“For Such a Time as This”*.

d) Church of Scotland Responsibilities for People Living with Dementia

A letter was received to commend the work of an MDS (Ministries Development Staff) who has been focussing on developing awareness within the Church of dementia. Concern was expressed that the post would come to an end. The Ministries Council had also received the communication on this matter and had responded. The Council noted the position and the Acting Secretary to the Council of Assembly offered to liaise with the Councils involved to ensure the appropriate response was made.

John Chalmers took the opportunity to encourage members to attend the Westminster Confession of Faith Conference, on 8 May 2019, at New College, Edinburgh. The event has been organised by the Theological Forum for the wider Church, exploring different aspects of the theology and status of the Westminster Confession, with speakers from Scotland and elsewhere. Details are on Church website.

131. PLANNING FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Acting Secretary to the Council of Assembly highlighted that monthly cycle of Council meetings, alongside the meetings of the various sub-groups of the Council, has created a real problem for the Council to operate effectively. Noting that there was uncertainty around proposals to be brought to the General Assembly on the governance structures of the Church, consideration should be given to the future of the cycle of meetings with a plea to meet less often.

The Convener of the Special Commission, David Fergusson, has asked for the opportunity to meet with staff of the Central Services Committee prior to the publication of their report to the General Assembly. A date would be confirmed for this. The Convener agreed to communicate that the Council of Assembly would also wish to have an update from the Special Commission.

The April Council meeting will be primarily on the Supplementary Report to the General Assembly.

The Convener thanked members for their contributions during the meeting.

132. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.30am, Monday 8 April 2019, in the Church Offices, Edinburgh.

The Meeting was closed with Prayer.

APPENDIX I

COUNCIL OF ASSEMBLY

18 March 2019

Sederunt:

Jennifer Adams
Ian Alexander
Sally Bonnar
Derek Browning
John Chalmers
Viv Dickenson
Alison Fenton
Richard Frazer
Alistair Gibb
Neil Glover
Isobel Hunter
Martin Johnstone
Anne Lamont
Elaine McCloghry
John McPake
Anne Macintosh
Mary Macleod
Angus Mathieson
Norma Rolls
Norman Smith
Alan Sorensen
Bill Steele
David Watt
George Whyte
Ronald Wright

Apologies:

David Brackenridge
Andrew McGowan
Ruth MacLeod
Jayne Scott
Raymond Young

In Attendance:

Chloe Clemmons
Carron Lunt
Craig Renton
Catherine Skinner
Pauline Wilson (items 118.4 and 120)