

THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
COUNCIL OF ASSEMBLY
19 June 2017

MINUTES

The Council of Assembly met within the Church Offices, Edinburgh, on Monday 19 June 2017, and was constituted with prayer. A list of those attending is attached to this Minute as Appendix I.

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Convener welcomed the following new members to the Council: Very Rev Dr Russell Barr, Mr David Brackenridge, Mr Alistair Gibb, Rev Dr George Whyte and Mr Ronald Wright. Introductions were made.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were noted.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr Watt declared an interest in relation to Min 13.2c, Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, in light of his role as a trustee of another charity which was involved in this Inquiry; Mr Corrigan declared an interest in relation to Min 11.2, Boys' Brigade Scotland, in light of his role as treasurer to a local BB Company; and Miss Coull declared an interest in relation to Min 13.1, the Draft Minutes of the Governance Group meeting, in light of her membership of the Presbytery of Dundee.

4. AGREE AGENDA

The Agenda for the meeting was agreed.

5. ANNUAL OPERATIONAL PLAN

The Secretary spoke to the Council's Annual Operational Plan which included the full range of work to be taken forward over the course of the session, including those tasks coming out of the most recent General Assembly. It was noted that the document would be used by staff primarily to ensure that all matters were being progressed. Mr Corrigan asked if there was sufficient capacity to undertake this programme of work within the given timescales. Dr Scott indicated that a request for a new permanent post of Head of Organisational Programmes was to be considered later in the meeting, and that the outcome of that discussion would have a bearing on the achievability of the plan of work.

It was agreed that the Plan should be amended to take some account of the chosen theme for the ensuing year. It was agreed that a six-monthly update on progress would be provided to the Council, with the next report due in November.

6. STRATEGY

The Council noted the written update and diagram on the ongoing work to bring forward a Strategic Plan. The paper included a timetable for completion of this work by December for inclusion in the Council's main Report to the General Assembly of 2018. In the course of discussion, the following points were noted:

- The diagram should refer to the Church's international dimension and its social care work.
- Local, national and international engagement was about more than merely responding to issues.
- The 'Love God' and 'Love our Neighbours' headings could be developed and explained more fully.
- Consideration should be given to those aspects of the Strategic Plan which may possibly be opposed or resisted.
- The Church and Society Council would help identify people from civic Scotland and from the margins of society who may be consulted in the autumn. That Council would also make available relevant material coming out of the *10,000 Voices for Change* consultation.
- The words 'goals', 'objectives' and 'priorities' were used interchangeably throughout the document.
- Evaluation of the Strategic Plan would be essential, so measurable objectives would be required. Further discussion on this could take place at the September meeting.
- A developing realignment within the ecumenical scene in Scotland was likely to impact on ecumenical opportunities in certain places.
- Whilst the heading 'Love our Neighbours' was intentionally broad, it was suggested that a more explicit reference to interfaith engagement was needed.
- There was a plea for deeper reflection on what was meant by 'mission' and on the degree to which the Church was prepared to be changed by it.
- Congregations should feel released to carry out God's mission in ways relevant to their context.
- Statements around the theme of mission had been issued over recent months by the World Council of Churches, the Pope and the Lausanne movement, and a consensus of opinion was emerging.
- There was a plea for an aspirational vision with sights on numerical growth.

It was noted that the Convener would be meeting with officials in the next week to work on a first draft of the Strategic Plan.

7. BUILDINGS

The Council noted the information contained within Tasks PY1-PY7 in the Annual Operational Plan with regard to the various strands of work being progressed under the Property Matters heading. Dr Frazer asked if there might be space allocated within a redeveloped office to showcase the work of the Church. It was noted that engagement with the public was being looked at and that this may, for example, involve opening up the café facility for wider use or working in partnership with other agencies. As to whether the plans for the building would align with the forthcoming Strategic Plan, it was noted that the final proposal going forward would require to be flexible in terms of staff numbers and structure. Discussions with the Social Care Council and the Assembly Arrangements Committee were ongoing with regard to Charis House and the Assembly Hall. It was planned that by December the Council would be in a position to agree one option to recommend to the 2018 General Assembly.

8. COUNCILS' BUSINESS

It was noted that the Convener and Secretary were reviewing the reporting templates for Councils with a view to introducing revised forms in the autumn. The following reports were noted:

8.1 Ministries Council

Mr Glover spoke to the written report which highlighted the Ministries Council's key priorities and significant areas of work. The Annual Operational Plan was provided for information. The need to ensure that the Ministries Council's strategy aligned with the overall Strategic Plan was acknowledged. A collaborative approach would be essential. Early discussions with the Finance Group would be sought, noting that many of the items within the Ministries Council's Plan had significant financial implications.

In response to a question about risk registers, Dr Scott reported that there was an ongoing project to review those across the organisation.

The Council noted potential overlaps in responsibilities between Councils and Committees and the resultant need for co-ordination and good communication. It was suggested that a move to a programme-based structure might help to address this. A more streamlined process for obtaining the necessary permission to proceed with a project was also sought.

8.2 World Mission Council

Mr Kenny Roger, Middle East Secretary, joined the meeting for this item of business.

Mr Cunningham reported that this year's theme for the World Mission Council was 'Women in the World Church'. A conference around this subject was to be jointly hosted by the World Mission Council and the Centre of World Christianity, University of Edinburgh in September.

It was agreed that the matter of there being separate stamp projects in operation within the World Mission and Social Care Councils should be discussed by the relevant officials outwith the meeting.

It was noted that the strategic review of the Church's presence in Israel/Palestine was underway. This would examine the full remit of the Church's involvement in the region including partnership working.

The Council was asked to approve the World Mission Council's proposals for the refurbishment of the Tiberias Church, noting that these had been considered by the Designated Supervisory Group – which consisted of representatives of the World Mission Council, the Council of Assembly and the Church of Scotland Trust – and by the Finance Group. The Council was assured that, regardless of the outcome of the strategic review, this asset would require to be repaired whether it was to be retained or sold in the longer term. It was noted that the Salvesen Trust had set aside £500k for this building around ten years ago and that this money had been re-agreed for use in this way. Following further discussion, the Council approved the proposals. Ms Lamont expressed concern that the process for obtaining the Council of Assembly's final approval, following consultation with the Finance Group and the Designated Advisory Group, had not been properly implemented in terms of providing a written business case to inform this discussion.

8.3 Social Care Council

The Council noted the written update report from the Social Care Council. The likely impact of Brexit on the supply of care staff within CrossReach had not yet been quantified, but Mr Steele confirmed that there was currently a high proportion from other EU countries. It was suggested that this matter should be added to the Annual Operational Plan for continued monitoring across the employing agencies by the SMT. It was too early to know if the recent change in CrossReach's recruitment policy to no longer require all staff to have a Christian faith, and the payment of the Scottish Living Wage to all care and support staff had impacted on recruitment.

In response to a question about the Church's pension schemes, Mr Watt explained that a ten-year deficit recovery plan was in place to deal with the CrossReach Scheme, and that all of the schemes were being kept under review by the Pensions Working Group.

8.4 Mission and Discipleship Council

Mr Smith sought the Council's approval to include co-opted members to serve on the 'Young People and the Church of Scotland Working Group', as the General Assembly instruction that the Group comprise seven members of the Mission and Discipleship Council and seven young people, with young people to form the majority of the Group, was impossible to achieve given the current make-up of the Mission and Discipleship Council. The Council gave its approval to this course of action in the circumstances.

The Council noted with pleasure that the long-serving editor of Life & Work's Gaelic Supplement, the Rev Dr Roddy Macleod, had been awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

8.5 Church and Society Council

Dr Frazer highlighted that the Church and Society Council was continuing to work within the ten-year model which had come out of the Speak Out campaign.

9. COUNCIL AND SUB-GROUP MEMBERSHIP

The Convener advised that the Rev Dr John Ferguson had resigned from the Council and that the resultant vacancy had been advertised on the Church's website. The recruitment process would be overseen by the Nomination Committee.

The Council considered the proposed sub-group structure and membership for the session. It was noted that the Finance Group was to appoint a new member to the Audit Committee to replace Mr Corrigan who no longer sat on the Finance Group. With regard to the Central Services Committee, there were currently two vacancies for non-trustee members and people with HR and/or Property backgrounds were sought. As it was for the Council to make appointments to that body, members were invited to submit potential names to the Secretary.

It was noted that the Communications Reference Group was working well for that area of work, involving external media professionals as well as a Council member.

10. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 10 April 2017 were approved.

11. MATTERS ARISING

11.1 Interfaith Officer (Min 83.3b)

It was noted that the permanent post of Interfaith Officer would now be taken forward to recruitment following affirmation by the General Assembly of the ongoing development of this work.

11.2 Boys' Brigade (Scotland) Safeguarding Costs (Min 91.2b)

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

12. FINANCE

12.1 Minutes of Finance Group

The Council received the draft Minutes of the Finance Group meeting of 5 June (FG1 (2017-2018)).

12.2 Finance Group Report

Mr Watt highlighted the following matters:

- a) Budget 2018 and 2019: It was noted that Councils and Committees should continue to be focussed on working within their budgets.
- b) Management Accounts to 30 April 2017: The Council noted the management accounts to 30 April 2017 which showed a number of emerging variances. Mrs Macintosh offered to arrange an induction session covering management accounts, should any of the members find such a session helpful.
- c) Restricted Funds Review: It was noted that the Finance Group had been issued with an update report on the ongoing review of the funds of the Unincorporated Councils and Committees (UCC). It was hoped that this work would be progressed in time to inform the Annual Report 2017 and Reports to the 2018 General Assembly. Mr Glover indicated that this work should also feed into stipend discussions later in 2017.
- d) Financial Regulations and Policies: The Council considered a draft Financial Regulations and Policies document. Following minor amendment, the document was agreed. This would be reviewed by the Audit Committee in August 2018. The General Treasurer would be meeting with senior managers to discuss the implementation of these Regulations and Policies.
- e) Financial Strategy: The Council considered a draft Financial Strategy for the UCC which was intended to dovetail, in due course, with the Strategic Plan. The aim of the Financial Strategy was to establish a set of budget principles and to provide interim measures to assist the trustees in containing the financial exposure of the UCC. The Council welcomed the draft, noting that this document would continue to evolve as the Strategic Plan emerged.

13. GOVERNANCE

13.1 Minutes of Governance Group

The Council received the draft Minutes of the Governance Group meeting of 12 June (GG1 (2017-2018)).

13.2 Governance Group Report

Miss Coull highlighted the following matters:

- a) Conflicts of Interest Policy: The Council approved a Conflicts of Interest Policy for the UCC and other relevant constituent parts of the Church. It was agreed that a review of the Policy should take place after one year. Members were asked to complete and submit the revised Register of Interests proforma which was incorporated within the new Policy.
- b) Glasgow: St George's Tron: *The discussion which took place under this item is contained in a Record Apart.*
- c) Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry: The Council noted the written report on the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, noting that the Church of Scotland was due to appear to answer questions on 23 June 2017.

13.3 Restricted Funds Reorganisation Application

The Trustees agreed to the restricted funds reorganisation in relation to the Pettigrew Reward for Theological Scholarships, noting that OSCR had approved the proposals to use the Fund to award grants for postgraduate theological education by Ministers of the Church of Scotland to enable them to study topics which would benefit the work of the Church of Scotland.

14. CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE (CSC)

Mrs Kirsteen Scott, Acting Head of HR, joined the meeting for this item.

14.1 CSC Meeting of 15 June 2017

Mr Brackenridge, Convener of the CSC, reported that the Minutes of the Committee's meeting of 15 June were not yet available.

14.2 CSC Executive (Staffing)

The Minutes of the CSC Executive meeting of 15 June 2017, dealing with staffing matters, were noted. The following matter was highlighted for approval:

Head of Organisational Programmes, Council of Assembly: The Council considered the job description and then agreed this new post for a five-year fixed term in the first instance.

The Council noted that Mrs Elaine McCloghry had been appointed as the Head of HR and that the Interim Head of Communications post had been offered and verbally accepted.

Thanks were expressed to Mrs Kirsteen Scott who was due to leave the employment of the Church on 30 June.

15. SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Council noted the written updated report.

16. AUDIT

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

17. COMMUNICATION

Mr Flett tabled a report which provided an analysis of engagement with the Church's website and social media spaces along with media coverage and audience demographics. The Convener thanked Mr Flett for his contribution to the Church's work and wished him well as he moved to a new appointment.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Council would meet on Sunday 17 and Monday 18 September 2017. The venue for this meeting would be confirmed as soon as possible. The major focus of this meeting would be the strategic plan.

19. MOMENT FOR REFLECTION

The Convener shared her reflections on the meeting. Members who were willing to lead devotions in future meetings were asked to contact the Convener.

The Meeting was closed with Prayer.

APPENDIX I

COUNCIL OF ASSEMBLY

19 June 2017

Sederunt:

Very Rev Dr Russell Barr
Dr Sally Bonnar
Mr David Brackenridge
Mr John Corrigan
Miss Catherine Coull
Rev Iain Cunningham
Mrs Viv Dickenson
Mr Rob Flett
Rev Dr Richard Frazer
Mr Alistair Gibb
Rev Neil Glover
Rev Dr Martin Johnstone
Ms Anne Lamont
Mrs Anne Macintosh
Ms Mary Macleod
Rev Dr John McPake
Rev Jayne Scott
Rev Dr Martin Scott
Rev Norman Smith
Rev Alan Sorensen
Mr Bill Steele
Mr David Watt
Rev Dr George Whyte
Mr Ronald Wright

Apologies:

Rev Ian Alexander
Rev Dr Alister Bull
Mr Roger Dodd
Rev Graham Duffin
Mrs Isobel Hunter
Rev Prof Andrew McGowan

In Attendance:

Ms Carol Finlay
Mr Kenny Roger (*item 8.2*)
Mrs Kirsteen Scott (*item 14*)
Mrs Pauline Wilson