

**General Assembly of Unitarian  
& Free Christian Churches**

**Approved Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting  
Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2015  
Essex Hall, London**

**Present:** Robert Ince (Convenor), James Barry, John Clifford, Joan Cook,  
Peter Hanley (Honorary Treasurer), Alison Thursfield, Martin Whitell,  
Jacky Woodman

**In attendance:** Marion Baker (GA President), Derek McAuley (Chief Officer),  
Mary-Jean Hennis (Minute taker).

**Session 1**

*Opening Devotions: Martin spoke about redemption and what the experience of working with the other members of the EC has meant to him. He ended by reading from a book of poems by John O'Donoghue – "A Friendship Blessing"*

1. **Apologies: None**
2. **Minutes of the meetings held on 23 & 24 January 2015**  
The Minutes were signed as a true record of the EC meeting held on 23 & 24 January 2015.
3. **Matters arising for noting or to include in Agenda for later Discussion:**
  - **EC Action List** – worked through and actions completed were removed from the list. There is some concern about the items with regard to the Local Leadership Strategy Group and the Youth Strategy Group as no response is forthcoming from the people contacted. **Action** - The Chief Officer to follow up
  - It was clarified that Martin Whitell remained the link to the Youth Strategy Group
  - **Climate Change** - There was a lengthy discussion on the Motion on Climate Change which had been referred back to the proposer at the 2014 Annual Meeting for further consultation with congregations. Peter has been in contact with Rev Feargus O'Connor but as there has been no further progress with the production of a consultation paper for circulation at the 2015 Annual Meeting. **Action** – Chief Officer to place on May EC Agenda.

It was noted that this experience shed some light on the issue of Study Motions that would be raised at the EC Workshop and in particular the responsibilities of proposers of motions.

- **Safeguarding at the 2015 Annual Meeting** – A Safeguarding Policy had been received from the Foy Society. It was acknowledged that ultimately the responsibility of safeguarding for children and vulnerable adults at the Annual meetings was the EC's and needed to be complied with by all participants and groups. It is to be reinforced that the GA Safeguarding Officer at the Meetings is Rev John Harley.  
The risks around the GAZette office as well as use of a large hotel needed to be addressed by adequate supervision and it was **agreed** that there should be an identified safeguarding lead present when children are participating. It was raised that having a wider view of vulnerable adults was also important. **Action** – Chief Officer to liaise with Andrew Mason, John Harley and Foy Society. **Action** – James to forward his ideas for possible youth leaders who might undertake the role to Andrew.
- Mary-Jean was asked to speak to Stella about the arrangements for a Meeting at the Nightingale Centre in September 2015.  
**Action:** Mary-Jean

#### 4. Reports from Strategy Groups

##### a) Local Leadership Strategy Group – no update

**b) Ministry Strategy Group (DocEC23/15)** - noted with the following:  
Joan reported that the Ministry Strategy Group had welcomed the support it is receiving with regard to the Competency document.

Peter asked that in future could the Ministry Strategy Group use full names instead of initials – **Action** - Joan to liaise with Rev Linda Phillips

The EC has requested that the Ministry Strategy Group ensure that the Guidelines with respect to part-time Ministers are clearly expressed. – **Action** – Joan to take request back to the Ministry Strategy Group.

Marion Baker reported on her attendance at her first committee meeting at Unitarian College Manchester (UCM) on the 12 February 2015, where the main topic was the College Review which had been commissioned to look at the implications for training at UCM in light of the Competency document? The importance of curriculum development was recognised. **Action** – Jacky to liaise with Rev Daniel Costley with regard to the curriculum.

##### c) Visibility Strategy Group – verbal report

James mentioned that VSG were likely to be very disappointed when they heard that the EC had all but rejected the VSG proposal for a series of new less wordy leaflets and that the EC wanted the existing leaflets updated – an approach VSG had rejected. VSG would try and find a volunteer to do this

work, but as the artwork was at Essex Hall, James felt they were in a better position to make the change they had already identified. This would be a more straight forward than VSG, the EC and Essex Hall being involved in the re-wording as some leaflets were required for the summer. There was then a wider discussion on the terms of reference of volunteers and our working practices.

Marion Baker indicated that she thought that VSG needed a strategy and asked to be part of the discussions. It was agreed that with the development of a new Vision and Five year Plan that the existence and subsequent terms of reference for all the Strategy Groups would be reviewed **Action** – Executive Committee.

**d) 2020 Leadership Team (Doc EC24/15) – noted with the following:**

An updated report was presented. The 2020 Leadership Team welcomed the positive response they received from the EC at the last EC Meeting.

**e) Youth Strategy Group - no update**

It was noted that the EC is disappointed that there has been no response from Jen Hazel – **Action** – Chief Officer to again try and contact Jen.

## **Session 2**

**5. Management Accounts to 30 November 2014 (Doc EC25/15)**  
**– noted with the following:**

The Chief Officer reported that there have been more Quota payments received than usual due to use of the new Civi-CRM system. The outlook has moved from -£3,000 to +£6,000 due to a donation from a congregation and an underspend on EC election fees.

It was noted that with the appointment of a Honorary Treasurer we would be able to focus on post Bowland Trust financial planning. **Action** - To be taken forward by a group of the Convenor, Honorary Treasurer and Chief Officer.

**6. Millennium Fund Bids**

**a) 2020 (Doc EC26/15)**

Martin declared an interest in this item and left the room.

Comments had been received from the East Cheshire Union with regard to this bid and were discussed by the EC. **Action:** It was agreed that the Chief Officer would respond to the email pointing out that in fact the bid does conform to the criteria required by the Millennium Fund and would be considered in the same manner as all other applications.

It was pointed out that the reason that the 2020 Group had approached the Millennium Fund for support was that current allocated funding was allocated by EC to support specific congregations and could not be used to disseminate the learnings on growth. It was emphasised that this programme of district visits should focus on dissemination and not training.

It was **agreed** to award the 2020 Leadership Group **£4,780**

Martin re-joined the meeting and was informed of the EC decision and asked to relay it to the 2020 Leadership. **Action** – Martin

#### **b) Octagon Chapel, Norwich (Doc EC27/15)**

It was noted that a significant project was underway and that much of the application as it related to building works did not meet the criteria. The Fund could however support professional fees. It was **agreed** to award £6,000 with respect to the architectural fees element of the proposal.

### **7. Annual Meetings Update**

The Chief Officer updated the EC on arrangements generally and then for matters affecting the EC. There is limited contingency time available over the 4 days during the business session, which is a matter of some concern.

It was agreed that the Chief Officer would contact Rev Bill Darlison with regard to the Anniversary Appeal. **Action** – Chief Officer

The EC Handover would take place on the final morning and the format used in 2013 would be circulated. **Action** - Chief Officer

The Chief Officer presented an up-dated risk assessment of the Annual Meetings. The risk to successful delivery of the event if Andrew Mason was unable to attend remained high. James highlighted the role of the Steering Group in assisting the President in managing a difficult debate.

EC Question and Answer would also focus on the progress of the Vision.

John Clifford agreed to chair the workshop on Study Motions. **Action** - John

EC will be arriving at the meetings on the Sunday as no EC meeting is scheduled pre-annual meeting.

### **8. President's report – (Doc EC28/15) – noted with the following:**

The President drew the attention of the EC to the President's medallion which she has had cleaned. The jeweller had noted that the gold gilt has faded and that it can be replaced at a cost of between £80 - £100. It was **agreed** that the medallion could be re-gilded and the cost carried by the GA.

**9. Chief Officer's Report - verbal**

The Chief Officer reported that the return for the Safeguarding Audit was disappointing with only 38 received so far and two days remaining before the deadline. **Action** – EC report to Annual Meeting would include safeguarding and the final response rate. **Action:** Chief Officer would collate the returns by District and email to the EC Links for them to pursue locally.

**10. EC Term of Office and Skills Assessment  
(papers circulated separately)**

The Chief Officer summarised the trustee skill self assessment forms that he had received from the EC. Discussion followed on strengths and weaknesses of the new team from April 2015 and this highlighted what skills would be needed on the EC:

- 1) Faith and spiritual issues – a Minister
- 2) Fundraising/income generation/campaigner.

**Action** - Chief Officer to include specific requirements in advertisement process

**Session 3**

Discussion took place regarding the interpretation of “terms of office” for an EC member and co-opted EC member. This currently meant that a co-opted member could only serve a maximum of six years. The continued inclusion of section 6A in the Constitution on “Transitional arrangements” added to the confusion. It was **agreed** that the Constitution will have to be reviewed and any changes prepared in time for the 2016 Annual Meeting. It was recognised that there are a number of problems in the Constitution that need to be addressed as part of the discussions on CIO status. **Action** – Chief Officer to place on the May 2015 EC Agenda.

**11. Vision For Our Future -****a) Vision Document -- (Doc EC29/15) – noted with the following:**

A lengthy discussion then took place on the document provided by the Convenor which included the various contributions on the themes identified at the District event in September 2014. The intention was to publish these for the Annual Meeting with a response from the Executive Committee. James asked about any learnings from the previous five year plan? Martin's view was that the plan was a response to an emerging financial situation and that in future the EC needed to be more pro-active and be clearer on its plans. The Convenor indicated that there were complex issues to be addressed.

Each of the contributions was reviewed and key points identified.

b) NCVO “The Road Ahead” (Doc EC30/15) – environmental scan  
noted

**Session 4**

**12. Vision For Our Future (continued)**

**Action** Convenor and Chief Officer to liaise on an EC response to accompany the contributions.

MJ left the meeting at this point

**13. Key Messages**

As circulated.

**14. Confidential Items**

Chief Officer left the meeting at this point

**15. Non-responsive check-out**

*Closing Devotions: Peter Hanley*

**Saturday 15 February 2015 - Session 5.**

**16. Confidential items**