

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

Approved Minutes of Executive Committee
Friday 18th May 2018
Essex Hall, London

Present: Marion Baker (Convenor), Philip Colfox, Hilda Dumbleton, Peter Hanley (Honorary Treasurer), Sheena McKinnon, Lynne Readett, Matthew Smith, Christina Smith and Rob Whiteman

In Attendance: Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Joan Cook (GA President) and Mary-Jean Hennis (Minute-taker) David Joseph (Finance Manager) (item 8.)

Session 1

Opening Devotions: Lynne - meditation

1. Apologies: None

2. Minutes of the meetings held on 19th January 2018 – (DOC EC22/18)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2018 were signed as a true record.

3. Matters arising for noting or to include in Agenda for later discussion:

Hon Treasurer requested a five minutes slot to discuss finance strategy and it was agreed this would be included in item 8.

4. EC Action List (10/5/2018) - (DOC EC23/18)

Updated as per circulated list.

5. Next Steps

a) Session at Findhorn - (DOC EC24/18) – noted with the following:

A joint report from Peter and Sheena will be produced for the July EC meeting.

b) Feedback from Annual Meetings workshop and taking forward- a paper was circulated and will be discussed in more depth at the September strategy EC meeting. The response showed communication and promoting social action as key areas for action at a national level. It was noted that Unitarian Congregations are reflective of the people who engage in them and are continually evolving as a living religion.

It was agreed to circulate detailed paper to the EC before the September EC meeting. **Action: C Smith**

6. Annual Meetings

a) A discussion was held on the 2018 Annual Meetings with the following points being raised:

- Holding two events for newcomers to the GA was very valuable.
- It was felt that attending the Annual Meetings changes peoples' perception of the Movement.
- The Bowland Trust financial contribution for newcomers to the Annual Meetings was considered very valuable.
- Need to look at ways of getting people to the GA who would not otherwise be able to attend.
- Annual Meetings should be the place to experience different types of worship.
- The policy that subsidised attendees should not be voting delegates had the unintended consequence of discouraging the under 35 age group. This issue came up during the debate of Motion 6 from Fulwood Chapel with regard to membership and will probably be raised in the consultation.
- It was felt that the two main speakers dovetailed perfectly whether by accident or design, however, there will only be one plenary speaker in future due to the changes in format of the meetings. Susan Frederick-Gray, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, has been invited as the speaker for 2019, but has not responded.

b) Annual Meeting Panel Minutes 18/2/2018 - (DOC EC25/18) - noted with the following:

The Chief Officer asked the EC whether they had any knowledge of a good photographer to lead a team at the next GA.

c) Resolutions Paper - (DOC EC26/18) - noted with the following:

Resolution 1 – Chief Officer is trying to find the addresses of the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the GA President has volunteered to contact the Japanese Consulate for the addresses. **Action: GA President**

Resolutions 2 & 4 –

Chief Officer has informed the Charity Commission however does not anticipate any problems and once accepted will inform Bangor and Banbury; the current “small” congregations whose status will change. **Action: Chief Officer**

Resolutions 3 & 6 –

Honorary membership certificates have been posted to the Rev Dr Ann Peart and Alan Ruston.

Resolutions 5 & 7 –

Chief Officer has met with Dr Wanda Wyporska from the Equality Trust at Essex Hall and they will liaise further. Dr Wyporska enquired about the availability of the Lindsey Room to hold talks and seminars this had been agreed.

It was suggested that the website be used to give updates on the progress of the Resolutions.

A letter in The Inquirer with regard to the failure to publicly thank Dot Hewerdine for chairing the business sessions was noted. EC conveyed their thanks to Dot and it was agreed that a bouquet of flowers would be sent to her. **Action: Mary-Jean**

Session 2

7. Training and Education Development (TED) Project

- a) TED Update Report - (DOC EC27/18)** – noted with the following:
Lots of progress has been made and the better support for Lay Leaders had been welcomed. It was noted that a new tutor at HMCO is about to be appointed and there would be a need to co-ordinate programmes.
- b) TED Financial Report - (DOC EC28/18)** – noted with the following:
The Budget is in line with expectations. Feedback from the three students on the TED pilot programme is very positive, with their individual training plans developed.
- c) TED Proposal - (DOC EC29/18)** – noted with the following:
A detailed proposal to take forward the first year of the pilot and the preparatory work for a year two cohort was presented. It was suggested that the request should be described more accurately as bridging funds rather than interim.

Concern was expressed on the accountability arrangements and it reported that a “Shadow Board” for the new Unitarian College was being established and comprised Dot Hewerdine, the Convenor and the Chief Officer ensuring a direct link to the EC. They would be meeting on 12 June and would report to the next EC which would also consider the wider risks.

It was agreed that Funds totaling £35,000 be allocated to the TED project from a restricted donation from Kingswood Chapel Trust of £5,000 and a portion of a Legacy from the late Michael Scott of £30,000.

A vote of thanks from the EC to all involved with TED was extended.

8. Management Accounts to 31 March 2018 - (DOC EC30/18) – The Finance Manager, David Joseph joined the meeting at this point .

The management accounts were noted with the following:
There have been additional savings than expected due to the failure to appoint an communication officer and the later start date of the Youth Co-ordinator.

Lessons were being learnt on the operation of the Kereki Trust and dialogue with the Deputy Bishop of the Hungarian Unitarian Church was planned

Action: Chief Officer

It was noted that there is £1,500 income still outstanding from the Hibbert Trust for the Unifest budget.

The Hon Treasurer reported that he felt that the EC should do more strategic decision making, including finance and risk. He would like to produce an Investment Guide for Unitarians. Improved financial management and systems needed to be put in place. He would like to undertake more networking and communicating. He will present a paper at a future EC meeting. **Action: Hon Treasurer**

9. Update on Auditor Review Process - (DOC EC31/18) – noted with the following:

The Chief Officer thanked David for managing to take this work forward whilst putting together the Management Accounts. The Convenor thanked David for attending the meeting and for the very clear process which he had developed.

Session 3

10. Nightingale Centre

a) Annual Report and Accounts - (DOC EC32/18)

The Nightingale Accounts had been approved at a previous meeting. The Annual Report was approved and signed by the Convenor and the Hon Treasurer.

b) Minutes of Management Committee 10/2/2018 - (DOC EC33/18) – noted

The reference to an historic land sale was explained.

11. MSG Minutes - (DOC EC34/18) – noted with the following:

Rob Whiteman left the meeting for this item.

It was agreed that Claire MacDonald, having completed her academic requirements, be admitted to the Roll of Ministers with Probationary status. The admission of Lewis Connolly to the Roll of Ministers with Probationary status, prior to the Annual Meetings, was ratified.

12. Safeguarding - (DOC EC35/18) – noted with the following:

The attention of the EC was drawn to the Alert on safeguarding issued by the Charity Commission on 5 April 2018. The results of the safeguarding audit were outlined. There had been a higher response rate and some improvement in basic good practice.

The new Youth Co-ordinator/Safeguarding Lead Gavin Howell will embark on district visits as part of his induction and will be asked to highlight

Safeguarding. The data will be reconfigured in districts to enable EC Links to raise it with them.

There remains a need to work with our communities to understand why they are not complying with our request for completion of the audit. The Hon Treasurer voiced his disappointment in the Charity Commission for the approach they have adopted to this issue. **Action: Youth Officer and EC Links**

13. Feedback on Findhorn Experience Week - (DOC EC36/18) – noted.

14. Unitarian Theology Conference Leeds 2017 - (DOC EC37/18) – noted.

15. Growth Paper - (DOC EC38/18) – noted with the following:
Leadership in community developed was highlighted as a possible theme for action which tied into the aspiration for the TED project. There was also a requirement to improve how good practice is disseminated across the Movement with more sharing at the Annual Meetings. The distinction between entities and spaces was noted which could be independent of existing congregations.

The Chief Officer and the Ministerial and Congregational Support Officer would be producing more information for the September EC meeting. The Convenor thanked them for this paper. **Action: Chief Officer & MCSO**

Session 4

16. President's Report - (DOC EC39/18) – noted with the following:
The President had also attended the asparagus lunch at Oat Street Chapel, Evesham and the dedication of a Memorial at the National Arboretum for those people killed by terrorists overseas.

17. Chief Officer's Report - (DOC EC40/18) – noted with the following:
Item 5 – Unite – The Convenor and Chief Officer would meet with Unite representatives on 1 June to discuss a future working relationship.

GDPR – priority is to get a privacy policy statement on the website by the 25 May 2018. It was noted that the PECR – Privacy and Electronic Communication Regulations – are also to be considered although the General Assembly is not involved in email marketing. A data processing agreement would be signed with MillerTech, who had also offered various tools to support implementation. A records retention procedures was required.

The Chief Officer has received an invitation to Westminster Abbey for the Spirit of Windrush ceremony on 22 June 2018.

He highlighted the new Charity Commission requirements on disqualification of Trustees which also included staff posts of Chief Executive Officer and any Finance Director.

Noted that Mike Barber has resigned as chair of the Building Advisory Group which left them weakened.

18. EC Link Reports - (DOC EC41/18) - noted with the following:
NELUM – Vina Curren, Lay Pastor, had passed away.

19. Key Messages – to be distributed separately.

The Convenor handed Mary-Jean a card from EC members for her retirement. Mary-Jean thanked the EC for the card and the support given to her over the past ten years.

20. Non responsive check-out

Closing Devotions – Christina read a quote from Theodore Roosevelt with regard to criticism and then from the purple hymn book – “This is my community”

21 – Confidential Items

The GA President, and Mary-Jean left the meeting

21.1 Expenses Policy

The mileage rates for staff were considered in light of the Stipend Review Committee consideration for ministers. Their report recognised the difference between a requirement for regular use of a personal car and occasional use.

This distinction was accepted and it was agreed that the Chief Officer could designate specific posts, based on their responsibilities, whose holder would be eligible to apply the 45p rate rather than the 30p public transport rate to their work mileage. It was also emphasised that public transport should be used when possible to keep costs down.

21.2 Staff Remuneration

The Chief Officer left the meeting for this item

It was agreed that a maximum of £12,000 be allocated to fund staff remuneration pressures from 1 July 2018 in line with the policy agreed at the last meeting.

21.3 Chief Officer Appointment

The working group established at the previous meeting reported on its work to develop the recruitment and selection process for a new Chief Officer. If required, support on specific tasks would be obtained from an external human resources adviser. It is planned that the job description, person specification and process will be agreed at the July meeting of the Executive Committee and the post will then go out to advertisement. The Executive Committee also noted that provision for the costs of the recruitment process, and of any overlap during a handover, would have to be built into the budget for 2018/19 to be agreed in September 2018.