

**Approved Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held 25/01/19**

**Present:** Marion Baker, Phillip Colfox, Hilda Dumpleton, Peter Hanley, Christina Smith, Matthew Smith and Rob Whiteman.

**In attendance:** Celia Cartwright (Vice President), Joan Cook (President), Gavin Howell (Youth Coordinator, item 15), David Joseph (Finance Officer, items 9 and 31), Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Andrew Mason (Minutes)

**Apologies:** Lynne Readett

**Session 1**

Rob Whiteman conducted Opening Devotions with a piece of music (Sanctus Adalbertus) by Henryk Gorenki.

**1. Confidential Items**

Celia Cartwright, Joan Cook and Andrew Mason left the room for discussion of these items.

**- Appointment and Induction of Chief Officer**

The appointment of Elizabeth Slade was ratified by the Executive Committee. The members of the Interview Panel; Marion Baker, Phillip Colfox, Rob Whiteman and Paul Parker, Recording Clerk of The Quakers with support from Diana Fenton, Human Resources Adviser; were thanked for successfully undertaking the recruitment and selection process.

Discussion took place on the induction process and the handover from the current Chief Officer. The Convener reported that this would involve a series of visits to areas outside London along with time at Essex Hall. There would be an opportunity to meet all the members of the Executive Committee individually. Following the Annual Meetings Elizabeth would have some time-out to reflect on her experiences before the final handover on 26 April 2019.

**- Nomination of GA Vice President**

It was **AGREED** that Mrs Anne Mills, a member of the Bury congregation, would be nominated for the position of Vice-President of the General Assembly.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies for absence had been received from Lynne Readett.

**3. Minutes of the 16 November 2019 meeting (Document EC02/19)**

Page 4, item 12, para 4 – The sentence was amended to ‘The Investment Panel were looking at how ethical issues influenced investment’.

Page 6, bullet point 3 – At the end of the sentence the following text was added “, including for UniFest.”

Page 7, Item 18 – This was being dealt with under agenda item 7.

Page 8, Item 24 – Matthew wished to record the name of the organisation who had requested the information on anti-Semitism.

With the above changes, the Minutes of the meeting held 16 November 2019 were **AGREED** as a correct record.

#### **4. Matters arising for noting or to include in Agenda for later discussion**

UniFest – It was noted that the October Junior Weekend and November Inter / Seniors Weekend had been cancelled as conflicting with UniFest. The original UniFest organisers had indicated that they were unable to progress with the event, yet it had already been advertised on the GA website and in the Nightingale Centre brochure. The Nightingale Centre had raised the issue with the trustees of Unitarian College who were agreeable to organising the event as part of their lifelong learning programme. It was **AGREED** that Unitarian College be appointed to manage the UniFest event.

A question was raised about how this related to Hucklow Summer School. In answer it was stated that the strategic direction was that both Hucklow Summer School and the Worship Studies Course would transfer to the Unitarian College.

#### **EC Action List (Document EC03/19)**

The following updates were given on items on the Action List:

##### September 2017

Page 3, Organisational Effectiveness – this would be kept on the radar.

##### November 2017

Page 7, Grant form – This remained outstanding.

##### May 2018

Page 1, Feedback on AM Workshop – this item was felt to have passed and would be removed from the list.

##### September 2018

Page 7, Small initiatives fund criteria – The criteria was being prepared.

Page 4, Lindsey Press Volunteer – This had been added to the Risk Register.

##### November 2018

Page 1, Issues and Requirements list – This was on the EC agenda.

Page 1, Small Initiatives Fund – see above

Page 2, Competency Assessment – actioned

Page 3, Financial expertise – actioned

Page 4, Gilts – actioned

Page 4, Disinvestment – see agenda

Page 4, Ministers Pension Fund – see agenda

Page 6, Youth Programme – This item remained outstanding.

Page 7, Sustentation Fund – This item remained ongoing.

Page 7, Annual Meetings Panel EC Member– decision required at the May EC meeting.

**5. Issues and Requirements List**

The EC would discuss this with the new Chief Officer, who should keep the list. Phillip and Peter would go through their notes and prepare a list for the new Chief's Officer's induction. **ACTION: Phillip and Peter**

**6. District Associations**- **"Stirring the Old Giants (Document EC05/19)**

Sir Peter Soulsby's paper was reviewed. It was noted that the Scottish Unitarian Association have a statutory role, to hold a list of those registered to conduct marriages, and to ensure Scottish DBS checks were carried out.

- **"Blowing on Embers – District Associations facilitating the Movement from Top to Bottom (Document EC06/19)**

Peter Hanley's paper was reviewed. Discussion took place on the differences between district associations, whether this was the best line of communication with our members, and what we were trying to achieve through Districts. It was felt that this was all part of organisational effectiveness, which needed to be discussed with the new Chief Officer.

It was **AGREED** to revisit organisational effectiveness and growth, including the role of districts, and put together a package for the new Chief Officer to review. **ACTION: Peter**

There was a brief discussion on how to share best practice, and what the barriers were to this. It was suggested that the Ministry and Congregational Support Officer, as well as the Communications Officer and Youth Coordinator, could share some best practice at the Annual Meetings.

**7. General Assembly Annual Report 2017 - 2018**

A draft of the Annual Report had been circulated. Comments were:

Buildings Advisory Group – historic advisors – John Goodchild needs to be removed following his death.

Bios – Phillip wished to update his bio on the 'Our Trustees' page, and would give Andrew revised text to use. **ACTION: Phillip**

The Financial Summaries have been agreed with the Auditors.

Any other changes needed to be sent to Andrew in the next few days, as the publishing date was imminent.

The report was approved.

**Session 2****8. Financial Update (Document EC07/19)**

The Finance Manager presented financial updates for the first two months of the new financial year (to November 2018), and the outlook for the year, as at 31/12/18.

At present, David saw no reason to vary the budget except for the Chief Officer recruitment expenses detailed, which had been revised from £31.5K to £19K due to a significant reduction in dual running costs. This was **AGREED**.

A small legacy was expected from the estate of the late Malcolm Sadler. The quota income was being treated cautiously, as the decreasing trend continued. It was noted that there was a need to improve our processes around the collection of quota.

David would prepare a quarterly set of accounts with commentary and would circulate to EC members and had circulated management accounts for the first two months of 2018 – 2019. A difference on income figures for Summer School on two lines was noted and David would check the spreadsheet for a broken link.

In response to a general question about the current position, David answered that the ledger figures, which cover costs to date, were only partially useful, as there was a need to apportion larger annual costs received at various points during the year. These would be applied to the first quarter's accounts. A more meaningful assessment could be made by the third quarter, as the Annual Meetings had a major effect.

#### Financial Summary of the 2018 Annual Accounts

Apologies were given for minor rounding errors in the previous version circulated, and a replacement copy had been provided.

Grants – There was a variation on the amount of grants paid (£44K instead of £18K last year), which reflected the resolution of backlog payments from the restricted James Speed Trust which had been brought up to date.

Admin Costs – These had increased over last year for three main reasons:

- 1) Sundry expenses in the previous year were in credit, because we had identified £24K of historical credits in the balance sheet. There were no matching credits this year.
- 2) The office space provided by the Essex Hall Trust had been revalued at a higher rate, and there were nine months of the year at the new valuation of £111K per annum. This had meant an increase of £35K against last year. This was not an actual cost, and this figure was matched in the income total.
- 3) Legal and professional fees were high last year but were not anticipated in this year, which had reduced the overall effect on the administration costs.

Gift-Aid – There was still a total of £21K in gift-aid for collection as at the year end. It was noted that some of this had since been collected, and there were plans underway to accelerate collection of the outstanding amounts. Of the 2015 historical balance of £15K, £2.3k had been written off as it was not felt to be justifiable for collection.

Investments – There were unrealised gains from the year-end revaluation of our investments, though it was noted that these had since reversed due to stock market falls.

Cash Management – In the Balance Sheet, David had calculated a quick ratio of short-term liquidity of 8.5:1 which meant that we were carrying too much. Improved procedures for cash management would enable the reduction of the general cash balance to around £30K, but this would need active management. This had been discussed with the Treasurer and Chief Officer, and would be progressed.

Treatment of absorption of the Sustentation Fund – The Statement of Recommend Practice (SORP) states that we need to bring this in as an income item and this had been

confirmed with the Auditor. In the GA's Accounts it therefore stands out clearly. In the Consolidated Accounts it does not, as self-eliminating items are not to be shown.

Pensions Trust withdrawal – In response to a question, it was clarified that this item related to the GA Staff pension scheme. In the event that we withdraw from the scheme (either to move to a different scheme or if we run out of contributing members), there would be a charge to cover our share of the pension fund's deficit. This liability was being paid off at a rate of £12K per annum. Matthew Smith declared that he was a beneficiary as a former member of Staff who had contributed to a pension with the Pensions Trust.

#### 9. GA Annual Accounts 2017-18 (Document EC08/19)

It was noted that the income items for Local Leadership were separated on page 15, but there was not a corresponding separation of expenditure on page 16. David would discuss this with the new Auditors for next year.

Phillip indicated that he planned to send some comments to David directly. Phillip raised note 9 on page 22 regarding, the treatment of GA Staff who are also Ministers, querying the statement that there was not any direct liability. The Chief Officer responded that the advice from the current Auditors was not to put as a contingent liability the guarantee of last resort. This would be raised with the new Auditors.

One page 12, note 1 relating to consolidation, it would be specified that the statement about the assets being transferred to the GA related only to The Sustentation Fund.

With these changes, the Accounts were **AGREED** and signed by the Treasurer and Convenor.

The following recommendations from the Treasurer were **AGREED**:

1. There be a finance agenda item on Gift Aid at the July and September 2019 EC meetings;
2. There be a report at the July and September EC meetings on the work to collect about £8K in pre-2016 Gift Aid, which must be claimed before September 2020.
3. Report-writing software to enable Aqilla to produce better financial reports be purchased, along with training on its use. At present the recommended product was Crystal Report Software, though other products would be considered before purchase.

In response to a query on whether we should be accruing uncollected gift aid, David indicated that this was accepted good practice as long as it could be calculated and there was a reasonable expectation of receiving it.

David was thanked for his attendance.

#### 10. Nightingale Centre Annual Report and Accounts (Document EC09/19)

Page 4: Corrections were required to the trustee list.

**ACTION: Marion/Derek**

Page 2, para 3: A query was raised as to what stimulus was required. Marion remarked that Unitarian usage of the Nightingale Centre has not decreased, despite the Movement's reductions. It was **AGREED** to remove the sentence, and address this point with the Nightingale Centre in September.

**ACTION: Marion/Derek**

Other minor comments would be passed on to Marion.

**11. Nightingale Centre Minutes (Document EC10/19)**

The Minutes of the Nightingale Centre Management Committee meeting held 01 December 2018 were circulated.

Page 2: item 7.1, Land sale: Last week, The B&FUA as Custodian Trustee had signed the Deed of Surrender on the sale of the land to Derbyshire County Council (DCC). The delay had been caused by DCC.

Page 2, item 5: The consultant's report would be circulated to the EC. **ACTION: Marion**

Page 2, item 6.1: Living Wage Foundation minimum wage– this was part of ongoing strategic decisions and it was confirmed that the financial effect had been calculated.

**12. Strategic decision-making (Document EC11/19)**

Peter had circulated a document about strategic decision-making, which defined what a strategic decision was and included some suggested actions. Opinions expressed were:

- The decisions we take come within the framework of our society's culture.
- We should make decisions as deliberate actions rather than reactions.
- Timeframe is important, but can be decreased by good communication
- If the answer is to set up an EC subgroup, the question needed to be looked at.

It was **AGREED** to engage with the new Chief Officer before taking action on the paper.

**13. Investment Policy**

- **EC GA Investment Policy recommended Actions (Document EC12/19) and General Assembly Investment Policy 2019 Final (Document EC13/19)**

The Treasurer had prepared reports on the Investment Policy, including recommended actions.

The Convenor expressed strong concerns that the strategic process on finance needed to be taken forward as part of consideration of wider issues, rather than on individual items, incorporating the analytical skills of staff and in concert with the new Chief Officer.

It was clarified that we do currently invest ethically, but would need to take professional advice, including an impact assessment, on what these proposals might entail.

After considerable discussion, the following were **AGREED**:

- The phrase 'the GA' would be replaced with 'The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches' in all cases in document **EC12/19**.
- In draft Investment Policy document **EC13/19** on page 1, objective 5 ("to maximise total returns while balancing what are sometimes conflicting risks in order to meet the objectives of the individual trusts for which it is responsible") would be moved to the top of the list, which would then be changed to a bulleted list instead of a numbered list.
- In draft Investment Policy document **EC13/19** on page 5, at the end of the document, the work 'adopted' was changed to 'endorsed'.
- In draft Investment Policy document **EC13/19** on page 5, item 5 (Policy Review) the following paragraph was added: "The Implementation of this policy is subject to the taking of independent investment advice from a suitably-qualified professional and subsequent adoption by the Executive Committee."

- From document **EC12/19** recommendations 2-6 were referred to a Finance Committee consisting of the Convenor, Chief Officer, Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer (if appointed) and the Finance Manager.

The Honorary Treasurer was thanked for his thorough work on this issue.

### Session 3

#### 14. Safeguarding Report (Document EC14/19)

Gavin Howell attended for this item, and presented a Safeguarding Report. Areas to bring to EC attention were:

##### Designated Safeguarding Leader (DSL) wellbeing.

Gavin's role to DSL's is advisory, and he had identified the stress caused to DSL's when issues were raised with them. He had suggested a pastoral role to allow DSL's to be able to talk to someone about how issues were making them feel (but not discussing the particular case). There were issues around people offering support being properly-qualified, staying up to date on training and confidentiality concerns. It was **AGREED** that Gavin would investigate finding an independent company / professional to offer support for DSL's on a pay-on use basis, billed to the GA. **ACTION: Gavin**

##### Transition arrangements and Record keeping at chapel level

Gavin was concerned about poor record-keeping, particularly when there was a transition between DSL's. He suggested a brief plenary item at the Annual Meetings on 'have you considered this about Safeguarding' or having a slot asking CCPAS to come and discuss the types of training they offer. Gavin was asked to liaise directly with the Annual Meetings Panel to arrange this. **ACTION: Gavin**

##### Internal Safeguarding Register

Gavin had raised the idea of keeping an internal list. It would require expert guidance before setting up.

There were concerns about:

- Whether there was a line of communication to groups that weren't formally affiliated to the GA.
- If this was a responsibility we ought to take on.
- Confidentiality
- Data protection
- Whether we could realistically deliver an appropriate service on the half day per week allocated to Gavin for acting as Safeguarding Lead.

Peter offered to have work with Gavin looking at a possible system, what it would accomplish and assess how practical it was, and this was **AGREED**.

**ACTION: Peter and Gavin**

##### 2019 Annual Meetings

GA Zette – Gavin had some concerns and had approached the FOY Society. They would review their Safeguarding Policy and put a statement that minors should be accompanied at all times, but had not felt that a designated supervisory person was required.

Gavin was thanked for his attendance.

### 15. Minutes of the Annual Meetings Panel Meeting (Document EC15/19)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2018 had been circulated, and the Annual Meetings Panel had met again on 24 January 2019. In summary:

- The Panel were proceeding on the practical arrangements.
- The Opening Celebrations had gone back slightly but were being progressed.
- A marketing and communications plan had been discussed. An advertisement was being placed in the next edition of The Inquirer. A Social Media Plan was in operation.
- Martin Whitell was working on the Worship Leader's plan.
- The Keynote Speaker would be Lord Mark Price. There had been some comment on Facebook, one email, and some questions from The Inquirer (to which Derek had responded) about the selection. The Panel had reviewed the comments but did not intend to disinvite the speaker, who was felt to have something to say on meaning in the workplace drawing upon his experience of leading one of the largest social enterprises in the country. Criteria on the selection of Keynote Speakers had been adopted, drawing from a paper written by Matthew Smith, one of the most important being that the person brings fresh perspectives.

### 16. Findhorn Unitarian Network – application for Affiliated Body status (Document EC16/19)

Following consideration of a request it was **AGREED** that the EC would put a motion to accept the Findhorn Unitarian Network with Affiliated Body status (Proposer: Peter Hanley, Seconder: Matthew Smith).

### 17. Stipend Review Committee Report 2019 (Document EC17/19)

Rob and Matthew declared an interest, as recipients of a ministerial stipend.

There had been a request to appoint two congregational representatives onto the Committee. It was **AGREED** we would advertise for two volunteers on Uni-News for this at some point after the Annual Meetings in time for the 2020 Committee meeting.

It was **AGREED** to amend item 12, paragraph 2 to read "The Committee would like views on whether the rate for pulpit supply can be raised".

Comments received about the financial challenges facing congregations were noted.

The creation of a scale for Lay Pastors was noted. There were currently no active Lay Pastors, but some congregations were paying Lay Leaders at the Lay Pastor rates.

With the amendments, the report was **APPROVED**.

### 18. EC Activities at the Annual Meetings

Presentation of newer Staff – The four newer Staff members (Rory, Gavin, Simon and David) would all be invited to do a small 5 minute presentation, possibly on their motivation, what they sought to achieve and how Unitarians as a whole can help them.

Presentation of the Annual Report and Accounts – The Accounts would be presented, with some basic financial information covered about how our income and expenditure was going, rather than more strategic issues. David Joseph would be asked to assist with this.

It was suggested that Rory could do a 'Frequently Asked Questions' bit, possibly taking questions as part of the EC workshop, with a more conversational than presentational feel.

EC Handover – Lynne would be asked to arrange the EC Handover, which would take place during Plenary IV on the final day.

**ACTION: Lynne**

### Workshop

Christina would facilitate the FAQ questions and answers at the Workshop, and would also ask for questions on Facebook, and then coordinate with Rory.

**ACTION: Christine**

### Recognition of the change of Chief Officer

This would take place during Plenary IV on the final day.

### **19. Possible Honorary Member Nomination**

The Manchester District are planning to submit an Honorary Membership motion request. The eight other district signatories had not yet been obtained, but were expected to have been by the deadline. It was **AGREED** to accept this as a motion the EC would put forward, providing the signatories were received by the deadline of 19 February 2019.

### **20. Ministers Pension Fund GA Appointees**

It was **AGREED** that Karen Hanley, Hilda Dumbleton and Marion Baker be appointed as GA appointees to the Ministers Pension Fund. The MPF secretary would be informed.

**ACTION: Chief Officer**

## **Session 4**

### **21. Ministry Strategy Group (MSG) – Actions for EC (Document EC18/19)**

It was **AGREED** that the new Unitarian College Director Helen Mason, would be invited to join the Ministry Strategy Group with someone of a comparable level to represent HMCO.

Rob withdrew, under protest, as a result of a conflict of interest with his position as a Minister with probationary status taking part in decisions regarding admission to the Roll with Full status.

### Roll of Ministers

- Revs Phil Waldron and Kate McKenna were accepted on the Roll of Ministers with Full status
- Rev Maria Pap was accepted on the Roll of Ministers with Probationary status.

### Ministerial Students

- Robin Hanford was accepted for training at Harris Manchester College Oxford.
- Rory Castle Jones was accepted for training at Unitarian College.
- Laura Dobson was accepted for training at Unitarian College.

### Other Matters

Simon had met with the Tutor at Harris Manchester College Oxford and would be asked for more information on the outcome of the meeting.

**ACTION: Chief Officer**

The Ministry Strategy Group's request to take over responsibility for strategic work with paid lay leadership was **AGREED**.

The Ministry Strategy Group's request for funding of £3,000 for a mentor training residential to be delivered by Unitarian College was **AGREED**.

**22. Guidelines for Ministers & Congregations**

Lynne Readett had requested an update on the proposed review of Guidelines for Ministers and Congregations. It was reported that the MSG were aware of the need for updating and would be focusing on the legal requirements with the assistance of the HR Consultants. The MCSO would present a report when this matter had been progressed.

**ACTION: MCSO.**

**23. Collaboration & Partnerships (Document EC19/19)**

This paper was noted. The Chief Officer was thanked for the update which would be useful for his successor.

**24. European Unitarian Together (EUT) gathering 2021 (Document EC20/19)**

An invitation to participate in EUT2021 was received and noted. Whilst the General Assembly would be happy to encourage attendance it was not felt that changing the Annual Meetings in order to facilitate one large European event was practical, particularly as a hotel booking was already in place for 2021.

**25. President's Report (Document EC21/19)**

The President's Report was noted. The President highlighted the Interfaith event in Hull.

**26. Chief Officer's Report (Document EC22/19)**

The Chief Officer's Report was noted. Work would be needed on the EC elections but his external commitments would be reducing from early March.

**27. EC Link Reports (Document EC23 and 23b/19)**

The EC Link Reports were noted.

**28. Bridport Citizen's Charter (Document EC24/19)**

This was deferred to the next meeting.

**29. Key Messages**

As circulated.

**30. Confidential Items**

Celia Cartwright, Joan Cook and Andrew Mason left the room for discussion of these items.

A presentation was received on the implications of the appointment of new Auditors and other emerging proposals, including the request to provide services for Unitarian College, on financial resources.

**31. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

**32. Dates of future meetings**

Friday 17 May (9.00 – 5.00pm) and Friday 26 July (9.00 – 5.00pm)

**33. Non responsive check-out**

This took place.

Closing Devotions – Derek McAuley gave a Benediction from Rev Kimberley Quinn-Johnson and words by Cliff Reed based on JRR Tolkien, and the meeting closed.