

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

**Approved Minutes of Executive Committee
Friday 19th January 2018
Essex Hall, London**

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

In Attendance: Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Rev Charles VanDenBroeder (GA President) and Joan Cook (GA President – Designate)

Session 1

Opening Devotions: Marion Baker read from Cliff Reed's book "Unitarian? Whats That?"

1. Apologies and Welcome:

Apologies: Lynne Readett

Welcome: The Convenor welcomed Hilda to her first EC meeting and thanked her for agreeing to serve as a co-opted member until April 2019. She also thanked Joan for agreeing to be nominated as President.

2. Minutes of the meetings held on 17th November 2017 - (DOC EC02/18)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17th November 2017 were signed as a true record.

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

LLSG – Peter had emailed Simon Bland. He would raise the matter of apprenticeships later in the meeting.

4. EC Action List – (DOC EC03/18)

Updated as per circulated list.

5. TED Report – (DOC EC04/18)

The Chief Officer presented the notes of the TED Project Governance Group meeting held on 13 December 2017. It was agreed to support the Orientation Retreat up to an amount of £7500 from the Chalice Fund as a one-off cost. The implications of the establishment of a new institution to co-ordinate training and education were highlighted and would require further discussion.

The future structure of the planned CIO and the role of any “representatives” of key stakeholder bodies in ministry training on a Governing Board also required further work. The fundamental nature of the changes that were being proposed was highlighted with key strategic risks around purposeful design needing to be managed. Marion provided an update on the position at Unitarian College Manchester. The TED Project Governance Group were thanked for their work to date.

6. Ministry Training

It was agreed that the following be offered entry into the transitional programme commencing September 2018; Stephanie Bisby, Jane Blackall and Lizzie Harley.

It was agreed that the following be awarded Full status on the General Assembly Roll of Ministers: Rev Kate Dean and Rev Lewis Rees.

7. Next Steps Progress Report – (DOC EC05/18)

The Chief Officer presented an update on the “Next Steps” priorities. The relationship with the growth agenda (item 8,) was emphasised. Discussion took place on specific priorities:

3. Engage with the wider community on today’s issues - It was clarified that the priority was intended to be focused upon spiritual development in small groups within congregations on the engagement group model.

4. Increase collaboration with other like-minded organisations – Peter and Sheena would be giving a presentation on “Next steps” at the forthcoming Findhorn Unitarian Network event.

15. Reduce our carbon footprint – it was queried if this was being considered for the Annual Meetings and it was agreed that the Annual Meetings Panel be asked to review. **Action: Chief Officer**

In summary, the major focus had been on education and training with exploratory work commissioned in certain areas, such as the web project and identity. Others, such as campus ministry, would not be taken forward in the way originally intended. There was a recognition that the priorities needed to be kept under review and built upon to reflect changing circumstances.

8. Growth 2020

Matthew reported on discussions since the last meeting. It was agreed that this issue was more than simply about growth but required the Movement to address its engagement with the wider culture. Growth is not enough as a goal. Clarity about the underlying purpose had been emphasised in their paper and in comments by Simon Bland. It was acknowledged that this was done in differing ways in congregations. It was agreed that further detailed

work was required on models that were being used within the broader view of congregational development not simply the “planting” of new groups. The Executive Committee had to have clarity on how this would be taken forward by September 2018. **Action Chief Officer and Ministry and Congregational Support Officer.**

Session 2

9. Organisational Effectiveness- (DOC EC07/18)

Peter, Philip and Matthew had been discussing the priority since the last meeting. Clarity about what the General Assembly was seeking to achieve was necessary to enable our effectiveness to be measured.

It was agreed that the role of the General Assembly was to support Unitarians locally and that the strategy group structure needed to be super-ceded by a project/task group approach, such as TED. Panels should be accountable to the EC directly given our smaller structures. It was suggested that organisational effectiveness was actually about “achieving a lot with a little” which was about going where the energy was. It was agreed that further work was required on what this might mean in practice. **Action: Philip and Chief Officer.**

10. Strategic Communication – (DOC EC08/18)

The Chief Officer presented a paper on the strategic communications capacity that was required to progress the communications strategy considered at the previous meeting. This highlighted the issue of “who and what we are” as a Movement and clarity about this was required before any substantial investments could be made.

Christine proposed that the Executive Committee set aside a significant proportion of its September 2018 meeting to consider its shared vision and values, which would then allow a review of “Next Steps”. This would require external facilitation. The timing would allow members to contribute to the brief which would be required for the July EC meeting. **Action: Chief Officer**

11. General Assembly Annual Report and Accounts – (DOC EC09/18)

The Annual Report and Accounts of the General Assembly for the year ended 30 September 2017 were approved.

A report from Shaw Gibbs dated 16 January 2018 was presented which included a management report highlighting seven matters. Comments had been received from General Assembly management on these matters which were considered. David Joseph was thanked for responding so quickly to the management report.

It was agreed that as five years had passed since the appointment of Shaw Gibbs as auditor that a selection process for audit requirements be

undertaken. It was noted that resources would have to be allocated to this task. **Action: Hon Treasurer and Finance Manager**

12. Sustentation Fund Accounts – (DOC EC10/18)

The Annual Report and Accounts of the Sustentation Fund for the year ended 30 September 2017 were noted.

13. Sustentation Fund – New Arrangements - (DOC EC11/18)

A proposal for new arrangements to manage grants, including those of the Sustentation Fund, was approved. **Action: Chief Officer and Ministry and Congregational Support Manager**

14. Nightingale Centre Accounts – (DOC EC12/18)

The Annual Accounts of the Nightingale Centre for the year ended 30 September 2017 were approved. The Annual Report text would be circulated later.

15. Nightingale Centre Minutes – (DOC EC13/18)

The Notes of the Management Committee meeting held on 2 December 2017 were noted. The reference to General Assembly staff vacancies was questioned.

It was agreed to appoint Karen Hicks to the Management Committee.

Session 3

16. Apprenticeships

Peter reported on his email exchange with Simon Bland and concerns that what was planned may not be flexible enough to meet our needs. Comments were required by 6 February 2018.

17. Stipend Review Committee Report - (DOC EC14/18)

Matthew Smith and Rob Whiteman declared an interest and left the meeting.

The Report of the Stipend review Committee 2018 was approved for presentation to the Annual Meetings.

18. Annual Meetings Panel Minutes – (DOC EC15/18) - Noted.

19. Annual Meetings Panel Update – (DOC EC16/18)

The Chief Officer updated members on the current arrangements.

President - Joan Cook would be seconded by Ann Sinclair.

Honorary membership – Ann Peart would be seconded by Joan Cook and Alan Ruston by Peter Hewis and Andrew Hill. The honorary memberships should be considered separately.

Discussion took place on the Executive Committee plenary report and the need for a range of voices to be heard.

The Anniversary Appeal should be presented by a woman – suggestions to the Chief Officer.

A session on Resolutions Follow-up was agreed. Robert Ince had agreed to present on assisted dying. The Chief Officer would investigate with David Warhurst getting a message from Irene Clennell. **Action: Chief Officer**

EC Motions – small congregations to be proposed by Rob, seconder to be determined.

- format of annual meetings to be proposed by Sheena; Martin Whitell to be asked to second.

The EC workshop was a double session and should be less of a Q&A from the front and more inter-active in smaller groups. Plan to be developed.

Action: Convenor and Christine.

The transport needs of disabled people was raised and would be conveyed to the Annual Meetings Panel. **Action: Chief Officer**

20. Correspondence from UALM - (Unitarian Association for Lay Ministry) - (DOC EC17/18)

Discussion took place on the bullying raised by UALM in an email. It was acknowledged that this raised very difficult issues that were not easily addressed and that the General Assembly could offer support but it required action at congregational and district level as well, such as covenants. The Essex Hall lecture of 1999 by Paul Beasley-Murray was also valuable,

Action: CO to reply

21. EC ways of working

Peter reported on a course on poor decision-making he had attended and agreed to circulate the papers. This could lead to some bespoke training.

Action: Peter

22. President's Report – (DOC EC18/18) - noted

23. Chief Officer's Report – (DOC EC19/18) - noted

24. EC Link Reports – (DOC EC20/18)

NELUM – the reference to the amounts and timing of future Sustentation Fund grants was noted and it was pointed out that the new grant year would begin on 1 October 2018 and was dependent upon the new arrangements (see above item 13.)

Western Union/Southern – a mini-FUSE event was planned and Southern Unitarians were being approached to participate. He would be presenting on community engagement / volunteer development at a SUA meeting.

Yorkshire – there were concerns about the Lydgate congregation.

Manchester – Unfortunately Dob Lane was closing. Concerns were expressed that the quota demand were now entitled “invoice” and was too business-like. It was thought that this reflected the new accounting arrangements to improve how the quota payments were dealt with to avoid under-payments building up.
Action: Chief Officer to investigate

25. Key Messages

To be distributed separately.

26. Non responsive check-out

Closing Devotions – Rob Whiteman

Session 4

The GA President, GA President – Designate and Chief Officer left the meeting.

27. Confidential Item – Chief Officer

The Chief Officer gave notice to the Executive Committee of his intention to retire on 30 April 2019. The EC was grateful to Derek for giving fifteen months’ notice, allowing time to plan for the future. The EC established a small working group to take forward a recruitment and selection process for his successor.

The Appraisal report for the Chief Officer and objectives were approved.

**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.

**Approved Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held
Sunday 23 to Tuesday 25 September 2018
at The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow**

Pre-Meeting, Sunday 23 September 2018

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

In attendance: Dot Hewerdine and Richard Merritt, Management Committee and Stella Burney, Manager Nightingale Centre
Joan Cook (President) and Derek McAuley (Chief Officer)

Opening Devotions: Marion Baker gave a reading by Bill Neely "Change You Must"

1. Meeting with the Nightingale Centre Management Committee and Manager

A report was received on the outbreak of Norovirus during Summer School and the measures taken to manage it which ensured the event could take place. All Centre staff were thanked for their positive and compassionate response in difficult circumstances. The Centre had been commended by the local GP and Public Health England for the actions taken.

An update was given on developments relating to the Centre and plans for the future, including additional en-suite accommodation. Financially, it had been another positive year with Unitarian and other groups who use the Centre expressing great satisfaction with the quality of the service received. The Management Committee and the Centre Manager were thanked for their contribution.

Discussion took place on working closely with the Great Hucklow Chapel Trustees following the suspension of services.

2. Minutes of Management Committee 21 July 2018 (Document EC60/18)

The Minutes of the Nightingale Centre Management Committee meeting held 21 July 2018 were **APPROVED**.

Monday 24 September 2018

Present: (EC) Marion Baker (Convenor), Philip Colfox, Hilda Dumpleton, Peter Hanley (Honorary Treasurer) (Monday only), Lynne Readett, Christina Smith, Matthew Smith and Rob Whiteman

In attendance: Simon Bland (Ministry & Congregational Support Officer), Joan Cook (GA President), Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Andrew Mason (Minutes)

Opening Devotions: Hilda Dumpleton gave a reading by Elwyn Davies.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

Sheena McKinnon had resigned from the Executive Committee for health reasons and this would be communicated in Uni-News in phrasing of her choosing. The Committee's thanks and best wishes for the future were sent to Sheena. It was felt, with only two meetings left in the current term, a co-option would not be appropriate.

2. Minutes of the meetings held on 20 July 2018 (Document EC58/18)

The Minutes of the meeting held 20 July 2018, with an amendment to line 1 on page 5, were then **AGREED** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

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

There were no matters arising which were not already on the agenda.

4. EC Action List (Document EC59/18)

The EC Action List was reviewed. The following were noted:

25-26/09/17

Page 3, item B – Organisational Effectiveness. This was ongoing.

Page 6, item 16 – MPF Valuation:

a) Legal advice had been sought on trustee liabilities, b) The 2008 signed guarantee had been circulated) Jeff Teagle would be attending the November EC meeting to explain the background to the report.

17/11/07

Page 7, item 18 – Grant form. This was ongoing.

19/01/18

Page 3, item 10 – Strategic Communications – this was on the agenda

Page 5, item 10 – UALM and Bullying. The Chief Officer would review.

Page 5, item 21 – EC ways of working. Peter Hanley would present on this later in the meeting.

18/05/18

Page 1 – Feedback from AM Workshop – this was on the agenda

Page 4, item 8 – Management Accounts – The Chief Officer had emailed the Hungarian Unitarian Church in August on the Gabor Kereki Trust, but had not yet received a response.

Page 4, item 1 – Strategic decision making – The Treasurer would produce a paper.

Page 5, item 15 – Growth Paper – The Chief Officer had circulated the '20-40 report' of the United Reformed Church, which covered many of the same issues.

20/07/18

Page 3, Item 5 – Unitarian College CIO Business Plan – The plan had been done. A Three Year GA Budget incorporating the grants to the Unitarian College CIO had been circulated and would be discussed later in the meeting.

It was noted that Rev Ant Howe had been appointed as the College's Ministry Tutor from 01 January 2019 which would be featured in a forthcoming article in The Inquirer.

Page 4, Item 6 – Unite – Derek had responded and a meeting was planned for 15 October 2018.

Page 5, Item 10 – Complaints Policy – This had been revised and was on the GA website.

Page 5, Item 12 – Findhorn Unitarian Network – The Chief Officer had replied.

5. Agenda and process for remainder of Meeting

A process for the remainder of the Meeting was discussed.

The following were noted:

- A dilemma in making definitive decisions before appointing the new Chief Officer yet a need to make progress.
- Next Steps document – greater clarity was required on how particular priorities were being dealt with.
- The need to engage with individuals, congregations and districts and whether the EC's current arrangements facilitated this?
- The GA's role as both a servant and leader of the Movement in different areas.
- The importance of a coherent vision and integrity in being what we purport to be.
- The need to communicate, both internally and to the wider world, to nurture growth.
- The need to engage with our wider Movement to see how they want to communicate, in particular with individuals.
- Some criticism of the cycle of EC initiatives and structures.
- The implications of the new Unitarian College CIO.
- The Ministry Strategy Group needed to be re-tasked.

An update was given on the appointment process for the Chief Officer. Derek McAuley's leaving date would be 30 April 2019 and it was intended to have an overlap. The post had been advertised on the GA website, in The Inquirer and on Third Sector Jobs. The timetable was noted:

24 October - shortlisting

15 November -Interviews

16 November - recommendation to the EC Meeting.

It was **AGREED** that the three sessions of this meeting would focus on:

- Vision, Values, Culture and Identity
- Quality Framework for training ministerial Leaders
- Congregations and Communication

Session 1 – Vision, Values, Culture and Identity

Two short films were shown. ‘The Cookie Thief’ by Valerie Cox illustrated the dangers of false certainty. ‘The Golden Circle’ by Simon Sinek proposed an alternative approach, starting from the point of our ‘Why’ (the purpose), rather than ‘How’ (the process) or ‘What’ (the product), and the importance of integrity and shared beliefs. Members broke-out into pairs to discuss.

The following comments were made:

- ‘Love and Justice’ is a “How”, not a “Why” statement.
- We need to promote our ‘Why’ at the local level.
- There is sometimes a disconnect between what we claim and what we do, which can cause problems.
- The importance of clarity and optimism as a way of living.
- We need to help people seeking to have a higher purpose in their lives, by providing a space to nurture people’s spirit – ‘Be more, do more, make a difference’ is Derby Unity’s mission.
- Community is a key aspect, as we cannot have the same impact as individuals.
- The EC Link and President’s roles were important, as face-to-face contact is key to building trust and making connections in the wider Movement.
- Is the “Why” for the whole Movement or the GA? Should we focus on promoting our existing communities or promoting Unitarianism? Can it be both?
- Training is needed to facilitate growth.
- We should help people to understand what it means to be truly human, and also how to sit with uncertainty.
- There is a need to be responsive to a secular culture yet aware that our focus on words may sometimes mean we miss out on emotions.

Session 2 – Quality Framework for Leadership

Simon reported on the work of the Ministry Strategy Group (MSG) as the TED Project had been progressed but now was an opportunity to realign the MSG to a focus on ensuring quality in congregational leadership.

Issues identified were:

- The small number of ministerial students, with anticipated retirements, will cause issues with filling vacancies.
- New systems are required to maintain the integrity of the GA Roll.
- A review of the policy on Ministers from Overseas and Other denominations.
- Supporting Lay Leadership and its relationship to a GA Roll.
- Ensuring a common quality standard for different educational approaches in the Colleges.
- The timing of the process - need to ensure the MSG and Interview Panel reflect the timetables for new systems.

Unitarian College

Notes of the TED Project Governance Group Meeting held 15/09/18 were circulated. The following were noted:

- The CIO Application had gone in to the Charity Commission. The Business Plan was not required for this application, and had therefore not been submitted.
- An Assessment Subgroup meeting had been held.

- The first residential event had taken place, with positive feedback.
- An Academic Committee would be set up.
- The TED Project ends on 30 September 2018 and delivery of the pilot will transition into the new CIO.

Quality framework

The EC recognised its need to be satisfied with the quality of training that supported a recommendation for inclusion on the Roll of Ministers. It was recognised that the Unitarian College training was built on the agreed competencies framework and included a process for the assessment of candidates against those agreed ministerial competencies. It was **AGREED** to ask the Ministry Strategy Group and Interview Panel to ensure that those agreed ministerial competencies would apply to all training institutions and to enquire of the Ministry Strategy Group and Interview Panel how this might be demonstrated to be the case. It was particularly noted that it was essential that this system flagged up any issues as they came up, rather than an end of training assessment. **ACTION: Simon**

Timing

Simon flagged up timings issues with the process, which he would discuss with the Ministry Strategy Group and Interview Panel. **ACTION: Simon**

Ministers from Overseas and other denominations / Lay Leadership / Interfaith Ministers

It had been suggested that we could bring Ministers from Overseas and other denominations on to the GA Roll more quickly than presently occurred, though there were some risks with this. Congregations wished to fill vacant pulpits and were increasingly willing to appoint Ministers not on the GA Roll or lay people. Existing policies were presently being revised for discussion at the Ministry Strategy Group and would then come back to the Executive Committee.

Students at the Ministerial Fellowship Pre-Conference

Rob Whiteman raised a question about the Ministerial Fellowship Conference. New students had come to the conference and there had been confusion about who would meet the attendance costs. Rob declared a conflict of interest in his capacity as the Fellowship's Treasurer, and left the room for the discussion and vote. It was **AGREED** that the Unitarian Ministerial Students Fund would pay for accommodation and travel (with the Fellowship paying the conference fee) for students to attend both the Ministerial Fellowship conference and the pre-Annual Meetings Ministers' Pre-conference.

Session 3 – Congregations and Communications

The Ministry & Congregational Support Officer was asked to give an overview of his experiences of congregational support. Simon was generally invited to congregations because of a vacancy, financial or building issue or combination of the above.

He felt that growth was impacted by a deficiency of the 3 c's – Capacity, Competency and Confidence, and that by and large financial resources were not the constraint. The issue was more likely relating to needing the confidence to invest in intentional growth. A micro grants initiative would be helpful to assist with organic growth. The whole issue of growth was being overshadowed by numerical measure, but growth in resilience, values and communications were also important. Growth seems an impossible task, when actually it can happen slowly and incrementally. It was **AGREED** to create a 'small initiatives' grant fund which the MCSO would manage.

Welcoming was an issue. This should be fairly straightforward, as it was easy to acquire the necessary skills.

By and large, Simon was having positive interactions with congregations, He occasionally needed to explain that his role was to support, not audit, congregations. It was important to go and meet people to be valued and trusted. He had now started meeting with districts and was looking for the right issues and language to connect in a way that would add value. Visiting shows that the GA has an interest in congregations beyond collecting a quota. Simon had been using the anticipated changes to “excepted” status to encourage congregations to refresh their governance documents to ensure fitness for purpose going forward. These changes were highlighted as giving a risk that trustees might leave at that point through miscommunication.

There was an opportunity for more shared back office functions within districts or between districts, although he did not favour centralisation per se, only when it made sense. An example being actively looked at was partnerships and grants to support the sustainability of buildings and an expression of interest would be made to the Heritage Lottery Fund for their new scheme.

6. Background papers

6.1 Organisational Effectiveness (Document EC61/18)

The report was noted.

6.2 Report on 20-40 (Document EC62/18)

The report was noted.

7. Management Accounts to the end of August 2018 (Document EC63/18)

The management accounts were noted. Substantial changes before the September Year End were not anticipated.

The Finance Manager had highlighted the staffing implications of managing large investment funds and it was agreed that such funds be charged a 5% management fee from the 2017/18 financial year (as the B&FUA Inc currently do).

Overall, income was still down, though there were also some programme savings on expenditure from Local Leadership Strategy Group items which had not been carried out.

It was **AGREED** to drawdown funds from the Bowland Trust Development Fund sufficient to have a small surplus.

Summer School – it was noted that both income and expenditure had risen due to a larger number of people attending. For next year’s budget it was noted that this should not affect the subsidy given.

Balance sheet

The Debtors figure was £164K. This was high, though they were generally low risk, such as the B&FUA which owed a grant at that date. £34K had since been transferred for the 2017 period.

The Cash figure was also high at £262K. Some of this was income from dividends, which still needed to be allocated to specific funds. Additionally, cash had been retained as the Summer period is traditionally one of expenditure but low income. The Finance Manager had identified the need to improve our management of cash.

8. **Budget 2018/2019 and 3-year Plan** (Document **EC64/18**)

The key assumptions were:

- Legacies – no legacies were assumed due to their variable nature.
- Quota – It was **AGREED** to keep the quota at £35 per capita.
- Essex Hall Management Fee – a revaluation of the gift-in-kind had been made, from £64K to £111K. This would increase both income and expenditure, so there was no net effect.
- British & Foreign Unitarian Association grant – This was maintained at £30K.
- Chief Officer recruitment and handover costs – These were estimated at £31.5K.
- Drawdown of the Bowland Trust Development Fund – would be c£120K.
- Kingswood works – The works would now take place next Autumn, so a provision of £6K was needed.

General issues identified were:

- Falling quota numbers.
- Non-diverse sources of income and no legacy expectation
- Bowland Trust Fund monies – diminution of reserves, and consequential decrease in dividend income.

Rob Whiteman declared an interest as a recipient of James Speed Fund grants.

The following comments were made:

- The Budget for the outcomes of the TED Project was based on a five-year strategy. The EC would decide what it felt should be funded strategically going forward.
- As new possibilities were identified, some existing items would need to drop down the priority list, and not everything would be possible.
- There was a long- term strategic concern as Bowland money ran down.
- A deeper discussion was need on how to manage money flows from investments to meet expenditure needs over different periods .This would be on the agenda for the November EC meeting.

It was **AGREED** that the remaining £5K uncommitted in the Chalice Fund be used as a starter for a ‘small initiatives fund’, with Simon Bland to be asked to prepare grant criteria.

ACTION: Simon

The budget was **APPROVED** with the addition of the £5K small initiatives fund and the £45K instead of £50K for the Unitarian College grant, as per previous Minutes.

9. **Risk Register** (Document **EC65/18**)

The Risk Register had been updated with the following:

- Item 2 – External advice on the legality of our operation and investment approach had previously been received from Charles Russell Speechleys and Barnett Waddingham.
- Item 4 – The risk position on the GA’s position as guarantor of last resort for the Ministers Pension Fund (MPF) was being reviewed and more needed to be known about the MPF’s investment strategy.
- Item 7 – The Annual update report on the Pension Trust employer debt on withdrawal liability will be provided to the Treasurer. The likelihood of this risk coming to fruition had reduced, as all new staff had joined the fund. **ACTION: Derek**

- Item 9 – This had changed to reflect the Chief Officer’s announced resignation.
- Item 17 - The delivery of the new Unitarian College institution to deliver training in ministry, lay leadership and lifelong learning would pose challenges. The capacity of the new organisation was being built by putting in place the Director post.

The Risk Register was **AGREED**. It was suggested that future annual updates should have changes track-changed for ease of identification.

10. Response to Investment Guidance (Document EC66/18)

A response had been received from Martin Fieldhouse, which commended the group for the guidance, and offered a number of comments. This was reviewed. The EC were pleased to have started the debate on this.

Questions raised were:

- How will the General Assembly know whether trustees have taken the suggested steps in the investment guide?
- How do we incorporate responses?
- Could we collaborate with The Quakers, who have more resources in this area, and is there a way we could provide access for Treasurers to more investment information?

Fossil fuel investments

Hilda Dumpleton had been asked by her district to bring up Ethical Investment in respect of fossil fuels. It was noted that, with the pooled investment funds, it was extremely difficult to disinvest entirely from fossil fuels, whether we wished to or not. It was noted that the Unitarian Investment Panel were taking this issue seriously, and had discussed this with Newton at their last meeting and further information was being provided on options to assist discussions.

It was noted that Investment Managers could engage with common investment funds to influence company policies. In response to a question about the Quaker policies, the Chief Officer replied that they had ultimately disinvested from fossil fuels, but that it had been a long and difficult process for them. It was noted that the Ethical Policy was a component of our Investment Policy, which in turn was considered as part of the general financial plan.

11. Non – responsive check out

This took place.

Closing Devotions - Matthew Smith gave a reading on Autumn by Rudy Nemser.

An informal session took place in the evening. Andrew Mason was not present.

Tuesday 25 September 2018

Opening Devotions: Lynne Readett read from “Many Coloured Glass” by Vina Curren, and Peter Sampson.

Apologies: Peter Hanley had given his apologies for 25 September as he had a prior speaking engagement with the Honorary Treasurers’ Forum.

12. Review of Progress and agreed agenda

Next Steps Jan 2018 Report

1. Comprehensive Response on explaining who we are – We had appointed a Communications Officer from 1 October 2018. Some actions, like having testimonials added to the website, could be taken forward. However, the overall strategy would require buy-in from our community and would require significant time and effort. As such, it was felt that this had been taken as far as possible at this point, and would be revisited after appointment of the new Chief Officer, who would have strategic communications as part of their remit.

2. Support web-based spiritual learning resource.
This was intended to be part of the TED programme but needed to await development of the Unitarian College for online lay training in 2020. The Space to Search website had been built, but without content, and was not online. How it fitted with the GA website and social media needed consideration and the Communications Officer would be asked to review.

3. Engage with the wider community on today’s issues – wording since changed.
This was about Engagement Groups. Summer School had requested training and they were asked to bring a proposal but there had since been training in London. There was a need to re-engage with them on the current position.

4. Increase collaboration with other like-minded organisations
We were involved in collaboration with a number of groups; such as Liberty, the Accord Coalition, Equality Trust etc. The Chief Officer would provide an update of the grid of organisations we interact with, particularly referencing GA Resolutions. **ACTION: Derek**

5. Promote more Unitarian thought and writing
Sue Woolley’s book had been published. The Lindsey Press were struggling attracting volunteers with relevant skills. This would be added to the Risk Register. **ACTION: Derek**

It was noted that there is a lot of Unitarian thought on the internet in the form of blogs. The North West Provincial Council were running a creative writing course. It was suggested we could put links on our website to external Unitarian’s blogs and the Communications Officer would be asked to consider this. It was also suggested we could have Welsh publications.

6. Formulate a plan to undertake campus ministry – there had not been any further approaches. The Cambridge pilot had not proved successful although there had been learning. This was a difficult area to engage with and we were no longer pursuing any action on this.

7. Support a new congregational development

The limited capacity of the 2020 Project was focused on Derby. This was a strategic area to explore with the new Chief Officer.

8. Grow our volunteer pool

This was felt to be a local rather than national issue. It was suggested that organisations be encouraged to get together to support each other as with the Worship Studies Course. It was further suggested that we run training in how to be Officers. The idea was to grow confidence and capacity, by giving our existing wider Unitarian Community the skills to volunteer, rather than try and find new people.

9. Find more flexible ways of training for ministry

This had required significant focussed energy to achieve. 33 volunteers had been involved in work to produce the competencies framework, progress the TED project and the pilot run by the new Unitarian College.

10. Develop and integrate forms of ministerial training (including recognised lay ministry training)

See item 9 above.

11. Work with the Districts to create a new forum for national involvement.

It was concluded that another forum was not what people wanted and this was on hold for now, pending more discussion on how to make people feel involved. We would need to consider what to consult on and how and the timing impact for this process. This would be an agenda item for the next meeting. We would also need to consider whether districts were the best (or only) medium we should use, as there were options to consult with districts, other organisations and / or individuals directly.

ACTION: Derek

12. Understand and reduce threats to building and financial sustainability

The Ministry and Congregational Support Officer position had been given additional hours to give more support.

13. Review the effectiveness of our organisation

A paper had been received and this issue would be discussed with the new Chief Officer after their appointment. Education and Training functions would move to the new Unitarian College. The GA was moving to support other organisations (e.g. The Sustentation Fund, providing financial administrative services to Unitarian College). Progressing to CIO status was a further step, given governance changes affecting other bodies were being concluded.

14. Update "Help is at Hand" as an online resource

Updating had been done, and the amended version was currently being proof read with the expectation that this resource would be completed and online by the Annual Meetings.

15. Reduce our carbon footprint

Mark Hutchinson had offered to look at the Hilton's environmental policy regarding the impact of the Annual Meetings.

Session 7**11.00 – 12.30**EC Membership

The forthcoming EC elections were noted and the opportunities would be promoted more widely, for example, on social media.

13. Chief Officer's Report (Document EC67/18)

The Chief Officer's report was noted.

Grundy Trust – The EC were asked to rescind the appointment of the Manchester District Association as Custodian Trustee of the Grundy Trust. This was **AGREED**.

The Faith Forum for London were holding a consultation for the Government on widening the attendance at the National Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday.

Closure of the Banbury Fellowship – this was noted with regret.

Equality Trust – It was suggested we invite someone from the Equality Trust to report back at the Annual Meetings.

Eisteddfod – This had been a week of public engagement by Unitarian volunteers facilitated by Melda Grantham, Welsh Department Secretary. All were congratulated.

Staffing – Gavin Howell had taken up the post of Youth Co-ordinator/Safeguarding Lead on 01 August 2018, and Rory Castle Jones would start as Communications Officer on 01 October 2018.

International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) – Matthew Smith attended the IARF Congress. The current Inquirer edition has a report, which Matthew circulated. Robert Ince, as new President of IARF, was compiling a vision booklet for consultation to provide a shared vision of the organisation.

14. President's Report (Document EC68/18)

The President's Report was noted. Her attendance at the Cross Party Group on End of Life Choices at Holyrood was highlighted.

15. EC Link Reports (Document EC69/18 with addenda)

The EC Link Reports were noted.

Southern Unitarian Association report – The Ministry & Congregational Support Officer would be given the report and be asked to speak to Lucy Harris as SUA President. It was suggested that a joint enterprise between the Southern, Western and London Districts could be helpful.

Merseyside – The Ministry & Congregational Support Officer had delivered a workshop at Ullet Road, Liverpool.

North East Lancashire – The Ministry & Congregational Support Officer had delivered a governance workshop at Rochdale Church.

Wales – The Eisteddfod had been very successful. 50 Unitarians had raised funds to support registration for same-sex marriage and grants to other charities. The Swansea Church had a license for same-sex marriage granted and a wedding was now booked for February.

East Midlands – The District were continuing to support the 2020 Derby Unity Project, which had a year left to run on the original project. Rev Maria Pap had been appointed to the Mansfield congregation. The Ministry & Congregational Support Officer had attended the last district meeting. A very successful joint service had been held between Hinckley and Belper (at Hinckley) and it was intended that this would be repeated.

Sheffield – A new District Secretary had been appointed, working in tandem with Ed Fordham. A Rites of Passage course had been started. There was a feeling of momentum in the district. Three congregations had come to Underbank Chapel, Stannington for the GA President's visit.

16. Key Messages

As circulated.

17. Dates of future meetings

2018 - Friday 16 November – 9am-5pm

2019 - Friday 25 January – 9am-5pm

- **Friday 17 May – 9am-5pm**

- **Friday 26 July – 9am-5pm**

- **Sun 22 – Tues 24 September at the Nightingale Centre? This was to be confirmed**

18. Confidential Items

There were none.

19. Non responsive check-out

This took place.

Closing Devotions – Christina Smith read “The Invisible Powers That Sustain Us” from ‘In the Holy Quiet’ by Richard Gilbert and the meeting closed.

**Approved Minutes of the GA Executive Committee (EC) Meeting
held 16 November 2018 at Essex Hall**

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

In attendance: Rory Castle Jones (Communications Officer), Joan Cook (GA President), Gavin Howell (Youth Officer, item 15), Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Andrew Mason (Minutes), Jeffrey Teagle (item 14).

Session 1

Opening Devotions: Phillip Colfox gave a reading.

1. Appointment of Chief Officer

The President and GA Staff members were not present at this item. A report was received on the recruitment and selection process.

2. Nomination of GA Vice President

The President and GA Staff members were not present at this item. Consideration of this item was postponed to the next meeting.

3. Apologies

There were no apologies. Rory was welcomed to the meeting.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 23-25 September 2018 (Document EC72/18)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23-25 September 2018 were **AGREED** as a correct record, and signed by the Chair, with two minor amendments: to the page 5 paragraph on the quality framework; and to page 9, adding apologies for the second day for Peter Hanley.

A tabulated issues and requirements list from the Minutes would be created by Lynne Readett and Philip Colfox.

ACTION: Lynne & Philip

Andrew Mason was thanked for producing comprehensive Minutes of the last meeting.

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

There were no matters arising not already on the agenda.

6. EC Action List (Document EC73/18)

18 May 2018

Kereki Trust – The Chief Officer had received a response from David Gyero, the Deputy Bishop, indicating that the Hungarian Unitarian Church but would take the issue of nominees forward and that in the meantime, the GA would continue to act as steward of the fund. It was unlikely that there would be a student or minister nominated every year.

23-25 September 2018

Small initiatives fund – The Chief Officer would remind the Ministry & Congregational Support Officer about the need to create criteria for grants.

ACTION: Chief Officer

Collaboration – The Chief Officer would provide an update of the grid of organisations we interact with for the January EC meeting.

ACTION: Chief Officer

7. Follow up to previous meeting

Quality Framework, Page 5

The Chief Officer had asked the Ministry & Congregational Support Officer for feedback on where the Ministry Strategy Group (MSG) and the Interview Panel (IP) were on these issues.

Unitarian College (UC)

With the assistance of working groups, this process was well underway. The MSG would begin to explore and learn from the new College as the pilot training programme progresses with a second cohort in 2019.

Harris Manchester College Oxford (HMCO)

With a new Tutor inheriting an existing system, discussions have started on the curriculum and the need to evidence competencies had been discussed. There were opportunities for development in partnership with the GA and Unitarian College and engagement on this had begun.

The Chief Officer had attended a meeting involving members of the Manchester Academy Trust and the Tutor in Ministerial Studies with the new Principal of HMCO, Professor Jane Shaw. Professor Shaw has a large agenda, but had extensive knowledge around liberal religion and Unitarianism. The Principal had commented on how students could engage with other denominations. There was a need for the wider Denomination to recognise that the provision of ministerial training was only a small, but important, part of the Objects of HMCO.

The need for continuous assessment of students throughout training in order that the competencies were met was stressed and the Ministry & Congregational Officer would be asked to continue to follow up with the Tutor on how this would be dealt with. **ACTION: Chief Officer**

Unitarian College Manchester (UCM)

A update was received on the Governors' meeting at Unitarian College Manchester AGM. UCM was in process of ending its formal relationship with the Partnership for Theological Education, with the registered address being changed to Cross Street Chapel, Manchester. Students would, however, be able to study at Luther King House at the same preferential rates and ongoing engagement was welcomed.

Unitarian College (UC) progress

It was reported that Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) status had now been granted by the Charity Commission, and that the College Board would meet formally on 5 December 2018 (rather than a shadow board). The position of Director had been advertised with a closing date of 4 December and interviews on 12 December. It was hoped the appointee would be able to start in April. An independent academic, Professor David Sims (formerly of Cass Business School), would be involved in the recruitment panel. The position would be home-working, so there was no geographical restriction.

Marion reported that there were three founding trustees, Dot Hewerdine, Derek McAuley and herself but that nine trustees would be needed. Derek would shortly be standing

down. Anyone knowing of people with the right skills to recommend were asked to contact Marion.

8. District Engagement

Philip had received a request from one district to receive papers. He had asked for written reports to be sent, which had already increased their engagement. It was pointed out that any wider circulation of EC papers and minutes should only take place if all authors were aware this was the practice and this had been agreed.

It was noted that the Eastern Union no longer existed, and that were some implications if districts were therefore used as a communications mechanism. There were further questions about how the purpose of district associations had changed over time, the difference between those districts with and without resources for grant-making to local congregations, and how best we should engage as a result. The Chief Officer would circulate an report produced by Sir Peter Soulsby for the Denominational Support Commission about the role of districts. This would be on the agenda for the next meeting.

ACTION: Chief Officer

The Chief Officer remarked on the practical issue that, if more material from districts were to be considered by the EC, the papers needed to be submitted by the stated deadlines to properly administer this.

9. Nightingale Centre Minutes (Document EC74/18)

The Minutes of the Nightingale Centre Meeting held 13 October were accepted. In response to a query about archiving papers, it was noted that copies of the Minutes were held at Essex Hall as they formed part of the EC papers.

10. Nightingale Centre Investment Proposal (Document EC75/18)

The Centre was holding £300K in their bank account, and felt that £150K was needed for day to day activities, and £100K for contingencies. The Centre's Management Committee were therefore recommending that £50K be invested in long-term investments for income growth, as this required approval by the EC as the trustees. This was **AGREED**. Suitable investment advice would be sought.

Session 2

11. Feedback from Honorary Treasurers' Forum (Document EC76/18)

The feedback report was noted. The GA Treasurer remarked on the fact that trustees are often disengaged from finance, and education was needed

In the context of the EC, he felt it was necessary to make more decisions on which projects we would prioritise, and how we would plan the management of our resources to ensure funding was available at the correct stages in development. The Investment Guide was a good starting point for this. In terms of policy, technical financial expertise would be helpful to translate from the agreed policies to the big picture outcome. Marion offered to speak to an individual to see if they would be interested in being involved. **ACTION: Marion**

12. Future Investment Policy (Document EC77/18)

The Treasurer presented a report on the role of an Investment policy including a draft Investment Policy, using the London District's Policy as a guide. The trustees needed to first consider the GA's overall strategy, then create a GA statement of objectives. This

would then establish the Investment Policy, which in turn would give a mandate for implementation and operation.

In answer to a question as to whether the ethical investment policy would need to be approved by the Annual Meetings, it was clarified that this was a responsibility of the EC as trustees. It was requested that it be minuted that the EC were working hard towards this achievement. There was a statement of investment policy already, which could be drawn on. There was a default trustee responsibility to invest where a 'good return' rather than 'best return' could be obtained, unless there was a Resolution against this. The GA Resolutions would be used to inform the policy, though with a focus on the most recent Resolutions as having the most relevance (there were historic resolutions on the evils of alcohol, for example, reflecting the influence of temperance). The investment policy also needed to tie in with the Business Plan to ensure cash-flow could be matched to project timetables.

On page 10 of the report, there was a suggestion that there was a concern about Gilts. It was unclear why this should be there, and the Treasurer would review this.

ACTION: Peter

The Investment Panel were looking at how ethical issues influenced investment.

The issue of pooled funds was raised. The disadvantage of pooled funds was that disinvesting completely in any area was very difficult, and a performance standard needed to be met. However, Investment Managers were very aware of ethical issues and would challenge company practices seen as non-ethical. On the issue of fossil fuels, the draft policy had given the environment a classification of 'very concerned' on our negative issues to inform the Investment Managers. The Treasurer would write an additional page on disinvestment and funds.

ACTION: Peter

It was agreed that this would be discussed further at the next meeting.

13. Unitarian Investment Panel Succession Planning (Document EC78/18)

The report was noted. It was **AGREED** that the United Reformed Church (URC) Pension Fund, about the environmental, social and governance focussed Sustainability Fund, in which they had invested. Mike Tomlin's decision to stand down from the Panel was noted and he was to be thanked for many years of service. The commitment to serve on the panel was for three meetings a year, for someone with financial knowledge.

14. Ministers Pension Fund (MPF) Guarantor of Last Resort

Jeffrey Teagle attended for this item to brief the trustees. Lynne Readett and Matthew Smith declared an interest as members of the Fund, and Rob Whiteman declared an interest as Treasurer and member of the Fund.

The agreement for the GA to act as Guarantor for the MPF was signed by the EC in February 2008, after an original decision to start negotiations in 2001.

The reasons for the agreement had been: 1) Concerns about financial pressures on the Fund; and 2) a strong desire to give a clear signal to ministry that the denomination valued and cared for its ministers. The scheme is on a final salary basis, not money purchase. Jeff indicated he is the remunerated Secretary, not a trustee, of the MPF.

In 2008 the Fund had a considerable deficit of £561K. Today the deficit stood at around £184K. The GA has three appointees on the MPF Trust, so there is a strong GA link and influence. Historically trustees have been former GA Presidents with detailed knowledge of the denomination. The MPF has professional administration from Jardine Lloyd Thompson, and legal advice from Roderick Ramage, a pensions and insurance law specialist. The MPF participates in the Unitarian Investment Panel and this has been a big part of the reason for improvement in deficit. At the time of the agreement, the contribution rate for the fund was 8.5%, and this had since been increased to 10% to give more live income. Pension ages had since risen, so the MPF Constitution had been amended to match the drawing dates to those of the state. The Widows Fund amalgamated with the MPF in 2017, and the actuarial valuation estimate was good and it had also meant a reduced shared overhead.

In the decade since the guarantee was made, things have improved and according to the actuary, this was expected to continue. The GA had taken a risk, knowingly, and the MPF Committee had gone forward to greatly improve the risk factor.

The MPF Committee had met three days ago, and accounts were provided. The position was not significantly changed. There had been a slight dip in finances from the current instability in the financial markets, but the income stream was good. The MPF trustees have no material concern about investments or how the Fund is running. Should the stock market move adversely over period of time, the trustees would consider increasing the contribution rate further.

Risk was managed through the Management committee regularly reviewing the risk criteria, and good professional advice from the Investment Managers, with a spread of funds both geographically and by sector. It was noted that people were joining the ministry later in their careers, and that there were a reduced number of funded ministries. Their might be a scope to widen the fund for lay leaders as a result of the new training plans. The greatest risk over the last 20 years had been increased bureaucracy and costs from government initiatives.

The MPF recently had a meeting to discuss succession planning. The Board was refreshed every three years at the GA Annual Meetings. This year, Mike Tomlin would be standing down as Chair after over 20 years, Peter Hewis would not standing for re-election and Joyce Ashworth would be standing down as one of the three GA appointees. One of the other GA appointments already had a vacancy. The GA appointed trustees would need to be decided at the January EC meeting. Marion had agreed to stand, and had one other person in mind to approach. **ACTION: Marion**

Jeff Teagle was thanked for attending and for his full report.

Session 3

15. Youth Programme Presentation

Gavin Howell, Youth Co-ordinator, attended for this session and gave a presentation following a recent weekend strategy event on the national youth programme. He highlighted that the programme would be looking to build partnerships across the Unitarian and Free Christian Movement. There was scope for a more co-ordinated curriculum across the age groups and he was working with the Youth Panel to draw up an improvement and

development plan. Opportunities exist to share the thinking about future direction and how support could be offered across the country on work with children and young people.

The following questions and comments were made:

- Where were the voices of young Unitarians in the process? There had been some youth voice in the review, and attenders' feedback at the end of every weekend, though it was difficult to get a broader view due a thin spread and geographical dispersion. Gavin felt that it was most important to have trained professionals working on a sound and robust theory for the curriculum, with feedback then helping to flesh this out.
- Where is youth in our development plan? Youth was not specifically mentioned in the list of Next Steps Priorities, as the programme was seen as integral to the work of the General Assembly. The presentation went a long way to addressing this, and the EC now needed to consider how to progress this.
- There were questions about the relationships between strategy, delivery, volunteers and paid staff and where responsibilities lay, including for UniFest.
- We had not yet clarified how we saw the Unitarian journeys of our young people going, and Gavin was asked to provide more information for the EC to look at.
ACTION: Youth Co-ordinator
- There were issues with numbers, and resource allocation for those numbers.
- There were issues with supporting youth leaders at local level and training was needed to help with retention. We needed to assess the needs of our volunteers as well as our young people. Success can be inspirational.
- A conversation would be needed with the new Unitarian College, who will be responsible for lifelong learning for all within the next 2-3 years, after their new Director had been appointed.
- Gavin and all those volunteering with the national youth programme were thanked for their contributions and commitment.

16. Financial Update (Document EC79/18)

Management Accounts to the 30 September 2018 were presented. Comments were:

- There were no surprises in the year end first draft, which was subject to audit.
- Funds had been drawn down from the Bowland Trust monies, as planned.
- There had been a credit of £33K for recognition of a reduced deficit on the staff pension fund.
- There had been gains on investments of £168K as at 30/09/18 but it was noted that the market had since fallen.
- Summer School appeared to have made a slight deficit above the usual £3,350 subsidy. The subsidy would remain the same in 2020.
- Actual administration costs were greater than in the outlook. The main reason for that was a revaluation of the Essex Hall gift-in-kind office space from a notional value of £64K to £99K which was also reflected in notional income.

Full Final Accounts would be presented at the next meeting for approval.

17. Report of Meeting with Unitarian and Free Christian UNITE Branch (Document EC80/18)

Matthew Smith declared an interest as a member of Unite. A report was received of the meeting held on 15 October 2018. There were some items which the Ministry and Congregational Support Officer would be taking forward, including policy changes which would be presented to EC for approval.

ACTION: MCSO

The report was noted.

18. Notes of Sustentation Fund Meeting (Document EC81/18)

The Sustentation Fund Committee had convened, and written grant requests were received. These are sent via District Associations, so those without District Associations could not apply. Matthew Smith declared an interest as a Minister of a congregation without a District Association. This needed further consideration. The Ministry and Congregational Support Officer would be asked to devise a procedure to deal with this. He was working on making the process more robust going forward.

ACTION: MCSO

This document was noted.

19. Appeal from Robin Hood Tax Campaign (Document EC82/18)

An email request had been received requesting financial support. Several members expressed concern that there could be political or integrity issues, as this was not a Registered Charity. Some money had been given three years ago at the time of the Resolution. It was decided that additional funding would not be given at this time. The Communications Officer asked whether it would be reasonable to share messages from the campaign and this was felt to be acceptable.

Session 4**20. GA Associate Proposal (Document EC83/18)**

The proposals from Rosemary Ruston to discontinue the annual physical membership card and increase the basic subscription to £40 per annum single payment or £4 per month were **AGREED**.

21. Roll of Lay Preachers (Document EC84/18)

It was **AGREED** that Graham Phoenix would be added to the Roll of Lay Preachers.

22. Notes of Annual Meetings Panel 18 September 2018 and Update (Document EC85/18)

The Panel had met on 15 November 2018. Marketing had been discussed. It was noted that there would be a half-hour opening celebrations rather than a short prayer, to get the event off to a good start. The need for training sessions had been identified. Group Registration forms were due back by 23 November. Matthew Smith had given advance notice of his intention to resign from the Panel after the Meetings. The new EC in May 2019 would be invited to appoint a new representative.

ACTION: Chief Officer

23. President's Report (Document EC86/18 & EC86b/18)

The President's report was noted. An updated report on the Cenotaph Service was also noted. Joan planned to pass on some information on this for Celia Cartwright. Celia had attended a Baha'i dinner in Joan's absence due to a prior commitment.

24. Chief Officer's Report (Document EC87/18)

Item 3 – Antisemitism

The Chief Officer has sent a holding reply to a request from the Campaign Against Antisemitism for information on our formal position on antisemitism (and the definition thereof), including the text of the relevant 1933 and 1943 GA Resolutions. The President mentioned that some of our churches house liberal Jewish congregations. It was **AGREED** to accept the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition to guide any work on antisemitism as reflected in the Resolutions of the General Assembly.

25. EC Link Reports (Documents EC88/18 & EC88b/18)

The link reports were noted.

26. Key Messages

As circulated.

27. Dates of future meetings

The dates of future meetings were: Friday 25 January (9-5), Friday 17 May (9-5) and Friday 26 July (9-5) all at Essex Hall.

28. Non responsive check-out

The check-out took place.

Closing Devotions – Peter Hanley read 'Mind Buddy Spirit', a short poem, in response to Philip's opening reading, followed by mediation by Peter Rhodes, and the meeting closed.