

General Assembly of Unitarian
& Free Christian Churches

Approved Minutes of Executive Committee
Friday 5 September 2014

Luther King House, Manchester

Present: Robert Ince (Convenor), James Barry, Rev John Clifford, Joan Cook, Louise Rogers, Alison Thursfield, Rev Martin Whitell (interim Hon Treasurer), Dr Jacky Woodman,

In Attendance: Derek McAuley (Chief Officer) until Session 2, Mary-Jean Hennis (Minute-taker). Marion Baker (GA President),

Session 1

Opening Devotions: Robert read from the book Inner Peace by the Dalai Lama- "Purely theoretical knowledge is a dangerous thing".

1. Apologies:

2. Minutes of the meetings held on 14 July 2014 (DOC EC66/14)

Page 3 – Item 7 – VSG 1 July 2014 -second paragraph, 3rd line. The words "in principle" were deleted.

Page 5 – item 9 – Ministry Strategy Group Presentation, last paragraph was changed to read that "The EC agreed to support the Ministry Strategy Group's decision with regard to future intake of Ministerial Students to the Colleges."

Page 7 – item 16 – Nightingale Centre, – that "17. President's Report" be inserted at second paragraph – resulting in changes to the numbering of minutes from that point.

After these changes were made the Minutes were signed as a true record of the EC meeting held on the 14 July 2014.

Discussion took place on minuting of confidential items. Louise proposed that future confidential matters not to be included in the published Minutes should be recorded and held separately (referred to as "pink" papers); this was seconded by James and agreed by the EC. **Action: Convenor and Chief Officer**

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

- Page 3 item 7 – Equipment (asset) Register. James asked whether this is an inventory just for the VSG? It was indicated that this would be an organisational inventory and should be completed by all groups. James to forward the VSG inventory to the Chief Officer and all groups to be notified of same. **Action: Chief Officer**
- Page 6 item 12 – Resolution Up-date – Chief Officer still to contact the Charity Commission on constitutional change. **Action: Chief Officer**

It was agreed to amend the Agenda to accommodate the Chief Officer who would be leaving the EC meeting at 10.30 am due to ill health.

4. Financial Report & Budget 2014/15 (DOC68/14)

The management accounts to the end of July 2014 and budget proposals for 2014/2015 were presented.

With respect to the current year the outlook showed that the planned deficit was lower than anticipated despite no legacies being received during this period. There is a concern that due to the forthcoming changes in the management of the B&FUA investment portfolio, it may impact on income and grant to the General Assembly. The Annual Meetings budget broke even.

The interim Hon Treasurer proposed and James seconded that the thanks of the EC be expressed to Martin Sarbicki & John Crosskey for their work during the transition period moving from the old financial system to the new financial system.

The budget for 2014/2015 was considered. The anticipated income of £10,000 from legacies figure was reviewed but agreed to retain in view of past trends of giving and to highlight the opportunity to give in this way. The changes to accommodation at Essex Hall reduced administration costs. Without an increase in quota there was a deficit overall of £19,000.

Looking to the longer term there will be pressures building up due to the end of Bowland Trust Fund. There is an immediate need to support work on Ministry Training, which would be considered later in the meeting with a potential cost of £5,000 which was not in the budget.

It was proposed that there should be work undertaken on giving and that as a first step these issues needed to be communicated to the wider Movement. It was agreed that this is a message that can be brought up at the EC Vision Day on 6 September 2014. Various ideas for highlighting the above issues were discussed and it was agreed to submit an article to the Inquirer. **Action: Convenor, the Chief Officer and the interim HonTreasurer.**

Extensive discussion took place on the level of the quota for 2014/15. It was noted that the definition of the Quota was not consistent and that it was timely to clarify what the Quota entailed. This is also something that the Links should take to their Districts.

The EC unanimously agreed:

1. to approve the Budget as amended, subject to the latter discussion on ministry training .
2. to increase the Quota to £35 (+£3) .

5. Risk Register Update – (DOC70/14) – noted with the following:

The revision of the Risk Register requested at the previous meeting was presented incorporating issues which had been scored. Louise reiterated her concerns with the scoring for the first item on the Risk register.

- Item 10 –Loss of the Chief Officer due to ill health or without notice - the impact was felt to be more serious and the consequence figure was increased to 3 and therefore the score 6. **Action:** the Chief Officer to put a contingency plan in place for issues that only he is aware of.
- Item 13 – Loss of sufficient funds to support Ministerial Students – in view of low score it was agreed be removed from the Risk Register.

6. The Chief Officer’s Report – (DOC74/14) – noted with the following:

- Page 2 – item 4 – Visibility – the Chief Officer had given his support to an Accord Coalition initiative to promote inclusive education in line with GA Resolutions and the Chief Officer will be writing an article on this issue for the Inquirer.
- Page 3 – BBC thought for the Day - It was agreed to submit an article to The Inquirer on follow-up to Resolutions including the response from the BBC with regard to the inclusion of Unitarians on the regular rota of speakers for “Thought for the Day”. **Action: Chief Officer**
- Page 5 – ICUU – GA Representative – A vacancy had arisen following the departure of Rev David Usher to the United States. After discussion it was agreed that the EC would think of appropriate names and bring them to the November EC meeting and that the Chief Officer explore the job description. **Action: EC and Chief Officer**

The Chief Officer left the meeting at this point due to ill health.

Session 2

7. Ministry Strategy Group Minutes – (DOC67/14) – noted with the following:

- EC ratified the appointment of the Rev Daniel Costley as the new Chair for the Ministry Strategy Group. Stephen Lingwood was thanked for his contribution as Chair of the Ministry Strategy Group
- EC approved the appointment of the Rev Ant Howe as a member of the Ministry Strategy Group.

- Page 1 – item 2 – Membership – EC acknowledged that length of the term of office was being discussed and their expectation that members would commit to a period of 3 – 5 years. **Action: Joan to liaise with Daniel Costley with regard to the terms of office.**

There was a further discussion on the Terms of Reference for all Strategy Groups, which are due for review next year and it was agreed that Louise and James would draw up a terms of reference taking into consideration the outcome of the EC Vision Day and strategic plan. **Action: Louise and James**

Jacky reported that still had no response with regard to the Competency Document, Action: **Joan to liaise with Daniel Costley**

8. Ministry Training Update

This highlighted that the two Colleges do see the need for change and will cooperate, however, they do not have the necessary resources for these changes to take place within the next year, so will be looking to the EC for help. The Convenor reported on a positive conversation at the recent IARF conference with the Revs Peter Morales and Eric Cherry of the Unitarian Universalist Association on possible support given their experience of similar changes affecting ministerial training in the United States

It was recognised that there was a need to develop relationships with Harris Manchester College There was also a need for both Colleges to work together at this time.

It was agreed that a training manual outlining what is required to satisfy the requirements for ministry should be produced.

A lengthy discussion took place with regard to Continual Professional Development (CPD) and it was agreed the congregational Terms of Appointment should include this. Ministers should be involved in CPD and should have the support of their Congregations. **Action: Martin to include this item to the Ministers Conference as a recommendation and Joan to liaise with Daniel with regard to CPD.**

It was agreed to grant the Ministry Strategy Group an additional £5,000 to their budget on condition that the group presented a proposal to the EC. Funds would only be released with the authority of the EC who would retain total control over spending.

9. 2020 Update – (DOC 69/14) – noted with the following:

Louise noted that there are other risks that were not included in the Risk Register attached to the report. There was no mention of other people in the congregation, there was a need to link the governance to the money, there is a major risk with the milestones and the original application needs to be

looked at again as there are gaps. **Action: Louise to email her concerns to the 2020 Leadership Group.**

It was reported that the East Midlands Unitarians are willing to contribute more money to the project and want the project to go ahead. It was stressed that 2020 remain totally committed to Derby although there was much more work required. **Action: Martin to liaise with Sir Peter Soulsby.**

Session 3

10. Safeguarding Update – (DOC 71/14) noted with the following:

The letter from Simon Bass from CCPAS was noted and it was agreed that this correspondence will be shared with the Rev Shammy Webster of Rochdale Congregation and that the reference to a particular childrens' home should be checked. **Action: Chief Officer**

It was noted that the Rev Shammy Webster will be attending a Media Training course at Salford University in the Autumn funded by the General Assembly.

It was reiterated that any inquiries from the National Press will be handled only by the Chief Officer and inquiries from the local press by the local Congregations.

It was suggested that an approach needed to be developed to deal with any historical allegations. The first point of action in these circumstances should be to contact the CCPAS and this would be included in the Safeguarding item in the Risk Register under the Control Column. **Action: Chief Officer**

It was agreed that Joan will be the Safeguarding lead for the EC and will liaise with the Chief Officer on Safeguarding issues and that EC Link members are to reiterate the importance of the Safeguarding Policy to their Districts.

Action: EC Links

It was accepted that there was a continuing need to highlight to congregations the requirements of the Safeguarding Policy, such as display of their policy and name of their Safeguarding officer in a prominent place.

It was suggested that the GA President make discreet enquiries with regard to the Policy on their visits to Congregations.

11. Millennium Fund Application – Dukinfield – (DOC72/14)

It was agreed to return the application to Dukinfield as they had not yet applied to their District Association and as retrospective did not fit with the criteria of applying for the Grant. They were to be informed that should additional professional fees be required the congregation should be encouraged to apply for funding in advance of expenditure. **Action: Chief Officer to liaise with Dukinfield.**

12. Creating New Congregations - noted with the following:

Louise presented some ideas and suggested that the 2020 Leadership Group should report to the Local Leadership Strategy Group. Louise was thanked for her work on the paper.

Session 4**13. Annual Meeting Update - (DOC 73/14) – noted with the following:**

With respect to the 2014 Annual Meeting the Chief Officer and Andrew Mason were thanked for managing to keep the costs down, despite unbudgeted items such as IT support, and achieving a small surplus.

The 2015 and 2016 Annual Meetings will be held that at the Hilton Birmingham Hotel. Transport is much easier with the Hotel close to the International rail station and motorway system. As we will not have sole use there will be a need for greater care over security and safeguarding. The convenience of this location cannot be over emphasised and Andrew Mason was to be congratulated on finding it.

A discussion was held on possible Constitution amendments as several elements are out of date such as reference to the now dissolved Commissions. A reconstituted CRG (Constitutional Review Group) was needed for this task and supporting any move to CIO status. It would also require legal advice which would need to be budgeted for. Three members are needed for this group. EC to bring suggested names to the November EC meeting. **Action: EC members**

CIO will be on the November EC Agenda, **Action: Chief Officer**
Paper on Articles of Association to be prepared. **Action: Louise.**

14. President's Report – (DOC EC75/14) – noted with the following:

The President welcomed the Chief Officer's initiative with the Accord Coalition to promote inclusive education as it showed the breadth of concern of the Unitarian Movement as there was a risk of being seen as focused on a single issue.

A discussion was held regarding seeking suggestions for President and Vice president for 2015/16 .Feedback had revealed that there is the perception that the president's job involves an enormous amount of work including taking services and attending EC meetings. The current President noted that it is in the gift of the president to manage their own diaries.

It was agreed that the EC should actively undertake to seek names for consideration at the November EC meeting. An email reminder to be sent to districts. **Action: Chief Officer**

It was agreed that a Search Committee should be set up for next year to seek for volunteers not only for the role of President and Vice President but also the various strategy groups. Detailed terms of reference would be required.

The President was thanked for her report.

15. World Humanist Congress Report - (DOC EC76/14) – noted.

Jacky was thanked for her comprehensive report of the event.

16. IARF World Congress

The Convenor gave a oral report on the IARF World Congress at the University of Birmingham, 24-27 August 2014, which had highlighted extremism and asked the question how do we counter balance this?

17. Nightingale Centre Minutes – (DOC EC77/14) – noted.

Item 3 – EC issues : 3.1 It was agreed that there was no requirement for independent facilitation

It was agreed that the Convenor would remain as the EC/Nightingale Centre link person until May 2015.

The accounts to end of August are in draft form and are showing a £550 surplus which is an improvement on the predicted loss.

The joint meeting proposed for the 18th October had been postponed to the 25th October but this is not convenient for everyone and a new date to be arranged. **Action: Convenor**

18. A.O.B.

- 1. Climate Change** – Robert reported that there has been no progress on the pack for circulation to congregations in spite of a number of conversations between the Convenor and the Rev Feargus O'Connor
- 2. VSG** – It was recognised at the moment there is no logical successor as Chair as the people involved in the VSG are not willing to take leadership. This group is not running at full strength. It is the responsibility of the EC to appoint the Chair of this group; and it is felt that should James not be involved the group would dissolve.

Action: EC to explore names to serve as chair

Action: James to approach Susanne Intriligator to serve as a member of the VSG. If she agrees, James to email that agreement to the EC.

- 3. Badge making machine** – James is providing this service. There are insurance implications which need to be addressed and he will not let

groups use the machine until these have been sorted out. He reported that children had used the machine at a Youth Programme events

It was noted that James was charging 30p per badge to recoup the cost of materials and it was agreed that the EC required a financial report at the year end from him via VSG. **Action: James and VSG**

It was noted that James was not acting as a Trustee in undertaking this role and he should sign a declaration of interest and forward to the Chief Officer. **Action: James**

4. **IARF** – The Convenor was congratulated on being elected to the IARF Council.

Mary-Jean left the meeting at this point

19. Confidential Items

20. Key Messages to be circulated separately

Convenor to prepare.

Session 5

Mary-Jean was not present for this session.

21. Vision Day Update

22. Non-responsive check out

Closing Devotions: Martin Whitell