

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

**Approved Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting
Friday 14th & Saturday 15th November 2014
Essex Hall, London**

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

In Attendance: Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Mary-Jean Hennis (Minute-taker). Marion Baker (GA President), Jen Hazel for part of Session 3

Friday

The EC marked the death of Geoffrey Head with minutes silence in his memory.

Session 1

Opening Devotions: Louise read from "Appreciative Team Building" with regard to how people relate to each other during meetings and positive questions to bring out the best in the team.

1. Apologies: James Barry contacted the Convenor before the meeting indicating he was likely to be late due to childcare issues. In the event he did not attend the meeting.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2014 (Doc EC79/14)

Item 16. A.O.B on page 7 was corrected to read item 18, with sub sequential changes to item numbers, and the Minutes were signed as a true record of the EC meeting held on the 5th September 2014.

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

- Page 3 item 7 – Equipment (asset) Register – Action Chief Officer. This would be progressed once Annual Accounts finalised.
- From the July EC Minutes – Page 6 item 12 – Resolution Update (CIO status). The Chief Officer has had a response from

the Charity Commission, who apologised for the delay, but was rather unsatisfactory and he had gone back to them.

- Page 3 item 6 –The Chief Officer’s Report – article in The Inquirer on follow-up to Resolutions. The Chief Officer has held off on this item to ensure it was not seen as a response to the article already published from Stephen Lingwood.

Action: Chief Officer

- Page 3 item 7 – Ministry Strategy Group. Jacky reported that she has now had the completed Competency Document from the Rev Stephen Lingwood and she is satisfied that it is a workable document.
- Page 5 – item 10 – Safeguarding. Martin highlighted that there was increasing concern about vulnerable adults and that guidance should be made available to congregations. Louise noted that the definition of a vulnerable adult was very limited. It was agreed that Joan come back to the EC with suggestions and that there would be a Safeguarding workshop at the GA focusing on vulnerable adults arranged with LLSG. **Action: Joan Cook and Louise Rogers**
- Page 5 item 11 – Millennium Fund Application – Dukinfield – The Chief Officer had contacted Dawn Buckle and the congregation will submit another application to the Fund.
- Page 7 – item 18 A.O.B. – Climate Change Resolution. The Convenor had spoken with the Rev Feargus O’Connor about the pack on Climate Change for consultation with congregations. It was agreed that Louise consult with Feargus and seek volunteers to assist via Uni-news. **Action: Louise Rogers**

4. Strategy Groups:

a) **Local Leadership Strategy Group** – Louise to progress with reforming the group. She would consult with Margaret Robinson on the LLSG Report for the Annual Report. **Action: Louise Rogers**

b) **Ministry Strategy Group – (Doc EC80/14) – noted with the following:**

It was noted that a request for funding had not yet been sent to the EC. It was recognised that effective communications was important and Joan was to liaise with Rev Daniel Costley with regard to reinstating the “Highlight” reports and to clarify the use of the term “private” on Minutes. **Action: Joan Cook**

As Joan Cook was EC link the Convenor indicated he would be stepping back from direct involvement.

The Convenor referred to the discussion on Ministry at the Vision day and John Clifford had produced a paper “Provide Ministry that enables Ministry” which reflected his Anniversary Service address of 2013. The competencies would provide a platform for all providing ministry. Louise reported on LLSG discussions with Dawn Buckle on how they might be applied to lay people.

The President observed that whilst opinion on the relationship between profession and lay ministry had changed this required further work on a shared understanding.

c) Visibility Strategy Group – John reported that as there had only been two people attending on Skype plus himself as EC link it was decided not to have a meeting. James had produced editable posters which are available on the Uni-coms web-site.

d) 2020 – Martin reported that there have been a number of changes in the 2020 Leadership Group –

- Claire MacDonald has withdrawn to focus on a training project for which an application for funding had been made to the Hibbert Trust.
- Winnie Gordon & Suzanne Intrilligator have joined the group.
- Jacky has been approached by the 2020 Leadership Team and taking into consideration her time constraints she has agreed to join them.
- Sue Couper has resigned.

Whilst the recruitment of new members was welcomed it was highlighted that any appointments required the approval of the EC before implementation and this would be brought to the attention of the 2020 Leadership. **Action: Martin Whitell**

Martin provided an update on the Derby project with full launch taking place in January 2015. A strong working relationship had been developed with the East Midlands District. The EC were concerned that there has been no written report forthcoming nor agreement of key performance indicators and monitoring. Arrangements for holding the budget and release of funds by Essex Hall had also not been agreed.

It was agreed to request a written report and project plan in advance of the next EC meeting and invite two members of the 2020 Leadership Team and Christina Smith to the January 2015 EC meeting to report on progress before funds were released.. **Action: Chief Officer**

Details of a “Chalice Tour” to raise funds were outlined.

Session 2

5. Annual Trustees Report - (Appendix C - withdrawn)

The Convenor sought views on key issues in the Trustees’ Report as presented to him by the Chief Officer. EC agreed to the proposal of the Convenor to focus on the achievements of the past 5 years, rather than just the past year. We would report on the targets that were set out five years ago and whether they had been reached. There will be a detailed list of all targets with more explicit recognition of performance in the report to be presented at the GA.

The Convenor reported that a possible Hon Treasurer has been identified and may be confirmed early next week and if the individual was agreeable a proposal to co-opt them would be made at the next meeting.

After a lengthy discussion on specific sections in the report the EC agreed to delegate to the Convenor, Acting Hon. Treasurer and Chief Officer authority to agree the final text which had to go to the printer before the next meeting.

Action: Robert Ince, Martin Whitell, Chief Officer

At this point a discussion was held on co-ordinating an approach towards fund-raising for the Ebola Crisis which had been raised by Golders Green Unitarians. It was agreed that a notice should be placed in Key Messages in Uni-news to emphasise that the Red Cross Clara Burton Fund was available for donations to this crisis and that in Syria and Iraq. **Action: Chief Officer**

6. Annual Accounts Update – (Doc EC82/14) – noted with the following:

It was reported that after production of the Report further investigation revealed that expenditure on the Annual Meeting had been inflated by inclusion of the deposit for the 2015 Annual Meeting. This reduced the deficit by £7,000. Further work was underway to prepare the Annual Accounts with a meeting with the Auditor's planned for 10 December 2014.

7. Annual Meeting Update – (Doc EC83/14) – noted with the following:

The Annual Meetings Panel had met the previous day and progressed many of the issues in the circulated notes. Issues with credit have been resolved. Jill McAlister from the ICUU has agreed to be the plenary speaker and as it will be the 20th Anniversary of the ICUU the Rev Cliff Reed has agreed to give a 5 minute introduction.

The Steering Group will be meeting on 19 January 2015 at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester to review arrangements and to give advice on possible motions which have to be received by the 30th January 2015. There will be an Annual Meeting mail out from Essex Hall in late December.

It was agreed that the EC would host the following sessions:

- a) Plenary session – presentation of annual report and then video to be shown about the future.
- b) Double Q&A workshop with a focus on Vision.
- c) Single workshop session on study motions
- d) Double session with Jill McAllister chaired by Jacky Woodman
- e) Joint session with LLSG on vulnerable adults
LLSG would run double session with David Edwards on Risks for Trustees – Louise to Chair and also a single session on the future arrangements for LLSG. **Action: Louise Rogers**

EC acknowledged that there is going to be a greater safeguarding risk than usual at the 2015 GA because of the more open nature of the venue and the use of a paid safeguarding officer should be considered funded by the EC Safeguarding budget. **Action: Chief Officer**

A Risk Assessment on the 2015 GA still had to be carried out and would be reported to the next meeting. **Action: Annual Meetings Panel**

An email has been received from the Rev David Usher raising the issues of ordination and his concern that not enough is done to celebrate the recognition of new ministers at the GA. It was agreed that Certificates would be handed out to the new Ministers at the 2015 GA and subsequent GA's and that MSG be encouraged to discuss these issues and the theological implications. **Action: Chief Officer**

The Convenor proposed a name for Honorary membership at the 2015 GA and criteria for this was handed out. **Agreed: The Convenor to take this issue forward.**

Session 3

8. Youth Strategy Group

Jen Hazel joined the meeting at this point with a report from the Youth Strategy Group which was circulated.

Jen explained that three members of the Youth Strategy Group had got together to produce a proposal which identified three areas; programming, outreach and development and investment. They did foresee some problems and explained how they hope to overcome these "blind spots" with champions needed and funding resources to be found.

The development project had the title "MIND THE GAP" – a three year development project for enriching and growing the presence of young people with Unitarianism."

A number of work areas were outlined and it was felt that a paid staff member would be the best way forward. If agreed then the person employed would have the following responsibilities:

- Co-ordinate, drive and deliver project outputs as listed.
- Collate data to assess progress towards outputs.
- Line managed by Essex Hall.
- YSG would act as a steering committee to the project

The Youth Strategy Group also feel that greater use should be made of social media and would develop visibility of youth and young adult programming through this medium, web presence and communication and marketing.

A process of consultation with various parties would be the next step and if they wanted to be up and running by next September, finances would need to be firmly in place. **Action: Louise to liaise with Jen with regard to the consultation.**

The question on the relationship with the Youth Panel was raised and it was reported that, whilst there was a good working relationship with the Youth Panel, they did not report to the Youth Strategy Group. **Action: The Chief Officer and the Convenor to have a conversation with the Youth Panel on accountability arrangements.**

Discussion took place on the message from the YSG to the 2015 GA which will be the final phase of the consultation, with their vision being “we need to prepare for our children’s future”. A workshop had been booked.

The EC has agreed to support the Youth Strategy Group in taking forward the proposal to the next consultation phase and requested a report to the next EC meeting on consultation arrangements; **Action: Youth Strategy Group**

The Convenor thanked Jen for her time and for the work put into the proposal by all members of the Strategy Group.

9. Millennium Fund Bid – Portsmouth Unitarians – (Doc EC84/14)

Martin declared an interest in this item and left the room. It was agreed to award Portsmouth Unitarians the amount of £3,000 from the Millennium Fund for equipment.

Louise noted that “Awards for All” could be a useful funding source for many congregations on community related items and agreed to prepare a briefing note. **Action: Louise Rogers.**

10. Nightingale Centre:

a) Nightingale Centre Minutes – (Doc EC85/14) -noted with the following:

- A meeting between the EC and the Nightingale Management was agreed as 27 February 2015. **Action: Joan, John, Alison and the Convenor to attend as representatives of the EC.**
- Insurance figure for the re-sale value to be forwarded to the EC. **Action: Marion Baker**
- A copy of the scored Nightingale Risk Register to be forwarded to the EC. **Action: Marion Baker**
- The Convenor to stay as the EC link person until the new EC is in place in May 2015.

b) Investment – The Chief Officer requested EC approval to authorise him to open an account for the proposed investment with Newton’s.

This was proposed by the Convenor, seconded by Louise and approved by the EC. **Action: Chief Officer**

Session 4

11. Follow up to Vision day – 6 September 2014

The Convenor indicated that all the feedback had been very positive and that attendees had been engaged. He had produced a paper from comments made under the headings:

- We want to be.....
- We must.....
- To do this, we need to.....

These comments will provide the basis of articles which will be published over a period of time in The Unitarian and The Inquirer. The Convenor will also look into using the Unitarian page on Facebook. Ultimately a booklet will be produced to be distributed at the 2015 GA. A video will be produced on the Vision by UKunitarianTV.

The objective was to provide the basis for a new five year plan. There would be a need for discussion on how best to take forward the key areas of work and it was agreed that this should take place at the meetings prior to the GA and the EC needed to have a draft plan. **Action: EC**

It was highlighted that one of the biggest obstacles to progress was volunteer capacity. A proposal for a Nominating/Volunteer group drawing people from across the country to widen the pool of potential volunteers had emerged. It was agreed that terms of reference be presented to the next EC: **Action: Convenor and Chief Officer.**

12. C.I.O. Update

The Chief Officer gave a verbal update on the congregations that have converted, or were pursuing, C.I.O. status

13. President/Vice-President nomination

John left the meeting at this point. The EC agreed to the nomination of the Rev John Clifford as the GA President for 2015/16.

A no proposals for the post of Vice-President 2015/16 had been received it was agreed to extend the deadline to the next meeting.

14. Non-responsive check-out

Closing Devotions: Jacky read from "Making the right Mistakes – Mistakes – error management" by Dominic Johnson and Daniel Bloomstein with regard to the values of mistakes in Buddhist teaching

Saturday

Opening Devotions: Joan read from "Morning Watch" meditation by Barbara Pescan – Reunion.

Session 5

15. Chief Officer's Report – (Doc EC86/14) – noted with the following:

- A discussion was held with regard to ensuring co-ordination on matters relating to ministerial training.
- The sale of the property under the Retired Ministers Housing Scheme is nearing completion and will be concluded by 28 November 2014 resulting in a surplus to this designated fund. It was agreed that whilst the Fund could potentially continue to play a role in supporting individual ministers, the rising house prices affected the ability of ministers' to purchase their proportion of any property.
- The EC agreed in principle to support the "2020 Vision of the Good Society" put forward by Churches Together Britain and Ireland in the lead up to the General Election to be held on the 7 May 2015. **Action: Chief Officer to liaise on launch in January 2015**
- The Chief Officer gave the timings for the EC elections – these details will be published in the next Inquirer and in uni-news/GA website

16. Home Working Policy – (Doc EC87/14)

The document was agreed with the title "Health & safety for staff working from home" as it did not address all policy issues relating to staff working at home.

17. President's Report & Diary – (Doc EC88/14) – noted

18. A.O.B.

- The Chief Officer has received a letter from the Ministerial Fellowship with regard to the publication of a revised version of "Celebrating Life" a book published by the Lindsey Press. He has been in correspondence with the Lindsey Press who has welcomed the approach suggested and replied.
- The process agreed at the July meeting regarding admission to the Ministerial Roll was outlined.
- Louise asked about the Fellowship of Non Subscribing Christians which had been established the Chief Officer indicated that whilst he aware of it there had been no formal contact. He took the opportunity to describe his positive reception at the last quarterly meeting of the Unitarian Christian Association.

- Alison indicated that she had been asked by her local group to raise the need for a revision of the LGBT leaflet before Pride parades in summer of 2015 The Chief Officer indicated he could contribute to the revision. The updating was referred to the VSG. **Action: James Barry.**
- Louise asked who the contact person is at Essex Hall with regard to website issues and LLSG – Andrew Mason.
- The deadline for receipt of Motions for the GA was 30 January 2015.

Mary-Jean left the meeting at this point

Session 6

19. Key messages to be distributed separately

20. Date & time of future meetings

Friday 16 & Saturday 17th May 2015

Marion Baker left the meeting at this point.

21. Confidential items

Chief Officer left the meeting at this point

22. Non-responsive check out

Closing Devotions: John Clifford

