

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

**Approved Minutes of Executive Committee
Monday 12th and Tuesday 13th September 2016
The Nightingale Centre, Great Hucklow**

Present: Robert Ince (Convenor), Marion Baker, Joan Cook, Philip Colfox,
Peter Hanley, (Honorary Treasurer), Lynne Readett, Jacky Woodman.

In Attendance: Dot Hewardine (General Assembly President), Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Nightingale Management Committee members and Centre Manager for Session 3, item 8 and Mary-Jean Hennis (Minute taker).

Monday

Session 1

Opening Devotions: Peter Hanley read from Studs Terkel on "Hope".

1. Apologies

Gwynn Pritchard
Jacky Woodman for Tuesday.

2. Minutes of the meetings held on 14th July 2016 – (DOC EC60/16)

After minor alterations the Minutes were signed as a true record of the meeting on 14 July 2016

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

None

4. EC Action List – (DOC EC61/6) - noted and updated

5. Investment Management - (DOC EC62/16 and EC 77/16)

An informative informal discussion had been held on Sunday evening 11 September 2016. The position of the Ministers' Pensions Fund was noted. The Honorary Treasurer presented a detailed briefing paper.

A lengthy discussion was held. There was a need to take account of Charity Commission Guidance CC14. The EC has to take appropriate advice in dealing with investment matters. It was agreed that the Chief Officer would approach Charles Russell Speechlys, the General Assembly's legal advisers, for advice on the duties of trustees in light of the Unitarian Investment Panel arrangements and on the donation – **Action – Chief Officer.**

It was thought that any advice received would be applicable to other charitable bodies in how they managed their considerable resources.

The Chief Officer was asked to inform the Ministers' Pension Fund of the decision – **Action – Chief Officer.**

6. Vision Update –

6.1 Report of College Development Project – (DOC EC63/16) – noted with the following:

An outline proposal was received from the UCM Development Project Support Group on Unitarian Ministry Training and Education. There was recognition that there is a sense of urgency and impatience to get things up and running, The project is to be seen as a Denominational project. It has the support of the Reverends Sarah Tinker and Daniel Costley.

It was agreed that a formal secondment agreement will be needed between the EC and UCM for the project manager position. It was agreed that Dot would clarify the division of the work split.

It was agreed in principle to fund the project from restricted funds as this was a one-off cost and the sum of £16,500 was agreed.

It was agreed that no less than four and no more than six people would be identified as part of the detailed negotiations to form an advisory team. These people would consist of two people from UCM, one person from HMCO, one member of the MSG, one EC member and an independent person with the Chief Officer as the ex officio line manager.

It was noted that this proposal would be put before the next UCM meeting for approval.

6.2 Cambridge Campus Ministry - (DOC EC64/16) – noted with the following:

A Campus Ministry proposal was presented by Cambridge Unitarian Church. It was noted that this involved supporting outreach through establishment of a university society rather than a ministerial post. As funding was limited it would have to be a pilot.

The EC was keen to stress that the knowledge and experience learned and to a certain extent publicity would be valuable for other congregations to learn from. Support was given on the basis that a workshop would be held at the Annual Meeting (booked by EC's part of "Next Steps") and other material produced to disseminate the lessons such as a manual and a video. The team were asked to produce clearly defined deliverables for each area of work that had been identified. A link to BUYAN was suggested.

It was agreed in that £10,000 would be awarded to this project on this basis and the Chief Officer to communicate with them on EC requirements.

Action – Chief Officer

The position regarding the Manchester proposal, where more discussions were to be held, was noted.

6.3 Volunteering - (DOC EC65/16) - noted with the following:

It was noted that whilst the details of volunteers were being received there were presently fewer in number than hoped for. The list was starting to take shape, broken down by districts and areas of expertise.

The Chief Officer noted that the new staff position would have a responsibility to promote volunteering and develop our policies, drawing upon the information received from a visit to a major charity which he and the Convenor had undertaken.

The challenge of young volunteers and the benefits for individual well-being of volunteering was highlighted by Philip

Marion's observations on fast moving change as it affected "Next Steps" (DOC EC66/16) were noted

Session 2

Vision Update Continued –

6.4 Identity

This issue had been explored in the informal discussion the previous evening which would be drawn together by the Chief Officer. **Action – Chief Officer.**

It was agreed that Philip would explore how "Brand Management" could assist and he and Peter Hanley agreed to consider further the process we might need to go through. It was necessary to ensure a clear link between the "what" and the "why". They were asked to bring a proposal to the next meeting. – **Action – Philip and Peter.**

6.5 Web-based Resource

Whilst linked to UCM proposal it was moving forward. A professional group will create the website as a "minimum viable product" but funding for longer-term maintenance needed to be identified.

6.6 Engagement

Marion and Dot have discussed actions. Dot has the original paperwork and will contact those involved in the original engagement group processes to

ascertain whether they would be interested in volunteering. This would include Summer School leaders who used the engagement group methods – **Action – Marion and Dot.**

The issue of Summer School accountability and how it linked to EC had emerged and was important to the achievement of this “Next Step” priority.
Action – Marion to talk to LLSG.

6.7 Flexible Ways of Training and Integrated training

See above.

6.8 New District Forum(s):

A few responses from Districts but unlikely to be much progress by the Annual Meetings.

6.9 Sustainability - Buildings

The Chief Officer would be contacting Historic England. Buildings Advisory Group was looking for more volunteers.

6.10 Sustainability - Financial

Philip and the Convenor to work on this item and bring back to the November EC meeting – **Action – Philip and the Convenor**

6.11 Organisational effectiveness

How volunteers are managed to undertake important tasks remains a key question and the EC should aim to have a proposal by the 2017 Annual Meetings.

6.12 Help is at Hand

Louise Rogers had provided considerable detail for changing to a web resource. Marion to liaise with her on timescales and resources required for it to go “live” at the Annual Meetings. – **Action – Marion.**

6.13 Reduce our carbon footprint:

The Building Advisory Group was pursuing but needed more support.

Session 3

7. Nightingale Centre (to be joined by management committee members and the centre manager)

Following a tour of the building the Centre Manager introduced planned development work of the Barleycrofts Cottages.

The Nightingale Centre Minutes (**DOC EC67/16**) were noted. The Budget would be presented to the November EC meeting.

Mary-Jean was absent from this session

Session 4

8. Financial Report and Budget 2016/17

The Management Accounts to the 31 July 2016 were noted. Marion highlighted the achievement of getting figures that were up to date.

The reason for the high figure in net movement in funds is due to receiving the money from the Summer School but not their expenditure.

A gift of £700 had been received from the United States for youth work.

Discussion took place on the implications of the decisions on investment on the funds held. It was agreed to rescind the instruction to invest in Newton Funds made at the previous EC meeting of 14 July 2016. The funds would be reinvested in Moneymarket until 8 October 2016 and on the basis of the advice received would be considered by Marion, the Hon Treasurer and the Convenor. They would have delegated authority to make a recommendation to the EC in November and take decisions on the £1.5million in the interim.

Action – The Chief Officer, Marion, the Hon Treasurer and the Convenor.

The Budget for 2016/17 was presented. David Joseph, Finance Manager was thanked for his work.

It was noted that the quota figures needed to be validated by December 2016. The increase in the Essex Hall Management fee and Grant reflects the lettings income of the building. The doubling in the Legacy column is due to an expected legacy about which we have been notified.

The Chief Officer recommended that the amount of £5,000 for support for the Ministry Training Project be removed from the budget and that the expenditure be taken from Restricted funds.

It is intended to improve reporting of the use of restricted funds and for spending on “Next Steps” priorities.

The EC formally **approved** the Budget 2016/17 and there would be no increase in the Quota in this budget.

9. Letter from Stephen Lingwood on Fossil Fuel Disinvestment – (DOC 69/16)

The Convenor declared an interest in this item.

Stephen had written about investments in fossil fuels in a public letter which had appeared in The Inquirer. The use of collective funds made assessment difficult and information would need to be obtained from Newtons. Members expressed differing views on the merits of the proposal. There was a positive case for investment in renewables. It was felt that this issue required a General Assembly decision by way of a motion. This would give congregations and members the opportunity to discuss drawing upon a prepared paper.

It was agreed that Stephen would be encouraged to use the democratic processes of the Assembly to pursue this matter. **Action: Chief Officer**

10. Annual Meetings Panel Minutes – (DOC EC70/16) – noted with the following

Andrew Mason has been on site visits for the 2018 Annual Meetings.

BUYAN members are arranging the opening celebrations in 2018.

Non-responsive check-out

Closing Devotions – Jacky – Our devotional piece today is a soundscape commissioned by one of the TED Fine Acts fellows, Bahia Shehab and is a sound recording of a female voice performing the Islamic call to prayer – a reflection on how things can change.

After dinner there was an informal session to discuss the annual meetings paper - **(DOC EC71/16)**

Tuesday

Session 5

Opening Devotions: Joan – read the Unitarian Ethos to reconnect everyone to this Ethos.

11. Follow up on Annual Meetings

The Chief Officer to feedback the notes taken at the meeting last night to the Annual Meetings Panel who were asked to review the initial paper and to undertake consultation **Action – Chief Officer.**

12. LLSG Current Activity – (DOC EC72/16) – noted with the following

Marion to thank Louise Rogers for her work on Help is at Hand which is an ongoing task of important work and to clarify an end date. There will be no Strategy Reports at the GA, but a session on Help is at Hand will be planned as a “Next Step” priority. **Action – Marion.**

13. MSG- Ministerial Roll decision making

The implications of the current processes for the Ministerial Roll involving Interview Panel, MSG and EC was considered. It was agreed that if the Ministry Strategy Group can demonstrate their own confidence in the process, the EC would be happy to delegate full responsibility to them. Hon Treasurer and Philip to review the issue and bring back to EC. **Action – hon Treasurer and Philip.**

14. Chief Officer Report – (DOC EC73/16) - noted

It was agreed to promote the “What is a Unitarian?” video, which had received nearly 2000 views in three months, via Key Messages. **Action: Chief Officer**

15. International Report – (DOC EC74/16) - noted

The participation in the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists Conference in July 2017 and the International Association for Religious Freedom Europe and Middle East Regional Conference in August 2017 was noted.

16. Presidents report – (DOC EC75/16) - noted

17. EC Link Reports – (DOC EC76/16) – noted with the following:
Northern – Newcastle upon Tyne in discussions on selling their church building.
East Cheshire – Mossley unfortunately to close.

Session 6

18. Key Messages to be distributed separately.

To be issued when decision from UCM on development project.

19. Confidential Items

19.1 Support for Ministers

Discussion took place on support available to ministers within the Denomination. It was agreed:

- 1) that the MSG be asked to review the current position on conflict resolution, prevention and mentoring **Action: Chief Officer**
- 2) that the Ministerial Fellowship be asked to identify current support being used by their members **Action: Lynne**

Non responsive check-out

Closing Devotions – Robert Ince on Unitarian ethos