

Approved Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting held 14 July 2016

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

In attendance: Derek McAuley (Chief Officer), Andrew Mason (Minutes), David Joseph (Finance Officer, item 5), Andy Pakula and Aleks Zglinska (2020, item 7)

Marion Baker read a passage from Paul Parker's keynote speech given at the Keele 2012 Annual Meetings and the meeting started.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Philip Colfox and Dorothy Hewerdine.

2. Minutes of the meetings held on 13th & 14th May 2016

The Minutes of the meeting held 13-14 May 2016 (Document **EC48/16**) were **AGREED** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising for noting / EC Action List (Document EC 49/16)

Ministerial Pension Fund Appointment – There was a Vacancy for a GA Representative.

No response had been received from the Red Cross regarding the requested update on financial contributions to the Syria Appeal. The Convenor would contact them.

ACTION: Convenor

EC photos on website – members were happy with their existing photos. Ed would be asked for a firm commitment to come and take a group photo at the November meeting.

ACTION: Chief Officer

A letter had been received regarding the co-option and the Chief Officer would reply.

ACTION: Chief Officer

UNIFEST – John Harley has emailed since the discussion referred to in item 14.6 of the last Minutes, asking to whom UniFest would be responsible.. It was noted that Louise Rogers had included this under LLSG for budgetary purposes and this was supported.. A grant of £1,500 (over two years) was being sought from the GA, plus funding from the FOY Society and the Hibbert Trust. The event was proposed for 26-29 October 2017.

4. Vision Projects (Document E50/16)

Robert indicated that the Executive Committee needed to understand each of the priorities in terms of financial requirements, risks, who would lead (at least initially), what the objectives were and interdependencies between priorities.

Priority 1: Develop a comprehensive response to explain our identity

Philip Colfox had submitted a paper, which was circulated at the meeting. This priority was felt to be important for communicating effectively externally, though this had already started with the creation of the new videos, one of which had been watched over 1200 times. A Mission Statement was not felt to be the objective. There were fundamental tensions about who and what we are, and this was not just a branding exercise. This was likely to need external expertise, and could be expensive, particularly if not managed well. The Treasurer estimated a cost of around £5K for this project.

Philip Colfox and Peter Hanley were tasked to take this forward. **ACTION: Peter & Philip**

Priority 2: Web-based spiritual learning project

Some progress had already been made by UCM, who had bought domains for 'spacetosearch' variations (.com, .org etc.). Money had already been set aside. The project would not currently require more money from the GA itself, but would have to fundraise from Unitarian sources. This project would require professional input, not just volunteers. The idea was that a minimum viable project would be developed, and then develop organically. There would be a need for ongoing moderation. The structure for the project's management structure needed to be agreed..

The Treasurer noted the risk of the GA having to pick up funding if ongoing financial support could not be obtained. The ongoing annual project cost was estimated as £10K on the basis of work for one day a week to maintain it, plus a committee structure.

Priority 3: Engaging with others.

This required training of facilitators. Summer School had offered to assist with training facilitators, though this would need to be run as a separate event.. Jane Blackall had previously written a paper, which would need to be revisited with her and Margaret Kirk, Dot Hewerdine and Alison Thursfield were all interested.

The Treasurer had estimated a £10K initial training cost, and £20K annual cost, though others estimated much lower costs, and it was possible Districts might contribute.

It was **AGREED** that Marion Baker would contact Dot Hewerdine to attempt to progress this project.

ACTION: Marion

Priority 5: Promoting Unitarian Thought

This project would involve several aspects, not simply about publications electronic-media. Freeing up time to do the thinking as equally important. A lot more work was needed on this and Gwynn was tasked with taking this forward.

ACTION: Gwynn

It was noted that the quality and style of our existing material within the Movement, printed or otherwise, could be improved.. Lindsey Press was recognised as currently providing a high quality distinctive contribution.

Peter suggested retitling this as 'Raising the public profile of Unitarians and their thinking' and estimated a cost of £15K per annum.

Priority 6: Campus Ministry

Cambridge Unitarian Church and Manchester District Association were both hoping to be involved. Cambridge had allocated £10K for a six-month project. Manchester were exploring a five-year project, with a paid post, which they were estimating at £35k per annum, seeking matched funding from the GA. The Treasurer had estimated £40K per annum.

There were questions about how success in this project could be measured. It was not felt to be likely to increase membership but might be considered potentially successful if it encouraged Unitarian-style thinking in the young people involved.

It was noted there were issues with this, including access to campuses and that a significant number of people felt that campus ministry was not what we should be doing. It was not originally part of the Vision document and could be considered the "hobby horse"

of a few individuals. It was suggested that this could be dealt with by going back to the Assembly.

In the meantime, Joan would continue to take this forward.

ACTION: Joan

Priority 8: Volunteer Pool

There was no current database of volunteers. Joan had contacted Rosemary Ruston re. Associate Members and had received a response. It was felt that getting 40 possible volunteers to provide details was realistic.

The Treasurer remarked that a system would be needed to collect and keep data up-to-date, not just the initial setup. He estimated an annual cost of £100K, though the Chief Officer remarked that this was excessive and a discussion was needed on this.

It was **AGREED** that Joan would keep progressing this project.

ACTION: Joan

Priority 9: Flexible ways of training for Ministry.

Feedback would probably come at the end of September. UCM would put their proposals forward, though it was not clear what work Harris Manchester College, Oxford was undertaking. The risk of there not being full involvement from both colleges was noted.

There was a need for more certainty as potential ministerial students at the recent enquiry weekend were unclear about what training would involve. This was heavily tied in with priority 10, on integrated training, and the two needed to be discussed together as life-long learning should be our aspiration.

Priority 10: Integrated Training

Having agreed the competencies the important issue was how to assess when people have completed training or education and this still needs to be worked through. This required assessment tools to be developed with an assessment group, which was probably two years away.

It was recognised that people considering training should have a reasonable idea of what was involved, and that the work done by the Ministerial Strategy Group (MSG) retain its momentum. It was therefore **AGREED** that Lynne would speak to the MSG to confirm approval to proceed with implementation of the competency framework. **ACTION: Lynne**

When estimating costs, it was noted there were links in with existing ministerial training funding and for an online learning process generally. It was estimated that £5-6k would be needed for curriculum development, with a further £5K for the assessment development work (though this would also be usable for all future online learning programmes). The Treasurer added a further £5K for the integration of training, giving a total project estimate of £15K.

Priority 11: Creation of new district forum for national involvement

There was work needed to enable Districts to contribute ideas, though it was seen as best to ask the Districts themselves how we might best structure this. It was noted that this was not necessarily be seen as a single meeting with all Districts in attendance to meet the EC.

It was hoped that the forum could be part-funded by the Districts, though possibly with some form of travel pool to smooth out differences in travel costs in different venues.

Marion to progress.

ACTION: Marion

Priority 12.1: Sustainability - Buildings

The congregations own around 150 church buildings. Discussions had been held with Historic England, about trying to create an Asset Register of Unitarian Buildings, and their condition and sustainability. It was estimated this would cost around £20-25K, with 50% being our contribution. This did not include Wales or Scotland, and more work was needed to see if a similar arrangement could be reached with similar organisations in those nations. There would be a need to persuade churches of the benefits of this to gain the necessary cooperation. The Treasurer estimated a total cost of £40K, allowing for the same arrangement in Scotland and Wales, meaning a 50% contribution of £20K.

Priority 12.2: Sustainability – Financial

There was an issue knowing which churches have “excepted” status and which are separately registered with the Charity Commission. It was **AGREED** that Robert and another volunteer would spend two days going through Annual Reports & Accounts previously submitted to HQ to review the information and look at their sustainability. The estimated cost for travel and accommodation for two people for two days was £1K.

ACTION: Convenor

Priority 13: Organisational effectiveness

More work needed to be done on defining the project. This was a long-term aspiration.

Robert would speak to Philip about this.

ACTION: Convenor

Priority 14: Help is at Hand

Louise Rogers and LLSG were pursuing. The information provided in Help is at Hand needed to be updated, with a built-in mechanism for keeping it up to date (which could require ongoing paid support). The Chief Officer remarked that a better online solution was needed, where this information was incorporated directly into the website, making it easier for to update and also to use for people to use. A pdf booklet was not appropriate for this purpose. If the text could be produced, GA Staff could put it on the website.

It was **AGREED** that Marion would take it forward at the next LLSG meeting.

ACTION: Marion

Priority 15: Reduce our carbon footprint

The Buildings Advisory Group had circulated a letter and survey. Depending on responses, they would be able to move this forward.

Confidential Item - Staffing implications of “Next Steps”

Andrew Mason left the meeting.

Discussions took place on the staffing implications of some of the priorities.

5. Finance Report

David Joseph, Finance Officer, attended for this item.

The report (Document **EC51/16**), along with an additional page submitted at the Meeting, covered the 8 month period to the end of May and contained the Management Accounts and along with information about investments and the budget.

Currently the outlook for the year end was a deficit of around £7K. This was based on a forecast income of £693K and expenditure of £700K.

After discussion, it was clarified that the £5,867 from the Annual Meetings Special Collection should be put into a designated fund for the web project, not donated directly to Unitarian College Manchester. David would arrange this. **ACTION: Finance Manager**

Governance – The increase in costs was partially because the EC Link meetings have raised travel costs. The GA President’s costs were included in this item and in future should be separated out..

Essex Hall Trust – The additional grant was welcomed and it was felt that the work to produce this should be acknowledged.

The Chief reported that as usual the budget for 2016/17 would be presented at the next meeting and required considerable work over the summer.

Next Steps – The Treasurer’s estimates were for a start-up cost of £8K and annual cost for projects of £240K.

It was clarified that the one-off donation from the Bowland Trust meant that matching funding to donations for youth and ministerial students fund would not continue.

Bury letter – A letter had been received from the Bury congregation requesting clarification about the Bowland Trust money and the availability of funds for project bids. The EC would need to communicate that the GA would be managing money and projects differently, going forward, and there was not a new pot of money. The projects referred to were those in the Vision document, which had been given strong support at the Annual Meetings. The Chief Officer would respond. **ACTION: Chief Officer**

Investment Panel

The GA’s investments needed to be considered for several reasons:

- There were a number of members of the GA’s Investment Panel looking to retire.
- There was a desire to simplify matters by having various Unitarian bodies invest collectively (leading to a reduced strain on volunteers, as well as administrative cost reductions).
- The GA, and the Movement generally, needed to make good use of our collective funds.
- The Bowland Trust single payment meant a large investment was needed.
- The implication of the Bowland Trust payment, and the new projects, meant there were now greater cash flow considerations than previously.

It had been suggested that separating the management of investment monies from the operating groups which spend it would allow for a better use of volunteer skills.

The Treasurer and Convenor described the existing arrangement. The GA currently invests directly in pooled funds through Newtons who could not offer a discretionary

service. This therefore placed responsibilities upon the trustees and would require the GA to give buy and sell orders for immediate action, usually based on information given by Newtons at three-monthly meetings of the Investment Panel. The current return was believed to be good.

The alternative model to consider was to invest through a discretionary Fund Manager, who would then trade at their discretion within the policies agreed by the Executive Committee.. There could be sufficient monies between the various Unitarian bodies to have a 'GA Fund'.

It was noted that there had been a difference of opinion between the GA and the British & Foreign Unitarian Association over investment management when Newton's had stated that they could not give discretionary advice in investments for legal reasons. The B&FUA had decided this did not meet the requirements for trustees to take proper advice on investment matters and had switched to a discretionary Fund Manager. This depended on interpretation of the word 'advice' in several pieces of regulation & legislation.

A brief for Counsel had been received from Roderick Ramage to take legal advice.

A decision was needed before September, when the significant Bowland donation would be rolling three-month money market arrangement. This was currently earning a very small return and a more suitable investment was required.

Several trustees indicated other interests as trustees of other Unitarian bodies involved in the current Investment Panel arrangement. As did the Chief Officer as a director of the B&FUA.

It was **AGREED** that the Bowland Trust money (after drawdown of operating costs) be put into the Newton Growth and Income funds in September as a temporary measure, until such time as an investment review took place. Gwynn and Peter both abstained.

6. Risk Management (Document EC52/16)

The Treasurer had added a positive "desired working outcome" to each possible risk item indicating what we were attempting to achieve. The Risk Register was then reviewed, with the following changes to be made.:

- Item 12 – The Ministerial Students Fund: The fund would lose the Bowland Trust doubling, representing a loss of income, however, It was well-funded at present with limited demands.
- Item 13 – Falling membership: The responsible body was changed to the Executive Committee rather than the Local Leadership Strategy Group.
- Item 16 – This was clarified. It was noted that the assumption of matched funded seemed to be more prevalent from Unitarian organisations making donations for youth projects, the Ministerial Students Fund etc., rather than those seeking funding for their projects.

ACTION: Chief Officer

7. 2020 Update

Andy Pakula and Aleks Zglinska attended for this item.

Andy and Aleks reported on the achievements of the 2020 group, which had been to try to promote growth through the creation of new, and rekindling of old, congregations and was included in "Next Steps". This was an expensive process, estimated at £100K per congregation, to create a congregation with an average of 15-16 people. A key strategy had been to try to reach non 'standard-church' people as new participants.

The other thrust of the group had been training. The 2020 group strongly believed strongly that the only possible way to turn around declining congregations was through training for better congregational health and culture. There was a limit to how much training volunteers would be able to do, The group were therefore recommending that we hire a Growth Officer and a paper on this was circulated.

The Derby project was discussed. Derby had been supported by existing congregations and the East Midlands District Association. The group felt that plans for new congregations would likely come from churches that were already doing well. When considering new congregations, it was important to look at the culture of the area. These projects would be less likely to work in isolation and a team and infrastructure were required. Low running costs were also needed. The Derby congregation was using a multi-faith centre on Sunday at low cost, with no funds or effort required on a building.

There was a two-pronged model required. The first involved working with those congregations deemed to be viable (taking into consideration factors like demographics of the area, viability of their buildings etc.) and this required a person to undertake this role. The second involved where to start new congregations.

It was important that the success story of Derby be promoted.

It was **AGREED** that the 2020 group would come back with a template for growing a small number of new congregations.

8. Ministry Strategy Group Notes

It was **AGREED** that Ralph Catts, Katie McKenna and Rob Whiteman be added to the Roll as a Minister with probationary status.

It was **AGREED** that Cody Coyne and Winnie Gordon be added to the Roll of Ministers with full status.

9. Nightingale Centre Minutes

The Minutes were reviewed. At the end of June, the centre was in net profit.

10. Local Leadership (LLSG) & Visibility (VSG) Strategy Groups Update

VSG – It was **AGREED** that a request for a grant for speakers to Unicomms would be accepted. Derek would notify James Barry. This would be from next year's budget.

ACTION: Chief Officer

LLSG – Marion mentioned the teleconference in the link report. The LLSG was not producing notes from these meetings, so there was no record of discussions only the plan updates

. This was a concern.

11. Annual Meeting Panel Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held 12/05/16 (Document **EC55/16**) were presented. The Panel had met yesterday. They would be bringing a discussion paper on the future of the

Meetings to the next EC meeting. This would need agenda time. Rev Prof Ralph Waller had agreed to be the 2017 Keynote Speaker.

2017 – There was a desire from the Panel to have more training in the 2017 programme, and of a professional nature. A reduction in time for reports was being considered, along with how breakout sessions groups could inspire delegates at their slots. It was noted that there was very little quality control for these events. The Evening sessions (Anniversary Service - 1 hour 15 mins and Opening Celebrations – 1 hour) have both been reduced in duration to try and create a more focussed event.

12. President's Report

The President's Report (Document **EC56/16**) was received. Marion Baker had deputised for the President at Rev Dr Len Smith's funeral and Neville Kenyon would deputise at Rev John Roberts' funeral.

13. Chief Officer's Report

The Chief Officer's report (Document **EC57/16**) was received. The statement on the referendum appeared to have been well-received.

14. EC Link Reports

The reports were accepted. Joan stressed the need to ensure that issues affecting Wales and Scotland were in communications.

Gwynn and Marion left at this point

15. Key Messages

The key messages were agreed

16. Non responsive check-out

The non-responsive check-out took place. Lynne Readett gave a reading by Robert Walsh in closing devotions and the meeting closed.