

Chair Agreed Minutes Council 21 April 2023

Minutes of the Council Meeting 21 April 2023 Holiday Inn Stoke on Trent

Present

Jim Lyon
Mark Taylor
Chris Damp
Betty Bentham
Hilary Biggin
Sue Austin
Chris Gillham
Caroline Stott
Foday Kamara
Tom Wilson
Judi Holloway
Oliver Kinchin.
Brendan Mason
Dawn Mason

Representing

Chair
President
South East
North East
North West Midlands
Chair of FSSC
CF Wales
South West
North West
CF Scotland
South West Midlands
President Elect
CF Wales
CF Wales (Observer)

Participant Observers

Yvonne Campbell
Mark Tucker
Gary Baker

General Secretary
Operations Manager/
CFL Company
Finance Section only

Apologies

Eric Fenwick
Gerry Simonis
Margaret McGuinness

Eastern (Online Sat am)
CF Scotland
CF Scotland

Minutes

Clare Edwards

Session 1

1. Welcome & Introductions

The President, Mark Taylor opened with a reading from Hebrews 10:19-25

It was noted that Oliver Kinchin will be arriving later in the evening.

2. Apologies

Noted as above.

Eric Fenwick asked to attend the meeting via zoom, but Council agreed no zoom going forward.

Decision: Agreed to have a phone in the room

3. Minutes of last Meeting 18-19 Nov 2022

(Paper B)

Decision: The minutes from the meeting held in November 2022 were accepted as accurate and correct.

4. Matters Arising

From Minutes of last Meeting

Page 2 5.2 Practical Pastoring is ongoing

Page 2 7.3 It was noted that Glasgow, Cathcart is now closed

Page 7 13.2 Data form changes will come to November Council meeting.

Page 20 20 Video has been recorded and with the editor before launch at May Assembly

5. Declaration of Interest

Foday Kamara shared that he has now been appointed as North West Area Church Support Worker and asked for clarification on whether he can continue as CF Trustee. It was clarified that the Area appoint and he can remain as a Trustee.

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Mark Taylor declared an interest having recently received hospitality from NSCPI
Chris Damp declared an interest in relation to the Impact Grant awarded to Cowper Memorial church, Dereham

Judi Holloway declared an interest in relation to the Impact Grant awarded to Witney CC and to the correspondence from Ruth Green related to David Kinchin as he is a member at Witney CC.

Hilary Biggin declared an interest as part of the interview panel for Stephane Vickers.

6. Church Support Committee

**E
(Papers E1, E2)**

The Acting Chair took Council through the report and highlighted certain points.

6.1 The position of CF representative on the Robinsons Trust is still vacant.

6.2 APCCG Chair is up for re-election and will stand for another term.

6.3 A recommendation has been added that Safeguarding training is also mandatory for all those applying to be on the Accredited list.

6.4 Bullying in churches has been reported and is being addressed. There has been a webinar on building successful relationships and a leaflet will be produced. A discussion took place, and the leaflet is to be shared with Council before being printed. Council would like to have included:-

- Counselling service (CMCS)
- Good practice between churches and their Ministers
- Resources to enhance the leaflet
- The National Bullying Helpline

Council want to support the leaflet and respond further.

Action: Ideas and Contributions to be sent to APCCG Chair.

Timescale: ASAP

By Who: Council Members

6.5 The Accreditation Process is being reviewed and an update on the Area interviews have been shared and comments are anticipated.

6.6 Recommendation: That Michael Wallace be removed from the Roll of Ministries as he is unable to acquire a satisfactory DBS.

Decision: Council agreed to remove Michael Wallace from the Roll of Ministries.

11 In Favour 0 Against 1 Abstention

Action: Acting chair of APCCG to write to Michael; General Secretary to hand deliver.

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6.7 New Biggin Hub – the four students from the CF will have their names acknowledged at Assembly along with all the students who have completed the CIPT Course this year.

6.8 Stephane Vickers had his Area interview after both the APCCG and CSC therefore Council have been asked to agree for his name to be put forward for Form B.

Decision: Council all agreed Stephane Vickers can proceed to the next stage of the Accreditation process.

6.9 It has been **agreed** that the Pioneer Accredited Minister description will be reviewed and redefined.

6.10. The APCCG recommended the following for accreditation as Minister following their successful completion of the Foundation Degree and interview process:

Helen Keighley – Harden Congregational Church

Kathy Shaw – Padfield Congregational Church

Both were agreed unanimously by Council

Action – Letters to be sent

By who – Safeguarding Officer

Timescale - ASAP

6.11 Discussion has started with the new L&D Manager about Congregational training to make sure those on the APCCG group are aware of what is being taught. Congregational training will be delivered in February 2024.

6.12 Recommendation: To offer Witney CC an Impact Grant towards the stipend of a part-time minister of £6000 per year for three years.

Decision: Agreed

11 In Favour 0 Against 1 Abstention

Recommendation: To increase the maximum Impact Grant award to £18,000 for all churches

Decision: Council agreed unanimously

Recommendation: To ringfence £18,000 from the Ministry and Mission fund for one year only to support 50% of the recommended stipend increase.

Decision: Council agreed unanimously

Action: General Secretary to work with the Financial Controller to create an application form.

Timescale: ASAP

Recommendation: To grant Cowper Memorial Congregational Church £15,000 paid in one lump sum to assist with emergency repairs.

Decision: Agreed

11 In Favour 0 Against 1 Abstention

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6.12 Question about Membership to the World Council of Churches. A discussion took place.

Recommended: To speak to the Union of Welsh Independents about joint membership relating to WARC, WCC and CEC.

Action: Memberships explored

By who: Interchurch Board

Timescale: November 2023 Council Meeting

6.13 Chair of CSC

One application was received prior to the meeting and during the meeting someone else volunteered. Voting took place and a recommendation is being brought to Council that Ruth Green be the new chair of CSC.

Decision: Agreed

10 In Favour 0 Against 2 Abstention

6.14 Mission Project for 2024. A new partner is being researched. Council recommend Christian Rebuild as it is a Congregational charity.

It was acknowledged that Chris Gillham, Chris Damp and Yvonne Campbell are all Trustees of Christian Rebuild.

Council received the Minutes of the Church Support Committee and Assembly report.

Thanks were expressed to Barbara Bridges for stepping into the Chair's role and her report.

7. Correspondence

(Paper H)

7.1 Woodside Congregational Church wrote to share the decision that at their Church meeting they no longer wish to be affiliated to CF.

A response letter has been sent by General Secretary. The letter and response were noted.

7.2 An email has been received from Ruth Green highlighting that one of the President Elect nominations is related to a member of Council. The concern is that the charity commission guidelines are not being followed.

A discussion took place and given the number of Trustees this matter is not seen to be of concern.

Decision: Council agreed to take comments into future consideration and amend the Presidential Election forms.

Action: Chair of Council to respond.

Timescale: ASAP

7.3 Email received from Caroline Stott with a concern that all the papers were not uploaded for Council by the Wednesday before the meeting.

Decision: Papers to be uploaded by the Wednesday before Council meetings along with the dates and update if no item paper.

Action: General Secretary

Timescale: November Council Meeting

7.4 Email received from Brendan and Dawn Mason regarding CF financially supporting churches who have critical bills to pay and problems with their bank. A discussion took place.

Proposal: Betty Bentham: To financially support churches who need this help.

Decision: Council agreed unanimously

Action: Operations Manager, Financial Controller and General Secretary to find a solution on how to offer support.

Timescale: ASAP

Barbara Bridges left the meeting.

Sue Austin and Gary Baker joined the meeting.

Oliver Kinchin joined the meeting.

8. Finance & Support Services

(Paper D, D1, D2, D3, D4)

8.1 Minutes of Meeting 13 April 2023

(Paper D)

Chair of FSSC presented the Minutes and the Action points.

Unpaid Affiliation Fees

Recommendation:

That the 3 churches concerned be removed from Membership with CF – to reapply for membership if they wish to re-join in the future.

A discussion took place.

Decision: Not agreed

Action: The Area Rep for each of the 3 churches will plan to follow up and make visits where appropriate.

Timescale: ASAP

Review of CF expense form

Recommendation's

Meals Daily allowance - for lunch up to £15 per day.

For overnight stays and/or evening travel up to £30 for an evening meal.

Detailed receipts are to be provided and should always state exactly what has been purchased, to facilitate transparent and clear audit trails and assist in VAT analysis.

Manager's approval of Special Requirements

Council, in November 2022, agreed that expense claimants can apply to the Chair of Council to consider any claims which fall outside the normal policy.

For practical reasons, it is recommended to FSSC that this is amended to include either Chair of Council or Operations Manager.

That a list is presented to FSSC as well as Council for all instances when Override is used.

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Question was asked about the timeframe in which expenses are paid because reports have been received that they have taken over a month. Financial Controller responded they should not take longer than 7 days. However sometimes there is a delay if staff are not working in the office.

Another question was raised about whether electronic receipts are acceptable. The Financial Controller confirmed that they are.

Decision: Council agreed unanimously

Action: Financial Controller to update and distribute expense form

Timescale: ASAP

Council unanimously accepted the minutes of the meeting of FSSC held on 13 April 2023.

8.2 Council receive the CF Statutory Accounts, Financial Summary and Balance Sheet 2022 which have been noted and received by the FSSC – April 2023 (Papers D1,D2 & D3)

Council received the accounts unanimously.

8.3 CF Accounts and Budgets (Paper D1)

Council agreed to recommend to Assembly that the Accounts for the Year End 31 December 2022 are approved

Council agreed to recommend to Assembly that the budget for 2024 be adopted

8.4 CF Statutory Accounts Year End 31 December 2022 (Paper D3)

Council unanimously approved the statutory accounts.

8.5 CF Balance Sheet (Paper D2)

Council unanimously approved the balance sheet.

8.6 CF Audit Findings Report Year End 31 December 2022 (Paper D4)

There was one thing to highlight from the Audit report:-

Trustees are to provide declarations and registers of interests. CF will maintain a register of interests and update it regularly. Trustees are asked for cooperation.

Council unanimously accepted CF Audit Findings Report Year End 31 December 2022

8.7 Chair of Finance Assembly report

(Paper D5)

The report was presented, and the question was raised when did we last benchmark the auditors. This was done 4 years ago but this year a brand-new partner was involved.

There are 5 recommendations and Council requested that the previous years affiliation fees are included to show the increase difference.

Recommendations:

1. Receive Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022.
2. Receive Budget for 2024.
3. Re-appointment of UHY Hacker Young as the Federation's auditors.
4. Affiliation fees for 2024 to be £165.00 per church and £9 per member.
5. Personal membership for 2024 to be £44.00.

Agreed: Unanimously after changes

Action: Chair of FSSC to take to Council then Assembly.

Timescale: Assembly 13.05.23

It was noted that The Chair Of FSSC is unable to attend May Assembly, Tim Bateman will present the FSSC report on her behalf.

It was also noted that when the Assembly papers are distributed to churches, the General Secretary will ask if there for Finance questions to be submitted in advance and the answers will be presented on the day.

8.8 Investment Performance

(Paper D6)

Chair of Council requested this paper be created to show the average KPI.

Thanks were expressed to Financial Controller for producing the graph and attending the meeting.

Thanks were expressed to Chair of FSSC for the committee reports.

9. NSPCI

G

Mark Taylor went to visit churches in Ireland by invitation.

A statement of friendship was made in 2016 and they are looking to develop this friendship.

A discussion took place relating to differences in theology and history with CF Scotland.

Council noted there are four churches that describe themselves as Unitarian. The representatives that Mark Taylor had met were very sympathetic to congregational church governance.

It was noted that Caroline Stott will look after NSPCI guests at Assembly, and they are also attending the CF Scotland Assembly in June.

Further discussion needs to happen with NSPCI and Council.

10. Strategy Report Group

(Paper F)

Report sharing a new shape of the Trustee body of the CF with recommendations was presented and initial discussions took place.

The following points were made:-

- Concerns about losing a geographical element.
- Originally Council was not a mixture of Trustees and representatives.
- There should be two independent bodies – Trustees and Area Reps
- CF Ltd Trusteeship was also assumed.
- Should representation be in relation to numbers?

End of Session 1

The meeting was closed in prayer.

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The President, Mark Taylor opened with a reading from 1 Corinthians 13

Session 2

11. CF Ltd – separate minutes

12. Action Plan Review

(Paper J)

General Secretary led Council through the Action Plan review.

Action	Update April 2023	Conclusion
Library of suggested recorded sermons	Sermon vaults to be launched at Assembly 2023	Council to encourage people to share and use this resource. Council also advised to create a link to pre-recorded CF church services
The Resource Hub awareness	Still continues to be highlighted	Council requested the Secluded Place and Life Light be uploaded
Prayer Strategy	The month of June will have a toddler group focus	Concern was shared over Government changes to childcare from 1 years which may have an impact on church toddler groups
Practical Instruction on Conducting Life events in different locations	Ministry Matters was launched in January	This will be a priority for the next 6 months now there is a new L&D Manager in place.

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Skills database	No action taken	Ongoing
Mentoring	No action taken	On The Fresh Expressions Group agenda
Re visit Likewise topics	Personal Membership group met on Zoom. Requested quarterly worship	Online church discussed. Council request more information regarding a URC proposal to recognise as a church
Enthuse those in ministry in the bible	Immerse Bible study every Monday Biblios training in May	Ongoing
Short courses for preachers and worship leaders	Dancing with elephants module	Ongoing
Short films of church success stories	Stories collated and filming is hoping to start soon	Ongoing

13. CF Constitution

(No paper)

A discussion took place relating to articles 6 and 8 specifically.

General agreement that the Constitution is out of date and needs revising so that it can be used as a guide for trustees.

Things to be considered are:

- Article 5 defining the role of Assembly
- Article 5 the relationship between Council and Assembly
- Article 6 the make-up of Council
- Article 8 the requirements of changing the Constitution
- Possibly a dissolution clause

The process needs to be outlined about how CF consult and communicate with churches. Council highlighted the importance of making churches part of the process.

Decision: Council agreed unanimously to introduce at Assembly that CF will start a consultation with the churches to update the Constitution.

Action: Chair of council

Timescale: Assembly 2023

Brendan and Dawn Mason engaged Council with completing a SWOC analysis of the CF.

Strengths

1. Committed staff team
2. Volunteers
3. Diversity in churches
4. Integrity
5. History
6. Supportive relationships

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7. Stable Finances / Grants system for churches
8. Sharing Faith / knowledge
9. Safeguarding
10. Learning and Development
11. New Testament Church Governance
12. Trustee/Legal support
13. Ecumenical Relationships
14. Congregationalism
15. Holy Spirit
16. Members – resource

Weaknesses

1. Communication – content and disseminator
2. Sustainability / Future planning
3. Building bound
4. Participation / value
5. Governance / understanding and lack of engagement
6. Congregationalism / What is Congregationalism?
7. Low numbers
8. Addressing social concerns
9. Perception lack of public stance
10. Step into unknown / fear
11. Don't pause and reflect
12. Administrative – risk of taking advantage / need for trained people

Opportunities

1. Online services / new people / Youth
2. Governance / Independent Community Churches who want to work and join with us
3. Projecting Congregationalism
4. Using Technology (Telephone/Online)
5. Pioneering
6. Sharing experience/expertise
7. Training
8. Using buildings for new uses/assets
9. Engagement from consultation
10. Passionate people
11. Ecumenical relationships
12. Resources to enable growth

Challenges

1. Demonstrating progress in a timely manner
2. No churches
3. Volunteers – sustaining and recruitment
4. Covid legacy
5. Age of Congregations / Demographics
6. Traditions / History – learn not to be constrained
7. Difficulty in changing / Fear of change

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8. Unrealistic expectations
9. Precedence
10. IT – fear
11. Governance – not letting us go forward
12. Failure to make Disciples

14. Strategy Discussion

(Paper L)

A through discussion took place about the strategy document that was presented by the Strategy Group and the consensus was it was not to be accepted.

Discussion points included:

- Attaining representation through areas
- Nominations for independent representation
- Needing two modules to compare and choose from
- Area direct appointment or a wider discussion

Action: North West Area to share the process for election as part of good practice

By who: Foday Kamara

Timescale: November 2023 Council Meeting

15. Assembly Update

(No paper)

The General Secretary updated Council on the plans from Friday afternoon to Sunday afternoon. She expressed her thanks to the South West Area and asked Council to encourage people to attend.

Friday afternoon Biblios training

Friday evening Tour of Somerset Museum

Saturday Commences at 10.30am, Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre. Assembly to be live streamed. Youth & Children Assembly also taking place

Saturday evening North Street CC providing hot food and Mark Taylor Eurovision themed quiz

Sunday Oliver Kinchin will lead morning worship at North Street CC and at 2pm at Stoke St Mary

16. Chairs Assembly report

The Chair of Council amended his Assembly report and this was unanimously agreed.

17. Assembly Review

Assembly report to be sent to churches on Monday 24 April.

Betty Bentham was thanked for her time as Council representative for the North East Area.

Council closed in open collaborative prayer.