

Minutes of the Council Meeting
26-27 April 2019
Nottingham

Present

Sandra Turner
 Janet Wootton
 Martin Spain
 Peter Butler
 John Bentham
 May-Kane Logan
 Margaret McGuinness
 Gerry Simonis
 Jill Stephens
 Eric Fenwick
 Stella Wallace-Tween
 Betty Bentham
 Hilary Biggin
 Judi Holloway

Representing

Interim Chair of
 Council & South West
 President Elect
 Prev. Past President
 Chair of F&SS Comm.
 Chair of M & S Comm.
 CF Scotland
 CF Scotland
 CF Scotland
 CF Wales (sat.)
 Eastern
 East Midlands
 North East
 North West Midlands
 South West Midlands

Participant Observers

Caroline Stott
 Foday Kamara
 James Breslin
 Ken Hague
 Oliver Kinchin
 Yvonne Campbell
 Mark Tucker

Gary Baker

Sam Coleman
 Clare Edwards

Apologies

Chris Gillham
 George Crossley
 Sue Wade

South West
 North West
 Free Churches Group
 Chair Candidate
 Chair Candidate
 General Secretary
 Operations Manager/
 CFL Company
 Secretary
 Financial Controller
 (sat.am)
 Minutes (Fri.)
 Minutes (Sat.)

CF Wales
 North West
 South East

Friday 26th April 2019 – 9.00 a.m.

The President's Group led a day of discussion and feedback from the numerous Open Space Events that had taken place along with the results of the research group findings.

Council formulated a proposal to take to Assembly. Notes of the discussions can be found in Appendix 1.

Friday 26th April 2019 – 6.30 p.m.

Opening Worship and reflections were led by Martin Spain. This included readings from Psalm 65 & Revelations 1 & 2 – "I am making everything new"

Session 1

1. Welcome and Introductions

A warm welcome was given to all attendees by Sandra Turner the Interim Chair of Council. Sandra specifically welcomed Foday Kamara who will be a Participating Observer at this meeting and taking over from George Crossley in the North West Area for the next meeting of Council; Ken Hague & Oliver Kinchin both candidates for the role of Chair of Council and to James Breslin from the Free Churches Group.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

3. Congregational Federation Limited Trustee/Directors Meeting

Minutes are recorded separately.

4. Minutes of Council

4.1 Minutes of Council Meeting 16-17 November 2018 (Paper C1)

Council accepted the Minutes of the Council meeting 16-17 November 2018 as a true and accurate record and they were signed by the Interim Chair.

4.2 Minutes of Council Meeting 18-19 January 2019 (Paper C2)

Council accepted the Minutes of the Council meeting 13-14 July 2018 as a true and accurate record and they were signed by the Interim Chair.

5. Matters Arising (not covered elsewhere in the Agenda or Action points)

7.6 Communications Group - Minutes of Council Meeting 16-17 November 2018

Council asked Eric Fenwick for an update.

Quote on printing less than £700 Origination £1600.
£2500 in total for 1000.

The Communications Group looked at publications in round? The Chair of the Communications Group said it is difficult to manage both positions? Haven't forgotten about Communications Group it is on hold.

Need to reconvene Comms group with this information and it be actioned.

Re-advertise for new chair of comms group.

12. Personnel Group - Minutes of Council Meeting 16-17 November 2018

Barbara has resigned Caroline Stott has offered her services to Chair.

Hilary proposed Caroline Chairs that group.

Council agreed unanimously.

Council also happy for Hilary to continue or anyone else to take that role as she does not have the most up to date knowledge.

Council accepts Hilary to continue.

Council agreed unanimously.

6. Declarations of Other Business

There were no declarations of any other business at this stage of the meeting.

7. General Secretary Report

Yvonne Campbell

The General Secretary shared some of the differing aspects of her role visualised as juggling balls.

- CWM – written application for MSP4
 - Justin Lunniss will be going to New Zealand with CWM in September 2019.
 - Member Mission Forum
- Many Church visits and much communication.
- Facilitating Open Space Events.
- Safeguarding – working on a new policy, this will be an update and tidy up of the latest policy; the finished policy document will be on the agenda of the next Council meeting. (Ken Hague offered his assistance with the project).

- Working with the Interim Chair of Council and those who have applied for the position.
- ICF – 2020 the conference will be in July 2020 and celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the Mayflower sailings.
- Facilitating the Church Support Department – having monthly team meetings, coordinating the Advent and Lent reflections, pulling together the Children & Youth Group (with Judith & Johnny) and Finance.
- Organising the Assembly.

Council expressed their thanks to both General Secretary, Yvonne Campbell and to operations Manager, Mark Tucker.

The evening session closed with worship led by Martin Spain.

Saturday 27th April 2019

8. Presentations from Chair of Council Candidates

This was a closed session.

9. Finance and Support Services Committee (FSSC)

9.1 Minutes of FSSC meeting 13 April 2019

Paper G1

Recommendation: that calculation of Ministers Stipend increases is discussed at the next meeting of Council, in relation to using CPI over RPI.

The General Secretary distributed a copy of a letter from Greenacres Congregational Church raising fundamental issues with CF guidance to an increase in the stipend of a full-time minister living in a Manse of 3.3%

A discussion took place and points made included:

- A number of churches have raised this issue.
- One church lost their Minister because of the expectation of what is in the Year Book.
- The cost of ministry is relying more and more on voluntary leadership.
- CF need to encourage ministry in churches if CF want churches to grow.
- It should be spelt out Ministers' minimum stipend is only a recommendation.
- The letter from Greenacres appears to be more of a Pastoral Care issue requiring a visit.

The Operations Manager made the point that the decision does not affect CF it affects the churches. Council need engagement with churches, a group of people who employ Ministers to see what they think.

James Breslin from the Free Churches Group suggested asking sister denominations to see how their minimum stipends compare.

The General Secretary agreed to action the above.

Proposal: The General Secretary to carry out as broad as possible consultation by appropriate means; in relation to the cost of ministers' stipends, expenses and associated costs and CF's role in the recommendation.

Proposed: Janet Wootton Seconded: Foday Kamara

Timescale: To report back to November 2019 Meeting of Council

Council unanimously agreed.

The Chair of Finance advised receipt of an email also sent to the Presidents Group raising concerns regarding CF end of year financial losses.

A discussion took place points made included:

- The loss is unrealised, it is a paper loss from an investment that CF still hold.
- It is related to the money markets which have risen since the accounts were produced.
- CF investments are handled by a reputable firm of financial advisors and the investments are all with blue-chip companies.
- Income and expenditure are not the same as the ups and downs of the money markets.
- CF are running at a small deficit but are happy to be doing this to support churches. This is reviewed annually by Council.
- Council also affirm Chair of Finance in his role and acknowledge the work he does

Action: Financial Controller to look at the technical responses that need to be made and confer with the Interim Chair of Council.

Timescale: The Interim Chair of Council to respond to the email ASAP.

Proposal: That there be a vote of confidence in the Chair of Finance and that Peter Butler continues in the role of Chair of FSSC for a further term of 3 years or until a suitable replacement can be found.

Proposed: Janet Wootton Seconded: Foday Kamara

Council unanimously agreed.

9.2 Summary report of 13 April 2019

Paper G2

Council received the FSSC minutes and all related papers

9.3 Statutory Report and Accounts

Paper G3, G4, G5

The Chair of Finance highlighted the role of the auditors as ensuring the Accounts are accurate and that CF/CF Ltd are a viable organization. The auditors have not noted any material errors relating to income recognition, whether relating to fraud or error. He also reminded Council of the importance of Trustees providing accurate and complete declarations of interests.

The Financial Controller added the successful audit proved there are robust systems in place.

Council agreed the Congregational Federation Report of the Trustees and Audited Financial Statements Year Ended 31 December 2018

9.4 Report to Assembly

Paper G6

The Chair of Finance reported there are still some difficulties in giving an accurate prediction of what to expect with budgets/forecasts for 2019/2020. Unlike 2018 there are no longer the uncertainties of the committee reorganisation and the cost of the review asked for by Assembly, but political uncertainties have had an adverse effect on investments. The best advice in such a situation is to hold firm, investments are expected to regain on the unrealised losses sooner rather than later.

The Chair of Finance highlighted the following points:

1. The figures for 2018 look bad at the base line largely due to the unrealised investment losses experienced at the end of the year of £696,315. The underlying operating figures also incurred a deficit in the year as the money coming in from closed churches and property sales; something we hope not to happen in the future, was less than in recent years. Looking at the forecast for 2019 we are looking at a deficit of around £461,048 (£415,420 + £45,628), which is likely to be reduced by further closed church receipts of £379,204, to £81,844. Whilst this is an improvement on recent years it is still too high.
2. Some good news is that there is amortised capital expenditure that will be coming to an end, which will improve finances a little.
3. Ethical banking remains on the agenda and is something that we need to seriously think about, but this has had to be put back due to all the other considerations that Council have recently been involved in.
4. At the November Council meeting a great deal of time was spent on the finance report to enable members to better understand the figures that were presented to them.

2018	£
Operating Deficit	(492,277)
Closed Church Receipts	96,799
Net Income/(Expenditure) before Investment Losses	(395,478)
Unrealised Investment Losses	(696,315)
Net Movement in Funds	(1,091,793)

- Christian Aid: The CF have launched the campaign to raise £12,000, over two years, for the project: No Generation Lost in Syria. Over £2,000 towards that total has been collected already which is fantastic.
- Grants: 2018
- £125,500 Impact Grants have been awarded; £8,334 Starter Grants & £1,100 Mini Grants have been awarded. At our last Church Support Committee Meeting in March 2019 a further £57,500 Impact Grants were awarded helping churches with funding for three years to help bring alive their visions with their long-term plans sharing in the Good News. It was emphasised there has never been a situation where there are more grant applications than money in the pot. However, it is linked to closed church receipts therefore the money will reduce if there is regeneration rather than selling of closed churches.
- A lot of good work is being achieved in areas with support from the Church Support Workers, CSC Area Representatives and Area Workers.
- CIPT: The CIPT Management Board continues to support the Learning and Development Manager / Director of Studies and the Chair of the Course Board, and their respective colleagues. It is conscious of the need to keep the provision relevant and cost-effective.

10.3 Report to Assembly

Paper H3

The Chair of CSC reported fantastic work is taking place locally all over the UK. There have been successful 'Breathing Space' events and training such as 'GIFT' Courses taking place, along with churches embracing the challenge and need of their communities. Some Areas benefit from Area workers, grants and funding to ensure this support can continue in the future.

Within some areas, some churches which have been closed are now, with the support of the Area and National guidance – have reopened or are in the process of reopening, such as Fritchley, Long Compton, & Ruscombe. There are visions and positive movements to plant new churches.

A lot of excellent team work is being achieved in areas with support from the Church Support Workers, Church Support Committee, Area Representatives and Area Workers. There are still challenges of course just to simply survive as a church puts the problem into perspective. There are many other demands as well, outreach, meeting the community where their need is. How to communicate with our community? It is having the confidence to try new things, to step out into the unknown and take the risk.

There are many wonderful stories to share. The Community Awards has so many applicants, great missional outreach programmes, not just from the three winners, but across the board, along with those churches who are doing such great things but are not mentioned.

The commitment and dedication from all within the Church Support Committee and the Church Support Team is very uplifting and very inspiring.

10.4 Finance report to CSC**Paper H4**

The CSC funding requirement for 2020 is £289,084. The 2018 funding requirement was £227,621 with a forecast of £267,239, an underspending of £39,618 indicating the budget holders are managing their budgets and making reductions in cost where appropriate.

10.5 Church Support Workers Report**Paper H5**

- Church visits
The report lists the churches visited by the CSW in the period between Church Support Committee meetings and highlights that Churches do not appear to require someone to walk along side of them for an extended period, but they do seem to need a point of reference, and someone to turn to when they need help, either via email, telephone or sometimes in person.
- Closed Churches Reports
Visits and reports were written for the following closed churches
Fritchley
Ipswich
Ruscombe
Long Compton
Longney

Following on from decisions made by Council and CFL Fritchley, Ruscombe and Long Compton are in the process of reconstituting and eventually reopening. The Church Support Workers are supporting these churches in such ways as through leading the discipleships training course Christ in All Things and with others supporting the area as they take on responsibility of the church.
- Other events
CWM Brexit and Belonging conference in Birmingham
Church planting consultation in London
Accreditation training
Breathing Space Market Harborough
Open Space for Council
- Children and Youth
A Children and Youth Group has been set up. The CSW report advises slow progress is now being made; it was felt this should be amended to structured progress. It is in the very early stages; the focus should be on supporting the people who are already working with children in CF churches rather than the children and young people themselves. This is a significant change in direction, and as the network grows and develops it may become possible to set up a group that works specifically with the young people themselves. This, however, can only happen at some point in the future when we have an established strategy for growth and development in this area of work.
- Grant processing
Church Support Workers are part of administering the Mini Grants, Starter Grants and Impact Grants, and have a steady flow of requests for information and for starter grants, all churches are able churches are able to apply for a starter grant each year.

The General Secretary added that Johnny O'Hanlon has accepted a call to training for Ministry in the URC. He will begin his training and new role in September. It was noted he has not yet formally resigned; on receipt of his resignation CF can consider how to move forward.

10.6 Website & Social Media Officer Report

Paper H6

In the past six months the Website & Social Media Officer has worked on various projects with the Church Support Team. Among these have been

- The Life Light Advent Reflections Website
- A new website called The Resource Hub which is bringing together resources to equip churches.
- Two new websites for the Learning & Development Group, one for students on the Integrated Course and one for the Alumni Association.
- A new round of Lenten Reflections on our Secluded Place website.
- Continued support to the Finance Department in their web development and in the recent change of IT support for the CF IT Infrastructure in the office.
- Life Light survey

The General Secretary emphasised that the Resource Hub is for anyone to use and share information.

The interim Chair of Council asked how easy the resource hub was to access highlighting that one of the open space responses was that the CF website is difficult to use and navigate around. The General secretary advised it is on the website, it has been publicised in The Congregationalist, In Touch Newsletter and InForm the monthly newsletter especially for those involved in working with children and young people in our churches.

10.7 Safeguarding Officer report

Paper H7

- The Safeguarding Officer continues to provide on-going support on queries from Churches as well as managing the GDPR for the Nottingham Office. The Safeguarding Officer and Administration Team are handling removals and new entries to the database. The Nottingham Office is being fully GDPR compliant.
- DBS/PVG certificates for those listed on the Accredited Roll are currently up-to-date.
- Safeguarding Checkers Training Options:
The Safeguarding Officer would like to replace the expensive in-house training with online safeguarding training. She has found 5 useful courses which will be researched, and the results presented to CSC for consideration.

Accreditation Group

No Paper

Area interviews have taken place, there are no recommendations to be made at this stage, as all interviewees have yet to complete their training. National Interviews have taken place, and the Accreditation Group are pleased to recommend the following:

Sian Lampard – Chaplain
Sue Rayner – Minister and Chaplain
Ruth Leeming – Minister
Audrey Lee – Minister

Proposal: That the above names be added to the Roll of Ministries under the categories stated.

Proposed: Hilary Biggin Seconded: Jill Stephens

Council unanimously agreed.

10.8 Learning & Development Manager report

Paper H8,H9

- The Department has been working towards a Vision Statement and Mission Strategy which has been approved by CSC. (Paper H9)
- The BA (Hons) top-up course will close due to low numbers making the course non cost-effective, as the fees for validation are high, and are fixed regardless of the number of students. The BA (Hons) is not required for CF accreditation and the Life Learning programme has proved more popular and very effective. There are currently six people in their first year of the programme and four more are expected to begin the programme in September.
- Any saving made by the closure of the BA (Hons) programme be retained by CIPT for reinvesting for a series of summer schools.
- CIPT Roadshow – Area representatives on CSC are encouraged to explore arranging one with us in their Areas.
- Likewise Events – the intention is still to arrange at least two Likewise events per year. Area representatives on CSC are encouraged as above.
- “How can I be sure?” is a guide for those who may be sensing a call to ministry in the CF
- “Ministry to Yourself” pamphlet sent out to all in ministry suggesting several possibilities for those who are feeling drained or dispirited, to find a way to relieve pressure on themselves, enabling them to become refreshed and energised.
- There has been strong interest in continuing ministerial development regional day conferences. These will be regional rather than Area based in order to make them more widely accessible.

It was noted there have been no meetings or reports from the Communications Group due to the Chair acting as Interim Chair of Council. Feedback regarding the Congregationalist has been received but work on this project is on hold until such time as a full review can take place. The Interim Chair of Council emphasised the need, if possible, for a new Communications Group Chair.

10.9 How can I be sure

Paper H10

Paper for information only

10.10 Ministry to Yourself

Paper H11

Paper for information only

10.7 Continuing Ministerial Development

Paper H12

Paper for information only

10.8 MSP4 Application

Paper H13

CWM MSP4: Yvonne Campbell our General Secretary, Sara Iles and Walter Riggans have been working alongside CWM to apply for MSP4 grant of £79,000 from CWM. The Consultation completed with the CWM European Coordinator identified 3 areas of focus:

Discipleship

Listening to our community

Call to Action

This is a large piece of work which includes a vacancy for a Project Leader for a 15 month period at the beginning of the 3 year project, to take the work forward and set up the new initiatives. The aim of the project is “In 3 years to give all churches in the Congregational Federation the opportunity to be directly involved in contextual and relevant missional activities.” The grant application is in progress.

Closed Session

11. Interviews of Candidates for Chair of Council

It was agreed to hold a telephone conference in the week to discuss and vote on appointing a new Chair of Council.

Ken Hague and Oliver Kinchin were thanked for their time and hard work in preparing for the weekend. James Breslin Director of the Free Churches Group was confident that correct procedures were followed by Council.

They would both be informed of the outcome by Friday 3rd May.

The meeting closed with a time of prayer led by the President Elect, Janet Wootton.

Council April 2019

Notes from groups capturing abroad themes

Group 1

Vision

Not everyone understands that our vision is Jesus based

Leadership

This should be stewardship

Chair is to facilitate meeting not to control

People with skills need to come forward

Communication

Responsibility for churches to communicate with areas and nationally as well as for national and area to communicate

Constitution

Needs to be more compact with the function taken out

Group 2

Lack of understanding

Saying this thing isn't working or this thing isn't mission

Message needs to be reinforced that CF are the churches.

Recognition of who we are

Why are we not a denomination as the definitions were read out

Group 3

Training A group goes to each area to explain

-who they are and

-how things are formed

- how much things cost

Training needs to be more in geographical areas

Numbers on CIPT courses

In house training - congregational principles and outsource to other colleges main training

Churches need professional advice for support.

Support need safeguarding resource.

Rules and regulations – accountability.

Areas

Area workers are a big loss - lost connectivity.

CF is a resource and not responsible for Mission.

Roles

Define and be more realistic about the GS role

- ambassador either or
- overlooking the Chair of Council (outsourcing those with skills)

Operations Manager - working well and must remain

President - do we keep? Process needs to be reviewed.

Staff - do they need to be more pro-active.

Shelf life on CF

- create a different structure.

Reorganised the structure but is it working.

Need to take advice and listen to Mark Tucker.

What do the churches want from CF?

Assembly

- more than 1 day
- debate and discussion
- if we value it people would attend
- delayed for voting but still open to anyone to attend

Council

- has to be representational
- spirit and prayer led
- papers out first so areas and churches can discuss

Trustees

- separate but attend council
- spiritual and passionate
- skilled in areas
- knowledge of CF is. Important

Trustees of CFL should be separate.

Areas need to be take more responsibility and not complain about Nottingham.

Resources/ support need to be 2 way.

Process was discussed on what happens next.

Are we wasting our time?

How many more conversation are we going to have.

Don't want a sub- group coming in.

Stay together and make decisions as one with an outside source - keep it simple.

Need to consider

- are we the right people
- is it too large group to be a steering group
- a selection of people from group that everyone from Council would want to be included

Possibility 2 people from Assembly to answer and report what Council have done - elected by Assembly to move forward

- Council representatives are the right people as they have been reaffirmed by their areas
- we need to go forward as a council body

Day has been encouraging

The new question is us moving on and feeling encouraged

We are not going round in circles, we need to be patient

Council is central to the process

A lot of things have come out and we need to get to a realistic place of outcomes

What are churches doing to build the relationship

Council are responsible for the control and management of CF

If we had a steering group

Need to be clear who they will be

Need to be clear what powers are delegated to them

Could we have 2 groups one to look at the constitution and one the Governance

Then we would focus down and the proposal will be 2 working parties and elect people at Assembly and Council can divide up

First step is what should CF become?

Then we can start to think about the constitution.

The focus is vital of what we are doing as CF.

What is the value of CF? This question has to be answered not just by a few.

What do we want to say to Assembly that the churches are saying through the open spaces - from this Assembly to the next?

We have to have some possible shapes?

How do we go about that?

Create shapes and scenarios in July and send to the churches then have a mini assembly in Autumn to discuss.

Then November we will have the collaboration.

The discuss has jumped we need to agree the groups first then take to Assembly.

Council would like to start as a group with someone from outside e.g. from Free Churches and from Assembly but then possibly split into 2 groups.

Co-opt if someone has more skills to do a specific piece of work.
Council have the legal powers to do that.

Have we built enough trust yet as Council to carry the process out ourselves?

May need to justify to Assembly because of the strong feeling previously in
Assemblies
Council representatives have all been reaffirmed by areas.

One church isn't coming to Assembly because the last one was horrendous because
Council were slaughtered.

We need a soft answer to stop the wrath.
It isn't just Council though it is 2 people from Assembly and an outside CF
representative.

Won't make a difference if a bigger group as smaller groups have caused different
problems as seen as power sources.

Whatever there will always be people who criticise but we need to speak gently into
the situation.

Strongly and firmly we are as Council listening and being collaborative.
If we Council set a sub group they are not being exposed to all the knowledge.
The representatives from Assembly will show the openness and listening and
reaffirming from areas gives Council confidence needed.
Needs to be presented with empathy.

We feel the burden of what has gone on.
We support what has been said.
We shouldn't be overburdened by bringing this to Assembly.
Go to Assembly with humility and we have had lots of responses.

We want people with a listening ear and a way of sharing openness to show us
moving forward.

What type of organisation can support all the things churches have said?
What kind of CF do you want?

After all the groups had presented the overriding theme was humility.
People have come on board.
Do we need three groups to explore 3 structures then give reasons why things are
not possible?

First do we need to decide what is possible and have a realistic breakdown.
If you can't provide it will then disappoint.

Mark is advising us to distill what CF should be? this is the next stage.

We need to know what happens if proposal isn't agreed by Assembly.

Show in proposal broad themes.

The way the proposal is presented will be how it is received.

Proposal

Council will take forward the next stage of the collaboration process as outlined in the resolution.

Nominated by Peter Butler, seconded by Hilary Biggin.

All in favour

The proposal is on the back of what we are saying to churches and the tail end of an hour and 20 ,minutes at Assembly.

Question to whether we need an addition - Council would like Assemblies position with 2 people from Assembly.

We seek two nominations from the floor of Assembly to work alongside Council through this collaboration process.

Nominated Martin Spain seconded May Kane.

All in favour.