

Finance & Support Services Committee Meeting – 7 October 2023

Nottingham Offices / Zoom.

Present

Susan Austin
Sandra Turner
Margaret Morris
Michael Hockaday
Keith Bradley

Representing

Chair
South West
Eastern
East Midlands
North East

Participant Observers

Gary Baker
Philip Stainer
Thandar Tun

Financial Controller
Property Manager/Finance Officer
New rep South East (to 1pm)

On Zoom

Tim Bateman
Jennie Blake
Sue McFarlane
Gerry Simonis
Foday Kamara
Elisabeth Sweeney-Smith

North West Midlands
South East
CF in Wales
CF in Scotland (to 2.00pm)
North West
President Elect (to 1.25pm)

Apologies

Mark Taylor
Sonia James
Mark Tucker

Yvonne Campbell

Past President
CF in Wales
Operations Manager &
Company Secretary
General Secretary

Minutes

Clare Edwards

1. Welcome

(Paper A)

The welcome was given by the Chair, Susan Austin.

Thandar Tun will be observing her first meeting in readiness to replace Jennie Blake as Area representative for the South East Area.

2. Opening Devotion

Chair, Susan Austin opened with a reading of Paul's letter to the Ephesians Chapter 3 v.14-19. Prayer followed which included giving thanks to Nicola White for her long-standing contribution as Area Treasurer and her mother, Greta White, a faithful supporter.

3. Apologies

Apologies were noted and are recorded above.

4. Declarations of Interest

None.

5. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 13 April 2023

(Paper B)

The minutes were agreed by the Committee and to be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

6. Matters Arising not elsewhere on the Agenda.

There were no other matters arising.

7. Investment Trust & Trading Board

Susan Austin

- a. Minutes of meeting – 26 July 2023

(Paper C)

The minutes were accepted by the Committee.

**8. CF Accounts Jan – June 2023, Forecasts 2023 & Forecasts 2024
(Paper D, D1,D2,D3, D4)**

Gary Baker

The Financial Controller submitted the finance report advising that a 2024 forecast has been created based from the 2024 budgets. Finances remain stable: CF is currently benefiting from higher interest rates yielding better deposit interest returns. He reminded the Committee that it is important to protect our asset base as it provides our main source of income. However, CF have no debts and no financial commitments.

CF are delighted to have received a further grant of £32k from Memorial Hall Trust, this is no longer budgeted for as it is not guaranteed.

Areas of concern include the on-going empty property at No 4 Castle Gate. This is costing CF around £40k-£50k pa! The 2024 forecast has been adjusted so that the anticipated rental income has now been removed and thus increasing the deficit for that year.

The Property Manager advised the Committee that No 4 Castle Gate will be on the Investment Trust and Trading Board's Agenda, and it is regularly reviewed by him. Innes England are marketing the property and there is a free period incentive.

If No 4 Castle Gate is sold before 2031, we need to consider the 25% development overage. The point was made it would be beneficial to investigate which is the lesser amount, 25% of sale or the monthly cost to CF. As the property value will deplete over time, lowering the rental value is also an option.

It was reported that a HRM property has been purchased at Taunton and funded from the PPF which will be repaid from future HRM sales. Any new applications for a HRM property would have to go on a waiting list until that debt is paid back and another property then becomes available.

Recommendation

The Finance Committee accept and recommend.

Paper D1: CF Accounts Jan to June 2023; Forecasts 2023 & Forecasts 2024.

Paper D2: CF Balance Sheet at 30th June 2023.

Decision: Agreed Unanimously.

Action: Chair of FSSC to bring recommendation to Council.

Timescale: November 2023

e) Unpaid Affiliation Fees

(Paper D3)

The Financial Controller thanked the Finance Officer and General Secretary for their hard work on the recovery of Affiliation fees.

Recommendation

The Finance Committee agreed to write off the unpaid affiliation fees as reported.

Decision: Agreed Unanimously.

Action: Chair of FSSC to bring recommendation to Council.

Timescale: November 2023

f) Schedule of Charges - 2025

(Paper D4)

The Financial Controller reported on Paper D4 and said there was a need to set parameters for the Spring Meeting in 2024 when the 2025 Budgets would be presented.

Church Affiliation Fee: to be increased to **£170.00** per church from £165.00 and to **£9.25** per member from £9.00 per member.

Personal/Associate Membership Fee: to be increased to **£45.00** from £44.00.

Paper D4 was accepted.

Recommendation

To increase the Affiliation Fees to £170.00 (church) and £9.25 (member).

To increase the Personal/Associate Membership Fee to £45.00.

Decision: Agreed Unanimously.

Action: Chair of FSSC to bring recommendation to Council.

Timescale: November 2023

From 2024 churches without a valid safeguarding certificate in place cannot have CF membership. Currently approximately 30 churches will be removed from January reducing the affiliation fee income.

The point was made that this is a legal requirement that must be put in place, it is not CF's decision.

Recommendation:

To ask Council for confirmation of the proposal to lose churches without safeguarding certificate because it will impact on budgets / forecasts and procedures.

Decision: Committee unanimously agreed to this recommendation to go forward to Council.

Action: Chair of FSSC to bring recommendation to Council.

Timescale: Council meeting 24 November 2023

9. Finance Strategy and Operating Deficits

(Paper E)

The Financial Controller reported on Paper E and gave a summary of the Paper. He highlighted the following:

It is important to control the level of expenditure to keep CF finances balanced. There are good policies and strategy in place resulting in the overall picture looking stable.

10. CFL Accounts

Philip Stainer

(Paper F, F1, F2, F3)

1. The **2023 Half Year Accounts, Paper F**, were received for submission and approval by the CFL Directors on 25th November 2023.
2. The **2023 New College Accounts Statutory Accounts, Paper F1**, were received for submission and approval by the CFL Directors on 25th November 2023.
3. The Finance & Support Services Committee to note the transfers made to the Congregational Federation during 2023, **Paper F2**, for approval by the CFL Directors on 25th November 2023.
4. Ridgewell Congregational Church, Paper F3, for submission to the CFL Directors on 25th November 2023.

| | |
|----------------------------------------------|--------|
| | £ |
| Final Distribution - Ashley | 12,490 |
| Interim Distribution - Shalford Green | 10,537 |
| Final Distribution -Ton Pentre | 17,124 |
| Final Distribution - Trudoxhill | 9,849 |

Total transfers to the Congregational Federation (2023) £50,000

The Finance & Support Services Committee to note the transfers to be made to the Congregational Federation by 30th November **2023**.

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------|
| | £ |
| Interim Distribution - Sandford - COIF | 160,179 |
| Final Distribution - Shalford Green | 1,333 |
| Interim Distribution - Tredegar - COIF | 60,000 |

5. Ridgewell Congregational Church, Paper F3.

The Property Manager reported that The Congregational Federation Limited still hold funds on behalf of Ridgewell Congregational Church. It was not possible to transfer the cash funds, as there was continuing insurance liability on the part of The Congregational Federation Limited. The church is now fully the responsibility of Ridgewell Congregational Church, with effect from 1st August 2023.

The Congregational Federation Limited will recharge Ridgewell Congregational Church for the seven months of cover.

However, the manse, whilst not showing as an asset of The Congregational Federation Limited, continues to be a liability of The Congregational Federation Limited, therefore, The Congregational Federation Limited are continuing to pay Edwards Insurance the insurance premium.

The managing trustees of Ridgewell Congregational Church will shortly be taking over the manse insurance liability from The Congregational Federation Limited.

The Property Manager is also chasing utilities to finalise their invoices to the agreed readings. When the fund is finalised, the fund balance will be transferred to the Ridgewell Congregational Church.

11. South West Midlands Area

(Paper G)

The South West Midlands Area are currently without a Treasurer and bank signatories are struggling to get control of the bank account.

In the interregnum, CF were asked to help and have been paying some payments on SWMA behalf.

CF have reported this in the accounts as a debtor and hope to recover the sums before the end of the year.

Paper G was for information and accepted by the Committee.

12. Area Updates

(No paper)

Michael Hockaday spoke on behalf of the East Midlands Area and asked if a professional person could be appointed as Area Treasurer. The Committees referred to its Terms of Reference and advised a representative should be a CF or Personal Member. The distinction was made between should and must and it was acknowledged that an external professional could become an Area Treasurer.

If a non-CF / employed person became a Committee member and there were serious concerns, it could be vetoed by Council.

However, the point was raised that the route to Area Treasurer comes from within CF churches. Church Treasurers are not listed in the Yearbook, can we find a route to contact them?

Recommendation:

A letter to go with the Affiliation Fee Invoices to the Areas with a Treasurer vacancy to raise awareness and encourage applications for the role and to represent their Area at FSSC.

Agreed: Unanimously.

Action: Philip Stainer to liaise with Tim Bateman to draft the letter

Timescale: By end of December 2023

It was noted that the North West and South West areas are currently without Treasurers. If there is no interest from the letters it will show that the Area structure is not working.

13. CF Area Grants (England & Wales)

(Paper H)

The point was raised that churches, even those in need seem unwilling to request the money. Could the grants be distributed in the form of a donation? The Financial Controller advised that as CF have GDPR consent to approach church officers, Areas could ask CF to communicate with churches on their behalf and give the money as a gift.

The Committee were reminded that it was Council's policy that the quarterly interest is paid out to the churches and not compounded onto the capital.

Paper H was for information and accepted by the Committee.

14. Communication – Respect & Courtesy

(No paper)

The Chair of FSSC asked the Committee should there be a communication policy to cover Trustees / Ministers and volunteers? CF staff have a policy in the staff handbook but there is nothing in place for the wider CF.

A discussion took place and points made included:-

- What would the policy be, who would implement it, and would there be sanctions?
- Sanctions would mean a grievance policy / procedure which could get very complicated.
- The Yearbook could have a section advising that polite and calm communication is expected between Ministers / Tutors / Trustees / Committee Members

Recommendation to Council:

That a respect and courtesy policy be written for all those involved in the CF (Trustees / Ministers / Volunteers / Officers) and possible remedies.

Decision: Committee unanimously agreed to this recommendation to go forward to Council.

Action: Chair of FSSC to bring recommendation to Council.

Timescale: Council meeting 24 November 2023.

15. Yearbook 2024

(Paper I)

It was noted that Paper I is a work in progress, visiting preacher's fees is a new addition and that Minister's Stipend cannot be agreed yet until the September CPI is announced.

Paper I was for information and accepted by the Committee.

16. Date And Time of next meetings

2024: 6 April 10.00am on Zoom
5 October

The Committee agreed unanimously to discuss arrangements for the October meetings at the next meeting (6 April 2024)

2025: 5 April 10.00am on Zoom
4 October

Chair Approved

The Chair expressed thanks to Jennie Blake, it being her last meeting, for all her time and input.

17. Closing Devotions – the meeting closed with the sharing of the Grace.

Signed:

Dated: