

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE NEW CHURCH

COUNCIL

Year 2016/2017

Friday 10 March 2017

Trustees Present: Mrs J M Wilson [Chairman]
Ms J Z Brooks [Company Secretary]
Mr R H Cunningham
Mr M D Haseler
Mrs L K Nicholls

Also in attendance: Revd D E Gaffney [Spiritual Leader]
Revd C A Bank [Secretary of Ministers' Committee]
Mrs S G Field [Company Accountant]

66	COUNCIL MEETING A meeting of the Council was held at Purley Chase Centre, Purley Chase Lane, Mancetter, Atherstone, Warwickshire on Friday 10 March 2017.	
67	OPENING The Revd Christine Bank opened the meeting by reading Psalm 27:4.	
68	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Mrs Rachel Turner sent apologies for absence, which was due to ill health. Mr Michael Hindley also sent apologies for absence.	
69	COMPLETE AGENDA Two items were added to the agenda.	
70	MINUTES 70.1 Confirmation of the Minutes of the last meeting The Minutes of the last meeting of the Council November 2016 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. 70.2 Matters arising from the Minutes 70.2.1 Brightlingsea Church [see Minute 41.2.1] The documentation for the sale has been agreed and prepared for signature and our solicitor is pressing the purchaser's solicitor for exchange and completion dates. 70.2.2 Library and Archives [see Minute 41.2.2] The agreement for the transfer to the Swedenborg Society has now been signed. 70.2.3 Common Investment Fund [see Minute 41.2.3] Bates Weston have sent details of their Terms of Engagement for the preparation of accounts for the Common Investment Fund and also their General Terms of Business for agreement, together with accounts for the fund for the years 2011 to 2016 inclusive.	

<p>Following the inclusion of the Common Investment Fund details in Conference's accounts no separate accounts had been prepared and this had led to difficulties. In future separate accounts will again be prepared for the Common Investment Fund and these will be sent to all unit holders. Copies will also be made available at Conference. The actual audit of the Common Investment Fund will continue to be dealt with as part of the audit of Conference accounts.</p> <p>Resolved: that the Common Investment Accounts for the years 2011 to 2016 be approved and that the Chairman and the Company Secretary be authorised to sign them on behalf of the Trustees.</p> <p>Resolved: that Bates Weston's Terms of Engagement in respect of the Common Investment Fund Accounts be approved and that the Company Secretary be authorised to sign on behalf of the Council acknowledging agreement.</p> <p>70.2.4 Burnley Society Closure [see Minute 41.2.6] The final service was held on 4 March. Mr David Haseler attended as the Council's representative. Friends from Accrington, Bradford, Clayton, Dalton, Kearsley and Keighley also attended. The service was conducted by the Revd Michael Stanley and included some well-chosen hymns. An offer of £180,000 has been accepted for the church and it is hoped that the completion date will be 2 May. The actual formal closing date of the Society is 30 April because of a commitment to the hire of the premises until mid April. A letter has been sent to the leaseholders offering them first refusal regarding the purchase of the freehold of the flats, as this is something that we are required by law to do. The question of removing the 20 year restriction on the use of the funds from the sale of the building is being pursued with the charity Commission.</p> <p>70.2.5 Merger of NENCH and SOLCe [see Minute 41.2.7] The Charity Commission has stated that a formal resolution is required by the Council regarding the revision to the objects of the College because Conference is the Trustee of the College Resolved: That in accordance with Section 208 of the Charities Act 2011 the objects clause in the Charity Commission Scheme dated 13th July 1977 in respect of the Charity known as The New Church College, Charity number 529989, be amended as follows: The object of the charity shall be the promotion of education and life based upon the spiritual teachings in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg; and the training of suitable persons for Ministry of The New Church, leadership and service in accordance with this object; in all or any of the following ways, or in such other ways as shall be thought fit: 1. The provision of educational resources, services or facilities calculated to further the said object; 2. The provision and maintenance of premises for use in furthering the said object; 3. The assistance in cases of need of persons whose education is being promoted under the said object; 4. The assistance of other charitable organisations or institutions having similar objects.</p> <p>70.2.6 College Council Minutes [see Minute 41.2.8] The outstanding minutes have now been received.</p>	<p>JMW JZB</p> <p>JZB</p> <p>JZB</p>
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	<p>70.2.7 Investment Policy [see Minute 47] At its November meeting the Council considered a suggestion from the Finance Advisory Committee that the Committee explore with Rathbones the possibility of investing some of Conference's funds in asset classes where the funds would be locked in for some years. In November the Council felt it needed more information and this has now been supplied. Resolved: that the Finance Advisory committee be authorised to explore with Rathbones the possibility of investing up to 10% of Conference's capital in asset classes where the capital would be locked in for a period of time. The Finance Advisory Committee to then report back to the Council before proceeding further.</p> <p>70.2.8 Spiritual Friends Website [see Minute 51] This website has been taken down and anyone putting in the website address is taken to the spiritual friends Facebook page.</p> <p>70.2.9 Purley Chase Centre [see Minute 54 and Confidential Minute 65] Mrs Anne Gaffney has informed the Council that she is resigning as Manager of the Purley Chase Centre, with 31 December 2017 being her last day of service. She is taking annual leave at the end of December, so her last working day will be 15 December. The Purley Team had supplied the Council with detailed suggestions regarding the future managerial arrangements at Purley and after considering these a number of things were decided upon. Resolved: that the Purley Management Team proceed with the conversion of the manager's flat into two flats in accordance with its proposals. Resolved: that we advertise now for a manager so that there is time for someone to be appointed and trained before Mrs Gaffney leaves. Minor adjustments to be made to the wording of the advertisement. Resolved: that the manager's job description be approved with minor amendments.</p> <p>70.2.10 Southend-on-Sea Society [see Minute 55] The registration of the land has now been completed. An offer of £375,000 has been accepted. The final service will be on 13 May and it is hoped the sale will be completed on 31 May.</p> <p>70.2.11 Asbestos Legionella and Electrical Installations [see Minute 56] One Society has received such a bad electrical survey that the Council felt it must insist that no further activities take place in the church until remedial work has been carried out. One society has failed to complete and return its Statement of Intent regarding its Asbestos Survey and has also failed to respond to a request for a Legionella risk assessment. It will be reminded that in accordance with Rule L7 it must comply with these requests if it wishes to continue to use the church.</p> <p>70.2.12 Conference 2017 [see Minute 57] The programme is almost complete and should be finalised after the Ministers' Committee holds its meeting next week.</p>	<p>MDH</p> <p>MDH</p> <p>MDH MDH</p> <p>RHC RHC</p> <p>RHC</p>
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71	CONFIRMATION OF DECISIONS MADE BY E-MAIL There were no decisions made by email.	
72	MINISTRY ISSUES The Council was informed that the Ministers' Committee will now begin the formal process of approving Ms Alison Southcombe for ordination. This means that Conference will be asked at the AGM this year for its confirmation that she be approved for ordination, subject to the satisfactory completion of her studies. The Council was made aware that changes to the Home Worship Scheme will be necessary as the current volunteers step back. It was suggested that the Marketing & Resources Group might supply funds for copying and postage costs. These costs are in fact minimal and finding the volunteers is likely to prove more problematical than covering the costs.	
73	COMPANY ACCOUNTANT'S REPORT The Company Accountant produced four sets of figures for the Council to consider. These were the Conference Income and Expenditure Account for April to December 2016, the Conference five year forecast, the Purley Chase Account for April to December 2016 and the Common Investment Fund Income and Expenditure Accounts for the quarters to June 2016, September 2016 and December 2016. Mrs Sally Field said that Conference can expect capital to be received from closed Societies and from legacies and that if, for example, our invested capital increases by a million then it is realistic to work on increased income of 30 thousand, which would almost halve the deficit forecast for 20/21. Mrs Field was also hopeful that when the Fundraising Team (at present herself, the Revd Jack Dunion and Mr Graeme Harding) had some activities underway more people would join them and that this would help reduce the deficits forecast for 2016/17 onwards.	
74	TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT OF CONFERENCE ACCOUNTANTS Bates Weston have sent details of their Terms of Engagement for the preparation of Conference's accounts, for approval, together with details of their General Terms of Business Resolved: that Bates Weston's Terms of Engagement in respect of Conference's accounts be approved and that the Company Secretary be authorised to sign on behalf of the Council acknowledging agreement.	JZB
75	PAY INCREASE FROM 1 APRIL 2017 The figure for the increase in average earnings is 2.6%. The Council's policy is to use this figure to determine increases in pay. Resolved: that salaries, except those of Purley domestic staff, fees offered to the self-employed and pensions paid by Conference be increased by 2.6% from 1 April 2017.	SGF JZB
76	YOUTH AND FAMILIES A report was received from Mr Jack Dunion. It contained some questions that could be dealt with by individuals rather than the whole Council. Resolved: that the budget for the year to 31 March 2018 be £10,000.	LKN SGF
77	BOOK ALLOWANCE The Council made its annual review of this allowance and decided not to alter the amount. Resolved: that the book allowance be £140 for the year to 31 March 2018.	
78	COUNCIL MEETING ON THE TUESDAY OF CONFERENCE Resolved: that the pre-Conference Council meeting be held at 10.30 am at the Hayes Conference Centre on 25 July.	JZB

79	<p>RETIRING MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL Mrs Rachel Turner, Ms J. Zoë Brooks and Mr Michel Hindley (vice-Chairman) retire in July. Mrs Turner has decided not to stand for re-election. Ms Brooks will stand again. As Mr Hindley was not present at the meeting his intentions are unknown.</p>	
80	<p>REVIEW OF POLICIES H & S, Legionella, Asbestos, Safeguarding, Bribery, Risk Management and Financial Procedures policies were reviewed. Resolved: that with minor amendments to the H & S [(C6. 1) the words 'electrical engineer' being replaced by 'an electrically qualified person, having gained qualifications in the current BS7671 wiring regulations and in Inspection and Testing (e.g. City and Guilds 2382,2391)] and Safeguarding Policies and the addition of a paragraph about the Common Investment Fund in the Financial Procedures Policy all policies be approved.</p>	JZB
81	<p>BROADFIELD MEMORIAL FUND Mr Ray Pulsford wishes to relinquish the post of Secretary/Treasurer of Broadfield at the end of March. Mrs Erica Cunningham has agreed to take over from Mr Pulsford. The team will, therefore, be Mrs Erica Cunningham, Mrs Helen Laidlaw, Mrs Liz Regan and Mrs Judith Wilson. It is hoped that two or three of the Committee will meet at Conference to re-asses how the fund is used and they would be grateful for any input from Ministry.</p>	
82	<p>MISS GEMMA MCLEAN Miss Gemma McLean completed her probationary year's employment with Conference on 28 February 2017. Resolved: that Miss Gemma McLean's appointment be confirmed.</p>	JZB
83	<p>NEW CHURCH WOMEN'S LEAGUE Several people have expressed concern that with the closure of the New Church Women's League there are no funds to help lay people. They say the money was given for a specific purpose and should be used for it. A request was made by one of them that the matter be brought to the Council. Ms Zoë Brooks explained the position to the Council. Mrs May Liversedge tried desperately to find people to take over as Trustees of the League but nobody was willing to do so. Among others she approached church Societies, the Trustees of the New Church Children's Society and the Trustees of Conference. The latter did not feel able to take on an additional trusteeship as they had more than enough work already. As they were unable to find anyone to take over the trusteeship of the League the Trustees of the charity closed it and with the permission of the Charity Commission transferred the funds to Conference. The Charity Commission has confirmed that the funds may be used for Conference's general purposes. The Commission states that the funds of the League were to be '<u>devoted to Charitable Purposes.</u>' The funds were not, therefore, given to the League for a particular charitable purpose and their use by Conference does not mean that they are being used for a purpose other than that for which they were given. The minutes of the March 2015 Council meeting made it clear that the charity was likely to close and these minutes were widely circulated. The Council did not know until after the event that the funds were to be transferred to Conference. It was not expecting to receive the funds as it had suggested to Mrs Liversedge that she should try to find another charity with objectives more in line with those of the Women's League with which to amalgamate. It was not until Mrs Sally Field, the Company Accountant, received a communication about arranging the transfer of funds that the Council became aware of the fact that Conference had been chosen to receive them.</p>	

	<p>At this point the Charity Commission was contacted so that the Council could be certain that the money could be used for its general purposes and only after receiving this confirmation did it accept the transfer.</p> <p>It was agreed that Ms Brooks would write to the individual who had made the request for the matter to come before the Council explaining the situation.</p>	JZB
84	<p>COPIES OF AMENDED ARTICLES AND RULES</p> <p>The A5 copies of amendments from Conference 2016 are being dealt with and it is hoped they will be circulated shortly to those who require them.</p>	
85	<p>CLOSING</p> <p>The Revd Christine Bank closed the meeting on Friday evening by again reading Psalm 27:4</p>	

The next meeting of Council will be May 5th-6th 2017 at Purley Chase Centre
Future meetings

July 25th-28th **2017** Annual Meeting
September 15th-16th **2017**
November 17th-18th **2017**

March 2nd - 3rd 2018
May 11th - 12th 2018
July 24th - 27th 2018 Annual Meeting
September 14th - 15th 2018
November 16th - 17th 2018