

Paper N2

Assembly Committee structures and Church House structures

Church Life Review

Basic information

Contact name and email address	The General Secretary john.bradbury@urc.org.uk
Action required	Consultation and decision.
Draft resolution(s)	<p>27. General Assembly welcomes the initial thinking about a General Assembly Committee structure and an associated Church House staffing structure. In the light of comments at Assembly, and the results of further consultation with committees, Synod Moderators and Clerks, it invites the Church Life Review Group to bring finalised proposals to Assembly Executive in November 2022 authorising Assembly Executive to adopt these if it sees fit so to do.</p> <p>28. Assembly resolves to create a Chief Operating Officer post to replace the current Deputy General Secretary Administration and Resources role upon the retirement of the current post-holder. It authorises the Officers of the General Assembly to agree a finalised Job Description and Person Specification, having taken advice from the Human Resources Advisory Group.</p>

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	To consult Assembly on current thinking about a new General Assembly Committee structure and associated Church House staffing structure.
Main points	<p>To consult Assembly on proposals:</p> <p>To move towards three key strategic committees that serve the General Assembly: Mission, Church Life and Administration and Resources.</p> <p>To move to two staffing departments at Church House, <i>Church Life and Mission</i>, and <i>Administration and Resources</i>, under a Deputy General Secretary and a Chief Operating Officer respectively.</p> <p>From within existing staffing, to create two Team Leader roles for Church Life and Mission.</p> <p>To invite the Church Life Review Group to bring finalised proposals after further consultation to the Assembly Executive.</p>

	To authorise the creation of a Chief Operating Officer post to replace the current Deputy General Secretary Administration and Resources role, and to authorise the Officers of the General Assembly to finalise the Job Description.
Previous relevant documents	
Consultation has taken place with...	Church House staff secretaries. Consultation will be ongoing at the time of Assembly with Committees, Synod Moderators and Synod Clerks.

Summary of impact

Financial	It is expected that there will be an overall reduction in the costs of the new committee structure with reduced numbers attending meetings and reductions in associated travel costs. The reduction in staffing from three Deputy General Secretaries to one Deputy General Secretary and one Chief Operating Officer is expected will result in an overall cost saving.
External (eg ecumenical)	

Church Life Review

Central Committee Structure and Church House Structure

1. Background

- 1.1. The question of the Church House staffing structure has moved up the agenda. Francis Brienen, Deputy General Secretary for Mission, retired at the end of April 2022. We have made a temporary ‘acting-up’ appointment to cover this for an initial two-year period.
- 1.2. Jane Baird, Deputy General Secretary for Administration and Resources, has indicated that she is likely to retire in June 2023.
- 1.3. Two retirements close to one another, and the fact that we have made a temporary appointment at the moment, gives us an opportunity to review the staffing structure at Church House. Given how closely related the staffing structure needs to be to the General Assembly Departmental and Committee structure, this means that we need to review both close at hand.

2. Timetable

- 2.1. To realistically fill a successor to the DGS Admin and Resources (in whatever form that post takes) allowing for a handover period, we need to advertise and run a recruitment process by the latest at the beginning of 2023, but preferably by autumn 2022. To meaningfully allow preparation for this, it is the intention to seek the consent of the General Assembly to the appointment in July 2022. It is impossible in the work of the Church Life Review Group to have an adopted and accepted new committee structure by this point – careful consultation is required

before we take such a piece of business to General Assembly or Assembly Executive. This means we need to move ahead to the appointment of a new DGS Administration and Resources before we have completed the new structure. It is vital, however, to do so keeping in mind prospective changes.

- 2.2. This paper sets out our current thinking on the shape of a new General Assembly Committee structure, which hopefully can inform, in background terms, the decision to seek to recruit a Chief Operating Officer post to succeed the current Deputy General Secretary for Administration and Resources upon her retirement.
- 2.3. This paper is also currently being consulted on by the current committees of the General Assembly, Synod Moderators and Synod Clerks. Particular consultation is taking place with URC Youth and the Children's and Youth Work Committee. We are concerned that whatever new proposals continue to strengthen the place of young people within the work of the United Reformed Church, and not sideline this. We are aware of the tension between drawing young people's voices into our wider work, and having a committee dedicated to Children's and Youth Work. This is one area of our proposals we could imagine being particularly likely to continue to evolve before we reach a final determination.
- 2.4. It is hoped to receive at General Assembly comment and reflection on these proposals, which, along with feedback from other consultations, will allow finalised proposals to be brought back to the Assembly Executive in November 2023.
- 2.5. It is hoped that if Assembly Executive agrees a new committee structure in November 2023, it will come into being in January 2024, allowing time for a new structure to be populated, and for appropriate handover from existing structures to take place. By General Assembly 2024, we would hope the new committee structure would be reporting to Assembly.

3. Purpose of this paper

- 3.1. This paper is to set out the thinking of the Church Life Review Group regarding the future structures of the General Assembly committees, and the related Church House staffing structure. These are intrinsically related, as Church House works to the direction and oversight of the General Assembly through its committees. Currently, however, there is no neat relationship between the two structures.

4. Identifying structural issues

- 4.1. About eight years ago, Church House developed a three-department structure: Administration and Resources, Discipleship, and Mission. Each has a Deputy General Secretary who, with the General Secretary, forms the General Secretariat.
- 4.2. Prior to this, various committees had merged to form the Mission Committee, which means that there is one committee, with one convenor, one Deputy General Secretary, and one staff team. This is a strong model, and brings

coherence of direction across the strategic overview of the committee, and the operational work of the staff team. (See Figure 1.)

- 4.3. The Discipleship department brings together Staff Secretaries in Children's and Youth Work, Education and Learning, Ministries (including community work) and Safeguarding. Each of these staff secretaries work to a different General Assembly Committee. There is a Deputy General Secretary for the department. While there is a strong sense of teamwork among the staff of the department, it has not always been so, and the current structure does not easily enable it. The agendas to which staff work are determined by the various different Assembly Committees. Opportunities for joined-up work can be lost because the committees work independently from one another. The committees, it would be fair to say, have little or no sense of being in a 'department', even if the staff team do. (See Figure 2.)
- 4.4. There are considerable areas of crossover between the Discipleship department and the Mission department. Some areas are obvious, such as Pioneer and Fresh Expression ministry, ministry and evangelism and so on. Children's and Youth Work is concerned with both Mission and Discipleship. While the ideal is that the General Secretariat keeps an overview of the work of the church as a whole, within a conciliar church, strategy and direction is set by the committees, not individual staff members, and there is therefore a limit to the real coordination of strategy that the General Secretariat can offer when policy is rightly determined elsewhere.
- 4.5. The Administration and Resources Department (Figure 3) is made up of staff that cover the areas of Finance, Human Resources, IT, Facilities and Communications, along with the staff of the Retired Ministers Housing Association (which is a separate entity in governance terms, and whose work is governed by the RMHS Board, but the URC provides the staff with which the RMHS undertakes its work). It relates to the Communications Committee, the Equalities Committee (the DGS A&R is the staff member that serves this committee), the Finance Committee, The Church House Management Group, and the Human Resources Advisory Group. It relates to the RMHS Board and the URC Trust, as external legal entities to the URC itself. Whilst the staff members may have a sense of a departmental identity, the committees do not. (See Figure 3.)
- 4.6. The work of the Equalities Committee and the Communications Committee span the whole life of the church. The first has a function of monitoring and promoting equalities across the whole life of the United Reformed Church. The second oversees the work of the Communications department that works closely with all other departments in promoting effective communications throughout the life of the Church.
- 4.7. There is an overriding concern at the scale of our committee structure, and the number of appointments it takes to fill it. The work of the Nominations Committee becomes increasingly impossible, with more than 500 appointments to make. There is a real need to take safer recruitment more seriously, which the

committee is currently working on. This is also about improving the quality of appointments in the round, which is important for the good functioning of the Church.

- 4.8. In our current committee structure, the first place within church life that can take a strategic overview of the whole work of the Church is the Assembly Executive or the General Assembly itself. While there is a relatively informal meeting of committee convenors and secretaries at the end of each Assembly Executive, and the General Secretariat keep an overview along with the Church House Connective (meeting of staff secretaries and equivalents), the number of our committees mean that at times important strategic links get missed, or there is a danger of the repetition of work in different places.

5. Principles for a new structure

- 5.1. Intrinsic to the nature of the United Reformed Church is that we are a conciliar church. We believe that we take decisions better together than any one individual might on their own. We believe that we meet together, in the councils of the church, and discern through our engagement with scripture and under the power of the Holy Spirit. This cascades into our structures, where the same principle holds.
- 5.2. It is also a tradition that believes in individual leadership of the Church in its mission to the world (notice the mission belongs to the Church, the leadership is exercised by individuals). This is one of the tasks that ministers promise in their ordination, and others are called upon at times to exercise that kind of leadership. The reality of the life of the United Reformed Church is that much of the impetus and direction for the work of our committees comes from committee convenors and staff secretaries. This is an important ministry in our midst, and part of what enables good conciliar decision making.
- 5.3. There is a distinction to be drawn between decisions regarding strategy and policy, and operational decisions about the day-to-day running of the life of the Church. It is right within our conciliar policy that major decisions about vision, strategy and policy should be discerned collectively. The operational task of putting into practice vision, strategy and policy is a matter that is more helpfully and effectively left to office bearers and staff to execute.
- 5.4. There is also a distinction between the major 'programmes' and ongoing running of the life of the Church, and more specialist advisory work. It is important within a conciliar church that the former is overseen by a representative spread of people in the life of the Church (Ministers/Elders/Lay) which fully represents the diversity of the Church. It is also important that where highly specialist skills are needed, they can be found.

6. A proposed structure (Figure 4)

- 6.1. It is proposed that there should be three main committees that oversee the main visionary, strategic and policy areas of the life of the United Reformed Church: Mission, Church Life, and Administration and Resources. Alongside these, there

should also be a General Assembly Safeguarding Committee, a Nominations Committee, and a Pastoral Welfare Reference Committee. There would then be a small number of specialist reference groups.

- 6.2. It is proposed that these three committees map onto two departments at Church House, a Mission and Church Life Department (Figure 5), and an Administration and Resource Department (Figure 6). The current Discipleship Department has shown that good teamworking is possible whilst staff relate to different committees.
- 6.3. **The Mission Committee** would essentially continue the work of the existing committee; it would oversee the work covered in staff terms by the Secretary for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, the Secretary for Church and Society, the Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries, and the mission programmes of the life of the Church.
 - 6.3.1. Under the Mission Committee would sit an Interfaith enabling group to offer specialism in this area.
 - 6.3.2. It is intended that International Exchange work will be handled by the relevant staff, who will draw on wider knowledge and expertise from around the church when necessary, and major policy decisions about international exchange links being determined by the Mission and Ministries Committee.
 - 6.3.3. It is intended that the relevant staff will, when necessary, consult with relevant partners around the church, and externally to support the work of Commitment for Life, but that this not be formalised into a particular committee, leadership being exercised by the relevant staff member, reporting to the Mission Committee.
- 6.4. **The Church Life Committee** would have oversight of all of the main ministries – lay and ordained. It would bring together what currently is handled by the Ministries Committee, the Education and Learning Committee and the Children’s and Youth Work Committee. The committee would work only at the highest level of vision, strategy and policy, and would be able to take an overview of all of the programmatic life of the church and the ministerial resources (in the widest sense) that support them. Work would be developed by Staff Secretaries and the networks of church life that they interact with, bringing matters for determination to the committee. All operational matters would be the preserve of staff, who would be accountable for their operational decisions to the committee through report.
 - 6.4.1. Under the Church Life Committee would sit an Accreditations Committee, which would oversee the roll of Ministers and the granting of certificates of eligibility, the adoption of CRCW ministries, SCM ministries, the accreditation of Lay Preachers, and the roll of Elders.
 - 6.4.2. Under the Church Life Committee would sit the Stepwise Development Group, which would oversee the continued development of Stepwise.
- 6.5. **The Administration and Resource Committee**
 - 6.5.1. This would oversee, at the level of vision, strategy and policy, the areas of life covered by the Finance Committee, the Communications

Committee, the Human Resources Advisory Group and The Church House Management Group (Finance, Facilities, IT, Communications, HR, Compliance, Archiving, etc). Work would be developed by staff in the relevant areas, who would be entrusted with operational matters and report to the committee.

6.5.2. Under the Administration and Resources Committee will sit a Pensions Committee, and jointly with the URC Trust, a remuneration committee.

6.5.3. The responsibilities of the current Business Committee for the practical arrangements for the General Assembly would sit with the Administration and Resources Committee, though in practice this is largely a matter simply for staff.

6.6. The United Reformed Church Trust and the Ministers' Pension Trust These would continue as legally necessary, and would continue to be served by an **Investment Committee**.

6.7. There would be a **Safeguarding Committee**. Safeguarding necessarily straddles the whole of the life of the church, and it would be inappropriate for it to sit as a subsection within another committee. It also requires specialist members to be responsible for the General Assembly for our safeguarding.

6.8. There will be a **Nominations Committee** which will seek nominations for the various Committees and Advisory Groups of the General Assembly. It is envisaged – as the Nominations Committee itself has already begun to consider – that this will be a much smaller committee than currently. It would have a small core membership, who would, in consultation with Committee Convenors and Staff Secretaries, determine role descriptions for all the roles that were being sought. There will be a network of Synod Nominations Champions (at least one for each Synod) who will have the responsibility for disseminating opportunities for service within Synods, and seeking out names of possible individuals to serve. All roles will also be advertised throughout the Church using social media, News Update, and Digest. Nominations or applications will be sought. Potential candidates will be asked to provide a brief CV outlining their relevant experience, and invited to have a conversation with the relevant Deputy General Secretary, Convenor or Staff Secretary. Nominations will then be brought to the General Assembly or Assembly Executive for appointment.

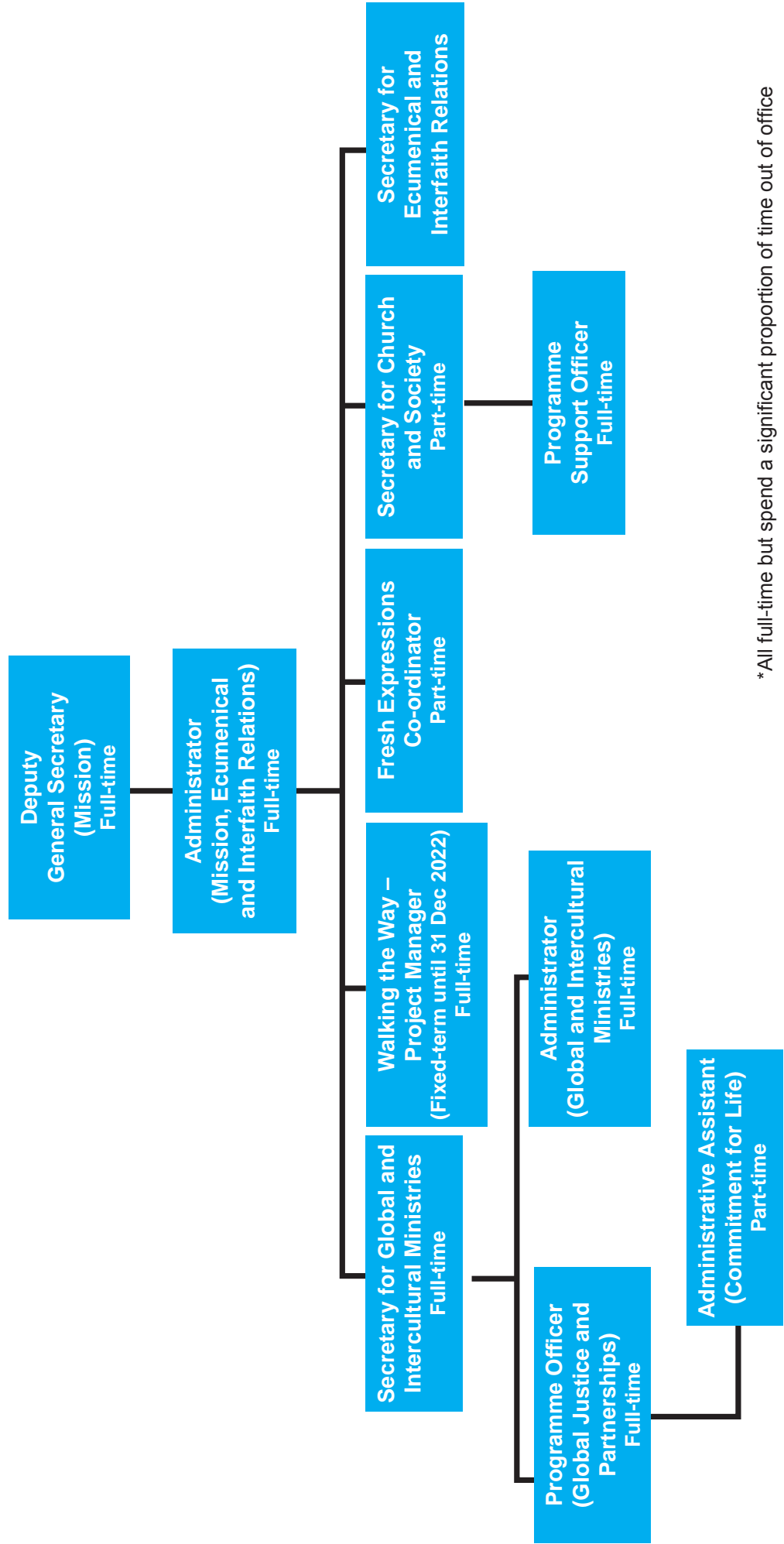
6.9. There will be a **Pastoral Welfare and Reference Committee**. This committee is the committee of last resort for serious pastoral issues, normally surrounding ministers. It is vital that there is a small, highly confidential, committee that can take decisions about particular cases of hardship or difficulty when they arise. The work of this committee is relatively limited, but very important. It would be inappropriate for the matters it determines to be decided upon by individuals, and neither would it be appropriate for its work to be done as part of a wider agenda of a larger committee for reasons of confidentiality and sensitivity.

- 6.10. The current Equalities Committee has struggled to make a significant impact on the life of the church. The intention in creating a separate committee was to raise the significance of equalities for the life of the church, but has at times felt like in being siphoned off into a silo. Its work has been difficult. It offers representation onto each of the other committees, but there is a limit to the impact a representative for equalities matters can make on each committee. It is proposed, therefore, to make equalities a fundamental part of the terms of reference of each of the major Assembly Committees, requiring them to report on equalities matters in their areas of competence at each Assembly. It is rightly, for the Assembly to hold to account the entire life of the church for our equalities agenda.
- 6.11. In addition to the main standing committees of the Assembly, there would three standing advisory groups.
- 6.11.1. **The Ministerial incapacity and discipline (MIND) advisory group** which would hold responsibility for the disciplinary and incapacity processes of the church, their good operation, and the selection and training of those who serve within it.
 - 6.11.2. A **Faith, Order and Worship** advisory group would offer the church advice in the areas of Faith and Order, worship, prayer and spirituality.
 - 6.11.3. A **Law and Polity Advisory Group** will offer the church expertise in the areas of the interaction between the polity of the church and the law of the land.
 - 6.11.4. The advisory groups would be essentially reactive, carrying out piece of work at the request of the General Assembly, the Committees of the Assembly, or the Officers of the Church. They will provide a reservoir of specialist expertise in their areas.
 - 6.11.5. Committees may, from time to time, appoint specialist task or advisory groups to undertake particular pieces of work for them. The membership of these would be determined by the committees themselves, not by the nominations committee.
7. **General Assembly staffing structure** (see figure 4)
- 7.1. It is vital that the staffing of the General Assembly more closely map onto the committee structure than is currently the case. It is also important that lessons continue to be learned from problems that have arisen in the past, when too few senior office holders or staff have had line management responsibility for far too many people, leading to inadequate direction in the work of Church House.
- 7.2. It is proposed that under the General Secretary should be two senior members of staff.
- 7.2.1. A **Deputy General Secretary**. They will lead the Church Life and Ministries staff team, service the work of the Mission and Church Life Committees and, where necessary, deputise for the General Secretary.
 - 7.2.2. To ensure that the DGS did not have an unrealistic line management workload, there would be a **Church Life Lead** who would oversee the work of Ministries and Community Work, Education and Learning and Children's and Youth Work, and a **Mission Lead**, who will oversee the work of Ecumenism, World Church and Intercultural Ministries and

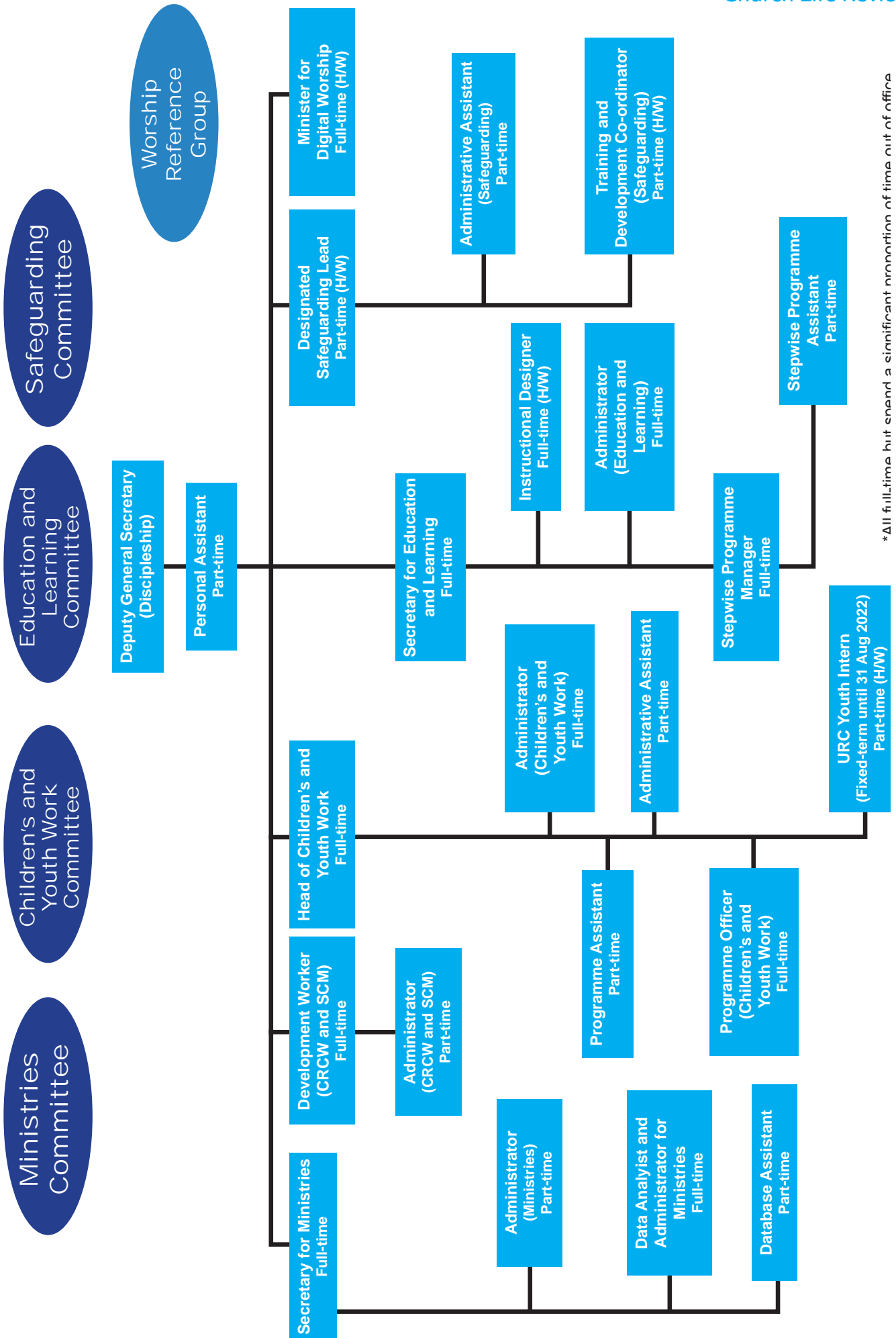
Church and Society. They will both be line-managed by the DGS. It is envisaged that these posts would be a reconfiguration of current posts rather than new roles.

- 7.2.3.** The second senior post working with the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary would be a **Chief Operating Officer**. This would replace the current Deputy General Secretary for Administration and Resources. That role is essentially a COO role, and we are more likely to have a successful recruitment if the job title matches similar roles elsewhere. They would lead the work of the Administration and Resources staff team, and service the Administration and Resources Committee. Where necessary, they could, in aspects of the work, deputise for the General Secretary. We are bringing a resolution to Assembly to seek a change in the job title for this role. It is the mind of both the Church Life Review Group and the Human Resources Advisory Group that, when one reviews the Job Description for this role, it does not fall within the category that would legally allow it to be a 'Genuine Occupational Requirement' for the role-holder to be a practicing Christian. An indicative Job Description appears in an appendix to this report. We are asking Assembly for the authority to change the job title, and remove the current genuine occupational requirement (which we don't believe to be sustainable in law), and to empower the Officers of the General Assembly, after taking further advice from the Human Resources Advisory Group, to proceed to make an appointment.

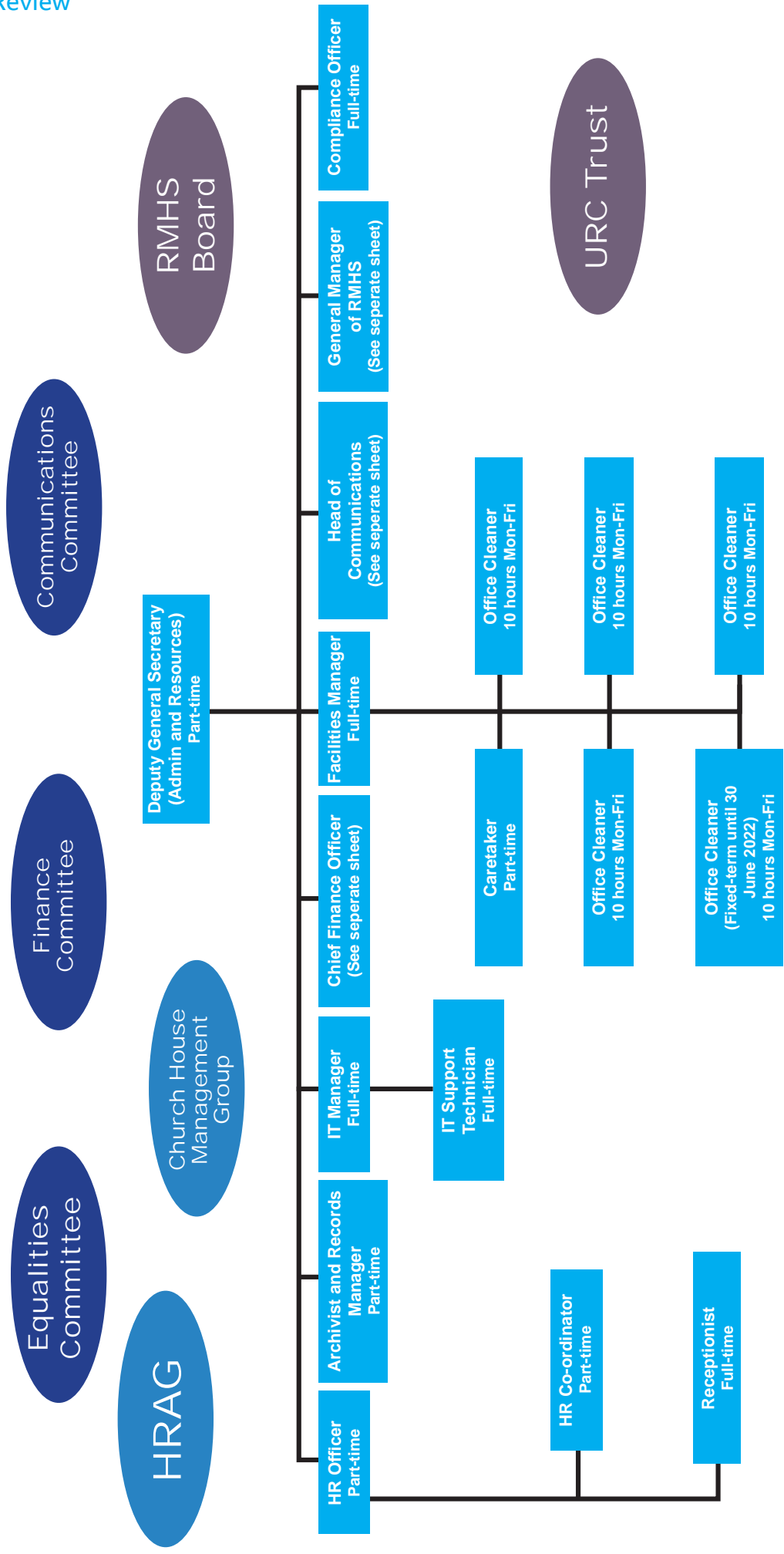
Mission Committee

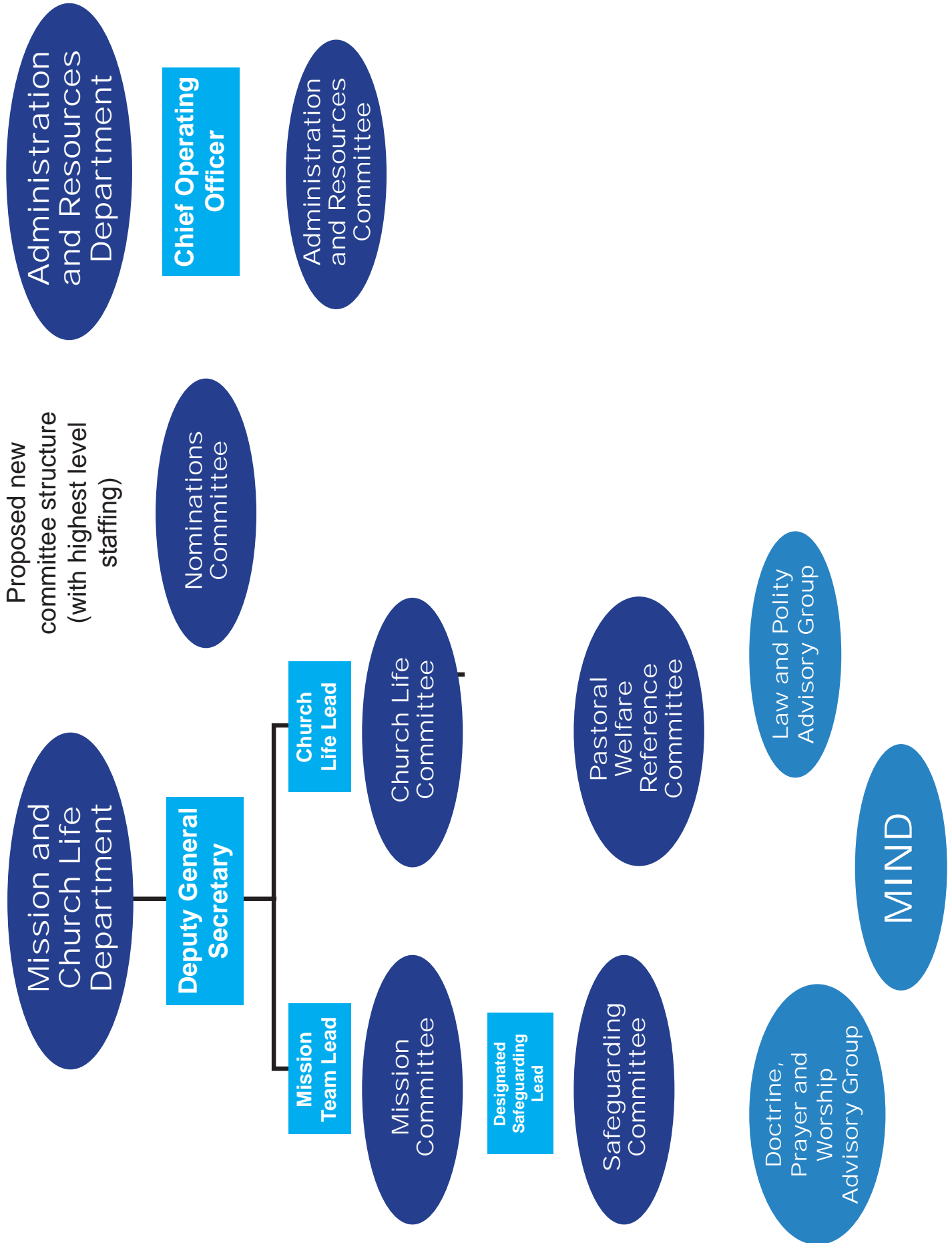


*All full-time but spend a significant proportion of time out of office



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Indicative job description and person specification

Job Title	Chief Operating Officer
Area/Department	General Secretariat
Reporting to	General Secretary
Direct Reports	Chief Finance Officer; Head of Communications; Compliance Officer; Facilities Manager; HR Lead; Archivist and Records Manager; Head of IT
Location	Church House, 86 Tavistock Place, London, WC1H 9RT
Travel	Occasional travel in UK
Working Hours	Full time

Job Summary:
 Direct and oversee the functional activities of United Reformed Church House.
 Contributes to the development of long term operational goals and strategies and ensures their execution.
 Responsible for effective operational functions: finance; communications; legal; health and safety; compliance; IT; facilities management; records; central properties; Retired Ministers Housing Society.
 The post-holder is expected to be in sympathy with the ethos and convictions of the United Reformed Church.

Background
 This role works closely with the General Secretary and the Deputy General Secretary (Church Life and Mission). As part of the senior staff team, known as the General Secretariat, this role enables the effective and compliant operation of United Reformed Church House, as it seeks to serve the wider United Reformed Church, and resource the worship, witness, service and evangelism of the wider Church.
 Church House operates with a two department structure: Administration and Resources and Church Life and Mission. The post-holder will head the Administration and Resources Department.
 All authority for policy and strategy within the United Reformed Church resides in the councils of the Church. The primary councils that the post-holder will relate to will be the General Assembly and the Assembly Executive. The Administration and Resources Committee is the committee of the General Assembly which exercises authority over the areas of Church Life the Chief Operating Officer will be responsible for. The post-holder will work closely with the convenor of the committee in exercising leadership over the agenda and direction of the committee, helping the committee develop appropriate strategy and policy, and enabling the department to deliver the required outcomes.

Principal responsibilities and duties

Management

1. As a member of the General Secretariat, ensure that the work of Church House is serving the needs of the URC in the implementation of decisions of General Assembly and Assembly Executive.
2. Ensures staff team is managed in accordance with the policies and standards agreed for Church House.

Strategic

1. Develop strategies for the efficient operation of Church House (and other areas of the URC as agreed by General Assembly and Assembly Executive).
2. Lead change management initiatives.
3. Ensure appropriate cross departmental representation on project teams.

Operational

1. Monitor the efficiency of operational processes and take steps to improve them.
2. Ensure quality and legislative standards are met.
3. Participate in the setting and monitoring of departmental budgets.
4. Ensure appropriate HR, IT and other policies for Church House are kept up to date.
5. Ensure staff have appropriate training and equipment to fulfil their jobs efficiently.
6. Ensure office facilities are appropriate, meet legal requirements, and are maintained to a high standard.
7. Support HR to ensure staffing policies and practices meet the needs of the organisation.
8. Ensure that an effective remuneration system is in place for employees.
9. Ensure that IT services and systems are effective and meet the needs of the organisation.
10. Promote effective internal and external communications.
11. Manage sale and acquisition of property.
12. Support the general Manager of RMHS to provide an effective service to tenants and prospective tenants.

Working with committees and volunteers

This section lists the type and level of interaction that this role has with committees and other groups. It will vary from time to time and as directed by the [insert role].

1. The Administration and Resources Committee
2. The General Assembly

3. The Assembly Executive
4. The United Reformed Church Trust.

Expected standards

This section refers to the way in which the job is done rather than the duties/responsibilities.

1. Promote a culture of open and effective communication to enable constructive relationships with colleagues and internal and external stakeholders.
2. Actively foster an environment which nurtures equality and cherishes diversity.
3. Promote, monitor and maintain best practice in health, safety and security.
4. Work collaboratively to develop a customer service culture which fosters continuous improvement.
5. Take responsibility for own personal development and support the development of others to enhance their skills and knowledge.
6. Promote, monitor and maintain best practice in data protection principles and practice.
7. Actively promote, manage and maintain best practice in Safeguarding.

This job description reflects the overall scope and responsibilities of the role. However, it is not an exhaustive list, and the job holder is expected to undertake any other reasonable duties that might be requested. All jobs change or evolve over time in order to meet organisational or departmental needs, and this job description will therefore be subject to periodic review and change if required.

Person specification

Job Title: Chief Operating Officer

Requirements	Essential	Desirable	Measurement
Education and qualifications	1. Business, management or finance degree, or professional qualification		

Experience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Senior Management 3. Financial and budget management 4. Change Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR 	
Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Company Law 6. Charity Legislation 7. Trust Law 8. Risk Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • URC Safeguarding • Property management 	
Skills and Abilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Excellent interpersonal and communication skills 10. Presentation skills 11. Problem solving 12. IT literacy 13. Ability to manage a complex workload and work to deadlines 14. Ability to motivate a team 15. Ability to think strategically and formulate short and long term plans 		
Other	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Willing to work within the Christian ethos of the United Reformed Church 		