

Paper G2

Update from Resources Committee

Resources Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Michael Hopkins michael.hopkins@urc.org.uk Victoria James victoria.james@urc.org.uk
Action required	Note.
Draft resolution(s)	None.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	Resources Committee is a new committee which came into being after General Assembly 2024 and this paper provides an overview of its work in that time.
Main points	
Previous relevant documents	N2 Church Life Review Structures (Resolutions 59-61), General Assembly 2023 A1 Establishing the Resources Committee, Assembly Executive February 2024 J1 Nominations Report, General Assembly 2024.
Consultation has taken place with...	N/A

Summary of impact

Financial	N/A
External (eg ecumenical)	N/A

1. Background

- 1.1 General Assembly in 2023 agreed to the creation of the Resources Committee, which was to bring together the work of the Church House Management Group, the Human Resources Advisory Group, the Finance Committee and the Communications Committee. The Terms of Reference for the new committee were agreed by Assembly Executive in February 2024 and after following a safer recruitment process, Nominations brought the names of the new committee members to General Assembly in July 2024.
- 1.2 The Resources Committee therefore formally began its work after General Assembly 2024. Since then and General Assembly 2025, the committee will have met six times, although the pattern of meetings continue to evolve.

2. Decisions and main areas of focus

- 2.1 The finances of the church have been the main area of focus for the Resources Committee since General Assembly 2024 and has included:
- Preparing the 2025 budget ready for approval by the URC Trust and Assembly Executive. As there was going to be another deficit budget, this process was both a strategic and financial exercise.
 - Approval of the annual accounts for year ending December 2024 and meeting with the auditors at the start of the process.
 - Monitoring of the quarterly management accounts.
 - Preparation of the 2024 annual report and accounts for approval by the URC Trust and adoption by General Assembly. This process includes meeting with the auditors and receiving their feedback which will inform future work and decision making.
- 2.2 In considering the deficit budget position, the committee agreed a Budget Policy to help staff and General Assembly Committees effectively manage the finances of the Church. This is supported by a delegated authority framework. This approach is a significant change, and marks both an operational and cultural shift. As such, the Chief Operating Officer and the Chief Finance Officer are working on how best to effectively embed this policy with staff and committees. This work will continue through 2025 and into 2026 also.
- 2.3 After considering the Q4 2024 management accounts, the committee agreed with a proposal from the General Secretariat that now was the right time to look at staffing levels and in doing so accepted the Treasurer's recommendation that the target was to reduce the overall salary costs by 20%. The committee agreed the timeline and process for this proposed restructure and, working with the Remuneration Committee, agreed an enhanced redundancy package for anyone whose application for voluntary redundancy was accepted.
- 2.4 The General Secretariat announced on 26 February 2025 that there was to be a full review of the staff team (except for RMHS, which is not funded through the M&M budget). Through the first two weeks of March, the Chief Operating Officer and the Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) held conversations with every member of staff without line management responsibility. These conversations were based on standard questions, which had been shared with individuals in advance. These questions were designed to understand individual roles and workloads. During the second half of March, the Chief Operating Officer and the General Secretary met with all those who have line management responsibilities and explored the same core questions about their roles, but also additional questions from a line management perspective.
- 2.5 This process had proved informative and helpful as the General Secretariat look at possible new structures and associated roles. As this process coincides with the changes to committee structures agreed at Assembly Executive 2024, it is a strategic exercise primarily, although with a significant financial imperative. The aim being that the staffing structure and associated roles best serve the needs of the modern denomination.
- 2.6 On 6 May 2025, the Resources Committee reviewed the proposed structures and associated roles in the context of a detailed outline of the strategy and rationale for the changes. It is therefore anticipated that at the time of General Assembly, we

will be in the formal consultation stages about possible changes. As such, the committee is not in a position to communicate any further details at this stage. The Resources Committee will of course ensure that there is effective communication to the wider church at the appropriate moment after the conclusion of the necessary HR processes.

2.7 Alongside this main area of focus, the Resources Committee has undertaken work relating to other key areas of its remit:

- a) Pensions – as the Pensions Committee is a sub-committee of Resources Committee, the Resources Committee has received regular updates about the move to Buy In by an insurer of the closed pension scheme. Two members of Resources Committee are also members of the Joint Working Group, working with the Pension Trust towards buy in and ultimately buy out of the Scheme.

The Resources Committee also approved the Terms of Reference for the Pension Scheme which were agreed by Assembly Executive in February 2024.

- b) Communications – following the resolution at General Assembly which requires the *Reform* Magazine to be cost neutral by the end of 2025, the Resources Committee agreed that the number of issues would reduce by two per annum, making *Reform* an eight issue per annum magazine. This was the first step towards cost neutrality. The committee also adopted a revised Communications Policy.
- c) HR – as well as the restructure referenced above, the Resources Committee has undertaken the routine cycle of policy reviews, but also approved a new Menopause Policy. Substantial changes to the Bullying and Harassment policy were also approved to address legislative changes relating to Sexual Harassment. As a result of these changes in legislation, there are now risk assessments in place and all staff have received training. Resources Committee has also agreed new roles which were to be advertised – all of these were before the restructure conversations started.

In the context of considering costs of living rises for 2025, committee suggested that we create a benefits brochure about the whole package available to staff. This was driven by a sense that there were ways that we are generous beyond matters of direct remuneration. This was approved by the Resources Committee and is now being used to aid internal communications and recruitment processes.

- d) Central Properties – the Resources Committee has made decisions to sell a former Moderator's manse in Wessex Synod, and in the National Synod of Wales. There have also been decisions about significant works on the Old Manse in South West Synod.

Central Properties have proved demanding during 2023-2025, both in terms of the number of sales and acquisitions and the amount of maintenance work required. Some of the latter has stemmed from the nature of the properties purchased historically. The Resources Committee has agreed that we will return to a position where a manse is purchased in the different Synod areas and retained, rather than purchasing a new manse each time the Moderator changes. This will enable us to maintain properties to a high standard in a

more cost-effective way and strive for net-zero credentials in a financially sustainable manner.

The Resources Committee and the URC Trust have also agreed that the Chief Operating Officer and Head of Compliance and Services should explore the best way to facilitate RMHS in taking over the management of Central Manses from a repairs and maintenance perspective.

- 2.8 Following the adoption of Resolution 21 at General Assembly in 2022, the URC committed to address the continuing negative impacts of the legacy of the transatlantic slavery on black communities in the UK, the Caribbean and Africa. At the time of writing this paper, we have received ten responses from Synods, pledging a total of £1,185k, however a number of the pledges still needed to be agreed at Synod Trust or Executive meetings. An additional £250k has been pledged from central funds. If all these offers are agreed at the various trusts, there should be a total fund of at least £1,435k.

3. Future work

- 3.1 Following the decisions on the proposed staffing structure and associated roles, the committee will work with the Chief Operating Officer through the consultation phase as necessary and then through implementation of any resulting changes. This will then lead into ensuring an effective transition.
- 3.2 Once the negotiation with RMHS has concluded, then the committee will be asked to approve the Service Level Agreement between the two entities. As well as dealing with the support on central properties, this will cover services provided to RMHS in terms of office space, HR, payroll, IT and finance. Similarly, with Westminster College for the services provided between the two entities.
- 3.3 In terms of Communications, the committee will be agreeing a strategy for the URC bookshop and ensuring *Reform* is cost neutral by the end of 2025.