

# Leeds Methodist Mission Council

## *Minutes of the meeting held at Oxford Place Centre*

**7th February 2017**

### **1 Welcome and attendance**

*Present:* The Revd Madeleine Andrews, The Revd Tim Boocock, The Revd Anne Brown (Chair), Mr John Goacher, Deacon Jenny Jones, Mr Bernard Neville (Treasurer), Mr Kenneth Tait (Secretary), The Revd Peter Whittaker

*Apologies:* Miss Sarah Cave, Mrs Rachel McCallam (Consultant to the Council), Mr Tim Newman, Mr Trevor Parker (Conference and Property Manager)

*Tim Newman had informed the secretary of his resignation from the Council. A letter of thanks will be sent.*

[KT]

### **2 Opening devotions**

Anne read I Corinthians 3:5-8 and then led the meeting in prayer.

### **3 Minutes of the previous meeting (10th October 2016)**

These were accepted as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **4 Matters arising from the minutes**

None that would not be dealt with under agenda items.

### **5 Outcome of stationing**

- (i) Deacon Meredith (Merry) Evans (presently in the Sheffield circuit) would succeed Deacon Jenny Jones from 1st September 2017
- (ii) A letter of understanding had been exchanged signed by Peter and Merry and was in the secretary's keeping.
- (iii) Some discussion had taken place concerning preaching expectations.
- (iv) Merry had been assured that his responsibilities at Diaconate level would be respected.
- (v) Jenny was to meet with Merry at the beginning of March 2017

### **6 Finance**

A report (Annex A) from Bernard had been circulated prior to the meeting. Bernard emphasised the following:

- (i) The audit of the 2015/16 accounts was expected to be completed shortly.
- (ii) If the present situation on tenancies did not change the end-of-year deficit would be £35,000. However, negotiations to relocate two tenants, with new leases could increase income by £20,000, and re-letting the vacated room could bring about a rough balance at the end of the year.

*(iii) Leases*

- (a) Four of the six commercial tenants leases had been completed.
- (b) Christian Aid needed to resolve some property issues prior to signing. The need for this was queried, but signing was imminent.
- (c) In the case of Phoenix there had been several exchanges between their solicitor, our solicitors and TMCP. These had delayed matters.
- (d) It was agreed that signed leases should be stored securely – in the first instance in a safe at Headingley Methodist Church and then at the circuit safe when this had been acquired.

[BN]

*(iv) Café*

This had made an operating surplus of £2000 in the 12 months to December 2016 which should be viewed as a contribution towards lighting, heating etc.

*(v) The following resolutions were agreed:*

- (a) Retrospective approval of the increase to staff salaries in line with living wage rates from 1st January 2017. (Trevor Parker, Chris Howell, Tim Lomax, Ewa Iwona Idzik and Ala Levcik)
- (b) Investigate with Methodist Insurance the possibility of increasing our policy excesses to either £500 or £1,000, currently at £250 with a view to decreasing our premium (the premium for 2016/2017 was £18,497).

[BN]

- (c) To continue the Tea Room café and the employment of existing staff to 31st August 2017.

*(vi) We have taken advice from TMCP about renting space to a 'Yoga Group'. Other churches have also raised this issue as many see Yoga as an exercise regime, but there are spiritual elements that would conflict with Methodist policy. TMCP are working with Methodist Council on guidelines, but have sent us a letter giving us guidance for any future enquiries from similar groups. Unfortunately, the delay in getting this guidance meant that we lost the interested organisation***7 Property and Conferencing**

*The Property and Conferencing Manager submitted a report (Annex B). Items arising from this report are marked with an asterisk (\*).*

*(i) Manses*

- (a) As the current tenants a Batcliffe Drive would like to continue their tenancy, and as the West Parade manse would need no work to make it ready for the incoming deacon (which would not be true of the Batcliffe Drive manse), then it was agreed that Deacon Merry Evans would be accommodated in the West Parade manse and the existing tenancy at Batcliffe Drive extended.
- (b) It was proposed that the management of the Batcliffe Drive manse become the responsibility of the Leeds District which would receive the rental income. At present, the management is the Mission's responsibility and the Mission receives the income. This change provoked some discussion as the Mission would lose an income stream. The District Policy Committee will be asked to look at this.

[AB]

(ii) *Oxford Place Centre – Fire Risk, Health and Safety\**

- (a) An item in the report stated that a tenant had mentioned the need for a review and indicated that a review would begin on 13th February 2017.
- (b) Serious concern was expressed that this situation had been allowed to arise, and the Council were adamant that a professional and expert opinion be sought on what needed doing and that a competent contractor be engaged to carry out the necessary work. This needed to be made clear to Trevor.
- (c) The meeting agreed that, if possible, the work be completed (or at least the costs determined) before the meeting of the District Policy Committee in March.

[TB]

(iii) *Gallery Lift\**

The lift between the Chambers and The Gallery needs replacing as it cannot be repaired. A quote of £16,300 has been received.

(iv) *Meeting with the architects*

The property subgroup met with our architects on 16th November 2016 and a report was circulated (by email) to Council members shortly afterwards. This report should be considered as part of these minutes and will be attached as Annex C.

(v) *Funding for repairs (not discussed)*

On 2nd December 2016, David Quick (District Property Secretary) and Ken met with Catherine Boardman of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The meeting was informal and intended to assess the likelihood of obtaining a grant from the Fund. The main points that came out of the discussion and tour of the building were:

- (a) Funding is only available for repairs needed to maintain the structure. This would, in our case, not include work on the windows.
- (b) The Oxford Place Centre and Chambers would be considered as a single unit.
- (c) One in three applications are funded.
- (d) A maximum grant would be £250,000 but the work could be done piecemeal with several applications for funding.
- (e) HLF expect 5% of the funding to be matched by from other sources.
- (f) The process of application has three stages: the first is an enquiry form which would lead to a workshop to clarify information (What we do, history and heritage, public benefit). This is followed by two rounds at which applications are assessed.

(vi) *Invoices\**

All invoices have been issued for January 2017 and all outstanding invoices have been followed up. Concerns however were expressed about the delay in following up the invoices.

(vii) *Line management*

The problems with ensuring that management tasks were carried out in a timely way were discussed. The main difficulty was the absence of strong line management. In the past this had been provided (when necessary) by the superintendent of the Mission circuit. For a short time after the reorganisation in 2013 the deacon, along with Rev Phillip Bee carried out line management. However, the Mission Council ended this arrangement as it was taking her away from her other diaconal duties. The past chair of the Council and the treasurer have exercised as much oversight as possible, but this has proved insufficient to guarantee that tasks are appropriately prioritised and that the promised timescales are adhered to.

(viii) *Actions listed in the previous minutes\**

The report includes short statements on the following actions

- 4(iv) Licences and leases (see also 6(iii) )
- 4(v) Electrical inspection
- 7(ii) External noticeboards
- 12(vii) Tenants key-holder register
- 12(viii) Trustees declaration (Charity Commission)

The confusion over forms at the previous meeting had been cleared up and only two declarations were required: Tim Boocock and Sarah Cave. Forms for them to complete were provided.

- 10(iii) & 10 (iv) Staffing

(ix) *Conferencing\* (not discussed)*

The report included two tables

- (a) A comparison of monthly conference income for the first five months (September-January) of 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17. (Annex D)
- (b) Current bookings for Saturdays (February 2017 to February 2018) (Annex E)

## 8 Review of Leeds Methodist Mission

A confidential copy of the review dated November 2016 was provided for each member present and a short time was allowed for reading. A discussion followed and these points arose or are taken from the review and can be reported:

- (i) The review will be discussed at District Policy Committee (DPC) at its next meeting.
- (ii) A district 'Vision Group' has been set up and already met once to set out a vision of the future of the Oxford Place centre and the work of the Leeds Methodist Mission in the centre of the city.
- (iii) The Vision Group will report to DPC at its meeting on 21st March and a proposal will be put to the Spring Synod which meets on 1st April 2017.
- (iv) The report was welcomed as a clear summary of the situation with realistic suggestions as to possible ways forward.
- (v) *In the 2011 Review it was stated: 'A further period of indecision or seeking to maintain the status quo will increase the pressure on the finances of the Mission, and on those in positions of leadership and governance. Almost inevitably, it*

would lead to a closure of the building as a place of Christian presence in the centre of Leeds in a very short time. Doing nothing is therefore not an option.' *This is still the situation today.*

- (vi) The work of the Council and staff in reaching a relatively stable financial situation was recognised although the financial reserves are modest and significant maintenance costs lie ahead.
- (vii) If the building is to remain in Methodist ownership then it is essential that a substantial income is available, sufficient to allow the building to be used and maintained with a surplus that can fund the work of the Mission.
- (viii) It was recognised that, in the absence of a viable model, the building could be sold. If this were to happen all funds acquired from the sale could (under standing orders) only be used for city centre work of the Methodist Church. In this context the term 'city centre' may need to be interpreted.
- (ix) Conference in 2016 set up a Property Development Committee and given that 'there is now a view within the Methodist Church generally that greater efforts need to be made to maintain city-centre work by means of a physical presence' it would seem useful to consult this committee.
- (x) *Brief extracts from the Review's conclusions:*
  - (a) ... Methodism should continue to play a leading role in promoting Christianity within a caring, social context at the heart of Leeds.
  - (b) [There is a need for] a renewed vision for Methodist Mission and ministry within the city centre of Leeds which is owned by the District, the two circuits, and the Local Church.
  - (c) The current model for the city-centre Mission ... has not fulfilled all of the hopes from the 2011 Review ...
  - (d) A substantially different approach is therefore needed ...
  - (e) The District will need to recognise that this will be a complicated and potentially difficult task, ...

## 9 Future Meetings

- In view of the anticipated vote at Synod (1st April 2017) a meeting has been arranged for 3rd April 2017 at 10.00am to discuss the Synod decision. We will meet at 2 West Parade, Leeds LS16 5AZ
- Summer meeting: 5th June 2017 at 7.30pm

## 10 Close

Anne closed the meeting with prayer.

*Agreed actions are listed on the next page.*

**Actions**

<b>Who</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Minute</b>	<b>Target date</b>
KT	Write to Tim Newman	1	As soon as practical
BN	Ensure signed leases are stored securely	6(ii)(d)	As necessary
BN	Investigate insurance excesses	6(v)(b)	As soon as practical
AB	Resolve the issue of the income from Batcliffe Drive manse.	7(i)(b)	Next DPC meeting
TB	Fire Risk, Health and Safety ensure that this is brought up to standard	7(ii)	As soon as possible