

Paper M5

General Secretariat

Development of Church House

Church 2015
United Church
2015
Reformed Church
Church 2015



Paper M5

General Secretariat: Development of Church House

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	John Proctor, General Secretary john.proctor@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council authorises the General Secretariat to pursue the path outlined in this paper, and requests the URC Trust to take responsibility for contract and costs, up to a figure of 1.5 million pounds.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	Planning for the development of Church House
Main points	Seeking approval to work with a firm called Third Sector Property.
Previous relevant documents	Mission Council, May 2015: Paper L1, and Resolution 10 of draft minute 15/13.
Consultation has taken place with...	Medium Term Strategy Group (which includes the treasurer). Finance committee; URC Trust. Church House staff have been told of the plans, and expressed some hopes; they also understand where the lines of decision lie.

Summary of Impact

Financial	Scoping and exploratory work is being done on the basis of a deposit of £12,000. The eventual development cost might exceed a million pounds, and would depend on Mission Council and Trust approval.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	We have already decided to stay in Tavistock Place, in part because of its proximity to a host of ecumenical, charitable, public and professional contacts with whom we regularly work.

Development of Church House

1. This paper seeks to give an update on activity following Mission Council's agreement in May to explore the possibility of a 'limited project to remodel Church House'.
2. Following the Mission Council decision in May 2015 the General Secretariat has continued to explore, in consultation with the convenor of the URC Trust, the possibility of a more contained refurbishment of Church House with the objectives of:
 - making the entire building accessible to all;
 - making running the building more cost effective;
 - improving space utilisation;
 - creating a flexible design which will facilitate different ways of using the space, including sub-letting;
 - creating a pleasant working environment which meets the current and anticipated future needs of the denomination.
3. We have met with representatives of two firms. Both were enthusiastic about the project and have expertise that could support our redevelopment.
4. One is a global organisation providing professional technical and management support services for a wide range of industries and governments. Whilst it clearly has a wealth of talent upon which to draw and the means to support us, on balance it was felt that the present stage of our planning does not match well to their way of working.
5. The other, Third Sector Property, is a London-based organisation specialising in supporting charities and not-for-profit bodies with their property matters.
6. Mr Zac Goodman of Third Sector Properties (TSP) met with the General Secretariat and the convenor of the Trust in July. He demonstrated an understanding of the not-for-profit sector and of the need to invest wisely.
7. Whilst not a commitment, Mr Goodman thought that by reorganising our use of space, and creating lettable space within the current premises, we should be able to generate enough income to cover the running costs of the building.
8. TSP's suggestion is that for a project of the scope of ours a 'Design and Build' arrangement would be appropriate. This could facilitate a fixed price contract. TSP would take on the responsibility of introducing suitable contractors and manage the contract on the Church's behalf.
9. TSP's approach has much to commend it:
 - understanding of the charity sector;
 - understanding of the local property market for similar organisations;
 - built-in project management;
 - single point of contact for the project;
 - fixed price contract.
10. The General Secretariat is keen to pursue this kind of approach. Subject to satisfactory client references and undertaking some due diligence regarding financial stability, we wish to engage the services of Third Sector Property to explore the refurbishment/redevelopment of Church House.

11. Members of the General Secretariat have visited TSP's office, and have also visited one of their clients, whose building is about a mile from Church House. There they were impressed by (a) the amount of work that had been done for the sort of price that we might be considering, (b) the sensitive match in style and ethos between the building work and the concerns of the client, and (c) the fact that TSP's projections about letting income had indeed been realised in practice as the client began to use the building and to seek income from parts of it.
12. The General Secretariat has high hopes for this project.
 - we think Church House can work in some smarter and more accessible ways;
 - we value the staff highly, and some quite modest changes might make their working environment more congenial;
 - disability access, both for staff and for visitors, is a witness to some values and concerns that matter a lot to our Church;
 - it would be great if the building paid its own running costs (indeed we have recently set off along that road, by letting the flat on the roof);
 - we should like the building to feel more open to church members who come to it, who visit that part of London, or who live locally;
 - it is time to install some better kit to support virtual committee meetings.
13. The Finance committee was told that the provisional costs of a project of this sort would be around £1m-£1.5m. On that basis the committee advised that it should be possible to fund such a project in 2016-17 out of general reserves without dislocating other expenditure plans.
14. We therefore commend the following resolution to Mission Council:

Mission Council authorises the General Secretariat to pursue the path outlined in this paper, and requests the URC Trust to take responsibility for contract and costs, up to a figure of 1.5 million pounds.
15. The assigning of contract and cost responsibility to the Trust would honour the Trust's role as custodian of the URC's assets. It would also ensure close liaison both with the General Secretariat as senior staff of the House, and with the Finance committee, which is responsible for the stewardship and budgeting of our Church's funds. The specification of a budget will leave Mission Council in control of the overall cost.
16. Should Mission Council support this path, the Trust will oversee the agreement of the design, and it is likely to delegate to a small working group the detailed supervision of the project and liaison with TSP.