

# Paper I1

## Update to terms of reference

### Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee

#### Basic information

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<b>Action required</b>	<b>Decision.</b>
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<p>Mission Council agrees to make the following amendments to the Terms of Reference of the PRWC</p> <p><b>“ 1(a) The Assembly pastoral reference and welfare committee will consider the cases of United Reformed Church ministers and congregations which are referred to it because of some perceived pastoral need by Mission Council, synods, committees, Synod Moderators or Officers of Assembly. and when the continuation of a minister’s service in an existing pastoral charge or within the URC is in question”</b></p> <p><b>“1(f) The committee, in consultation with the finance committee, will determine the level of welfare grants to be paid from Assembly funds.”</b></p> <p><b>4. Composition • A former Moderator of General Assembly who shall be the Convenor. • The General Secretary • Two lay people • One Minister in pastoral charge • One Synod Moderator • The Treasurer • <del>The convener of the welfare sub-committee</del> • The Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) who will act as secretary</b></p> <p><b>“5. Attendance (a) The minister whose case is being considered by the committee may request a meeting with the committee in person if he or she so wishes. Alternatively, the The committee may invite the minister to meet some or all its members. In either case the The minister may be accompanied by a friend if he or she so wishes. (b) The committee has the discretion to invite other persons involved in a case to meet it.”</b></p> <p><b>“6. Relationship to Structure The committee will report to the General Assembly at its <del>biennial</del> annual meeting. However, the report will only deal with general matters and the committee will not report on, nor may it be questioned on, individual cases.”</b></p>

## Summary of content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To update the committee's terms of reference.
<b>Main points</b>	To remove the restriction of acting only when the continuation of a minister's service is in question and to include welfare grants in remit.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Section H of the Manual as updated June 2017.
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	Synod Moderators, Secretary of Education and Learning, Secretary of Ministries, Manager of Retired Ministers Housing Society.

## Summary of impact

<b>Financial</b>	No alteration to existing budgets.
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	None.

## 1. Background

- 1a) The existing Terms of Reference (ToR) limit the work of the pastoral reference and welfare committee (PRWC) to 'consider the cases of United Reformed Church ministers which are referred to it because of some perceived pastoral need.... when the continuation of a minister's service in an existing pastoral charge or within the URC is in question' (see Section H of the Manual as updated June 2017).
- 1b) The committee has often been regarded as the 'committee of last resort', by which it is understood that when local church and synod have exhausted all other ways of resolving a pastoral need involving minister and congregation then the help of PRWC could be sought. The ToR make it clear that the primary function of the committee is to help the minister move on from a situation that has become unhealthy and the committee may authorise stipend payments and other costs to be made while a solution to the pastoral need is found.
- 1c) The understanding of PRWC as the 'committee of last resort' has led to a broadening of the committee's work. When a pastoral or welfare need has arisen, and there has been no other obvious place within the structures for that need to be addressed, it has been referred to PRWC.
- 1d) Examples of the kind of matters referred include:
  - i. the provision of stipend and housing at the end of a fixed term appointment
  - ii. housing and financial assistance for spouses and families following marital breakdown of a minister
  - iii. the breakdown of relations between individuals, who are not ministers, and Synods or other councils of the URC
  - iv. the breakdown of relations between congregations and Synods
  - v. assistance with costs of altering a retired minister's privately owned housing to accommodate increased disability

- vi. assistance with costs of improvements to RMHS property where the tenant has an equity share but cannot afford her/his share of the costs.
- vii. financial difficulties of retired ministers
- viii. financial difficulties of the widows and widowers of ministers.
- ix. financial difficulties of serving ministers

## 2. Purpose of this report

- 2a) The work of PRWC is confidential and reports are normally received without discussion. From time to time, however, it is appropriate that the wider church should be aware of developing trends that may require the attention of other committees or councils of the United Reformed Church.
- 2b) A proposal to amend the existing terms of reference is tabled alongside this report. The amendments express the existing work of PRWC but do not limit its ability to respond to pastoral and welfare matters that are referred to it.

## 3. Amendment to existing terms of reference

- 3a) The existing Terms of Reference are given in Section H of the Manual dated June 2017
- 3b) It is proposed to amend 1 (a) of the terms of reference as follows:
  - 1(a) **The Assembly pastoral reference and welfare committee will consider the cases of United Reformed Church ministers and congregations which are referred to it because of some perceived pastoral need by Mission Council, synods, committees, synod moderators or *Officers of Assembly*.** ~~and when the continuation of a minister's service in an existing pastoral charge or within the URC is in question.~~
  - 3c) PRWC has oversight of historic funds that are held for designated purposes and available to stipendiary ministers of the United Reformed Church. The level is set from time to time by PRWC and are paid on application for the following purposes: Education fees for children in independent schools, musical instruments for children, school uniform and equipment, public transport travel costs for school attendance. Further grants are paid at bereavement, as a Christmas gift to widows and widowers and as a contribution to the housing costs of a minister's spouse following divorce or separation. The committee also receives requests for financial assistance to ministers for purposes not covered by the historic funds.
  - 1(f)) **The committee, in consultation with the finance committee, will determine the level of welfare grants to be paid from Assembly funds.**
- 3d) The work of the welfare sub committee has been incorporated into the work of PRWC and the post of convenor of welfare sub committee no longer exists.

## 4. Composition

- **A former Moderator of General Assembly who shall be the convenor**

- **The General Secretary**
  - **Two lay people**
  - **One minister in pastoral charge**
  - **One Synod Moderator**
  - **The Treasurer**
  - **The convenor of the welfare sub-committee**
  - **The Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) who will act as secretary.**
- 3e) The introduction of a ministerial disciplinary process, an incapacity process and a complaints process now ensures that decisions affecting the standing of a minister are dealt with through other channels. The work of the PRWC increasingly involves giving financial assistance through extending stipend payments or making grants. The committee is of the opinion that it is no longer necessary for ministers to have the right to request a meeting in person where financial assistance is under consideration. The committee will continue to carefully consider any request that has the support of a Synod Moderator or Assembly Officer and may ask for further information in considering its response.

## **5. Attendance**

- a) **The minister whose case is being considered by the committee may request a meeting with the committee in person if he or she so wishes. Alternatively, the committee may invite the minister to meet some or all its members. In either case the minister may be accompanied by a friend if he or she so wishes.**
- b) **The committee has the discretion to invite other persons involved in a case to meet it.”**
- 3f) The Assembly has decided to meet annually and the alteration is a consequence of that decision.

**“6 Relationship to Structure The committee will report to the General Assembly at its ~~biennial~~ annual meeting. However, the report will only deal with general matters and the committee will not report on, nor may it be questioned on, individual cases.”**

# Appendix A

## Existing terms of reference

H: Assembly pastoral reference and welfare committee

## 1. Terms of reference

- a) The Assembly pastoral reference and welfare committee will consider the cases of United Reformed Church ministers which are referred to it because of some perceived pastoral need by Mission Council, synods, committees or synod moderators, and when the continuation of a minister's service in an existing pastoral charge or within the URC is in question.
- b) The committee will seek to enable the minister's service within the URC to be continued if that is seen to be appropriate, and to this end may consider financial support for a course of retraining, or therapy, or counselling.
- c) The committee may initiate discussion about alternative forms of service for a minister, within or outside the URC, and may seek help (practical, financial, professional) in consultation with the minister to make this happen.
- d) The committee may authorise the maintenance of ministry (MoM) sub-committee to provide stipend or part-stipend and may authorise the Chief Finance Officer to pay other necessary expenses (including accommodation costs) to a minister not in pastoral charge for a specific period. Such period will not exceed six months in the first instance but may be extended by the pastoral reference committee. The MoM sub-committee (or such other body as shall in future carry out the functions of the MoM sub-committee) or the Chief Finance Officer will accept this authority for payment. (e) In each case the committee will make clear to the minister concerned the period for which payments will be made and if it may be extended.

## 2. Limitations on powers

- a) The committee does not have the authority to delete the name of a minister from the Roll of Ministers nor to take any other disciplinary steps against him/her. The committee does not have to be consulted about and does not have the authority over the process of ending the appointment of a minister in pastoral charge, which process is a matter for minister, church meeting and synod pastoral committee or equivalent.
- b) The committee may not be involved with, and must withdraw from, any ongoing discussions, counselling or direct pastoral involvement with any case in which the disciplinary procedures of the Church are being applied against a minister. Nevertheless, the committee may authorise any financial payments allowed under its terms of reference (see 1d).

## 3. Confidentiality

It is evident that the work of the pastoral reference and welfare committee will be confidential and pastoral. Nevertheless, it will need to keep a record of its meetings. The committee's conclusions should be recorded, given to the person concerned and shared with others directly involved in the matter who need to know the outcome. It would be inappropriate for the committee as a body or individual members of it to divulge any additional information about ministers or churches concerned.

## 4. Composition

- A former Moderator of General Assembly who shall be the convenor
- The General Secretary
- Two lay people
- One minister in pastoral charge
- One Synod Moderator
- The Treasurer
- The convenor of the welfare sub-committee
- The Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) who will act as secretary.

## 5. Attendance

- a) The minister whose case is being considered by the committee may request a meeting with the committee in person if he or she so wishes. Alternatively, the committee may invite the minister to meet some or all its members. In either case the minister may be accompanied by a friend if he or she so wishes.
- b) The committee has the discretion to invite other persons involved in a case to meet it.

## 6. Relationship to structure

The committee will report to the General Assembly at its biennial meeting. However, the report will only deal with general matters and the committee will not report on, nor may it be questioned on, individual cases.

*Date of last revision: May 2017*

# Appendix B

## Revised terms of reference

H: Assembly pastoral reference and welfare committee

### 1. Terms of reference

- a) The Assembly pastoral reference and welfare committee will consider the cases of United Reformed Church ministers and congregations which are referred to it because of some perceived pastoral need by Mission Council, synods, committees, synod moderators or Officers of Assembly.
- b) The committee will seek to enable the minister's service within the URC to be continued if that is seen to be appropriate, and to this end may consider financial

support for a course of retraining, or therapy, or counselling.

- c) The committee may initiate discussion about alternative forms of service for a minister, within or outside the URC, and may seek help (practical, financial, professional) in consultation with the minister to make this happen.
- d) The committee may authorise the maintenance of ministry (MoM) sub-committee to provide stipend or part-stipend and may authorise the Chief Finance Officer to pay other necessary expenses (including accommodation costs) to a minister not in pastoral charge for a specific period. Such period will not exceed six months in the first instance but may be extended by the pastoral reference committee. The MoM sub-committee (or such other body as shall in future carry out the functions of the MoM sub-committee) or the Chief Finance Officer will accept this authority for payment.
- e) In each case the committee will make clear to the minister concerned the period for which payments will be made and if it may be extended.
- f) The committee, in consultation with the finance committee, will determine the level of welfare grants to be paid from Assembly funds.

## **2. Limitations on powers**

- a) The committee does not have the authority to delete the name of a minister from the Roll of Ministers nor to take any other disciplinary steps against him/her. The committee does not have to be consulted about and does not have the authority over the process of ending the appointment of a minister in pastoral charge, which process is a matter for minister, church meeting and synod pastoral committee or equivalent.
- b) The committee may not be involved with, and must withdraw from, any ongoing discussions, counselling or direct pastoral involvement with any case in which the disciplinary procedures of the Church are being applied against a minister. Nevertheless, the committee may authorise any financial payments allowed under its terms of reference (see 1d).

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- Two lay people

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- The Treasurer
- The Deputy General Secretary (Discipleship) who will act as secretary.

## **5. Attendance**

- a) The committee may invite the minister to meet some or all its members. The minister may be accompanied by a friend if he or she so wishes.
- b) The committee has the discretion to invite other persons involved in a case to meet it.

## **6. Relationship to structure**

The committee will report to the General Assembly at its annual meeting. However, the report will only deal with general matters and the committee will not report on, nor may it be questioned on, individual cases.