

Paper L

Location of Church Offices

United Reformed Church Trust





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United Reformed Church Trust: Location of Church Offices

Basic Information

Contact name and email address	Revd Prof David Thompson dmt3@cam.ac.uk
Action required	Discussion and feedback
Draft resolution(s)	
Alternative options to consider, if any	

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	The paper gives a brief update on the possibility of sharing office premises with the Baptist Union in Didcot. It acknowledges that there is still work to do in exploring what other options may be available and commits to reporting further in due course.
Main points	The Trust will not be taking the Didcot option forward at this stage. Church House staff have been asked to identify ways in which the work might be delivered more effectively and efficiently. A number of possible options have been identified to be explored.
Previous relevant documents	Minutes of May 2013 Mission Council – statement by Prof Thompson, session 5 (p. 7).
Consultation has taken place with...	Church House staff, ecumenical partners.

Summary of Impact

Financial	The purpose of these explorations is to use Church resources more efficiently.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	It is possible that the eventual decision will be to share office premises with at least one ecumenical partner.

Location of Church Offices

At its last meeting Mission Council authorised the URC Trust to investigate the possibility of the Church sharing premises with the Baptist Union and Baptist Missionary Society at Didcot. This was the result of a suggestion made to the General Secretary from the Baptist side. There were two reasons for taking up this invitation: first, as a matter of ecumenical courtesy to a close partner Church; and secondly, the increasing pressure from the Church at large for some reduction in the overall Central Administration budget, comparable to that being asked of the Church's Committees. The Trust accepted a Baptist invitation to hold its October meeting at Baptist House, so that members could see the building themselves.

At the beginning of September the Secretary of the Trust, Sandi Hallam-Jones, the Treasurer and I visited Baptist House to explore the possibility in more detail. This was a very useful visit, which enabled us to prepare a background paper for the Trust meeting referred to above. In particular, we were impressed by the way in which a more modern building (1989) has enabled the Baptists to make good use of an open-plan office space. We were given evidence of the closer liaison between staff in different departments that it made possible. The Baptists have also achieved further economies of space during their recent reorganisation, by scanning a large quantity of paper files, which they were then able to shred.

When it became clear that the URC was taking the Baptist offer seriously, the two Baptist Trust Boards concerned reflected on how they wanted to move forward in the next period of time. As a result they indicated to us that, at this stage, they did not feel able to commit themselves to stay in their present building in Didcot beyond five years. Effectively, this made it impossible for the Trust to recommend that this option be considered further at this stage.

However, the Trustees did feel that it would be appropriate to consider some of the wider issues which impact on the making of a decision such as this. These touched upon future staffing needs, whether programmes and administration needed to be co-located, the possible sharing of some back-office functions with other partners and the possible refurbishing and updating of Church House.

The Trust agreed that progress so far should be shared with Mission Council.

The Trust is continuing to explore other options and will report further in due course.

