

FINANCE AND STAFFING COMMISSION

Convener: Very Rev Dr RL CRAIG

Secretary: THE CLERK

1. The Commission met on two occasions since the last General Assembly and plans to meet for a third time towards the end of May 2016. The main work of the Commission during this session was largely to oversee matters arising from the restructuring of the General Assembly's work.

2. With new General Assembly Councils coming into being on 1st January 2015, this major aspect of restructuring is in place. Generally feedback has been positive with regard to the new Council Structures. **Councils had embraced the 'new beginning'**, organising opportunities to reflect on their remit, assist with the induction of new members etc. During the year there were occasional 'demarcation issues', which were mostly fairly easily resolved by the Clerk and the Commission Convener.

3. A modus operandi of the **General Council's Support Services Committee** and its Panels has been established and things are working well. A number of governance issues are being addressed, some of which are reported on in this year's General Council's report to the Assembly. The large remit of the **Council for Congregational Life and Witness** was being wisely handled, both by its officers and by the Council itself. The phased development of the internal structure of that Council was welcomed by the Commission, with some necessary changes agreed at the Council's request. The Commission noted that the **General Council** was coping with what would hopefully be a temporary back-log of work, which had necessitated the setting up of some eleven short term Task Groups.

4. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk were tasked with working on the routine **amendments to the Code**, necessary to reflect the new structures and these will be brought forward to the Assembly through the General Council.

5. The changes in the **General Assembly's staffing team** has by in large settled down. During the year some necessary decisions were taken by the Commission to facilitate staffing matters. In this regard, the Commission has been dealing with any business which would normally have come to the former Appraisals Committee, prior to that work becoming the responsibility of a dedicated Panel of the Priorities Committee following the 2016 General Assembly.

6. One significant matter which has been on the agenda of the Commission during this last session was an examination of **centrally owned assets of the Presbyterian Church, the use of which was not currently being maximised**. These include the premises at Elmwood Avenue (Council for Mission in Ireland); the Guysmere Centre and the Lucan Centre (former Board of Youth and Children's Ministry); and St Andrews Bungalows and Denegarh House and premises at York Road (Council for Social Witness).

- (a) The Commission noted that Council for Mission in Ireland had taken steps to stop the large losses by closing the café at Elmwood Avenue, with use now restricted to chaplaincy activity. The Commission welcomed that temporary arrangements had been put in place, with continued monitoring over the incoming twelve months as a permanent solution is found.
 - (b) The Commission noted and welcomed tentative plans for the possible developments at both the Guysmere and Lucan sites and hopes to be in a position to report further at the General Assembly.
 - (c) The Commission is engaging with representatives of the Council for Social Witness regarding St Andrews Bungalows and Denegarth House and the premises at York Road in Belfast. The Commission is also aware of, and shares, the concern of the Council for Social Witness with regard to the economic reality facing some of its residential facilities. This has also been highlighted during the year in the report of the Finance Panel of the Support Services Committee to the General Council. Again it is hoped the Commission will be in a position to report further at the General Assembly.
7. With its work largely completed the Commission is requesting that it be thanked and discharged at the 2016 General Assembly. It is recognised that the matters outlined in paragraph 6 above will however not be finalised. A suitable resolution is therefore appended to grant the General Council power to make necessary decisions on behalf of the Assembly during the incoming year.

RESOLUTIONS

1. That the General Council be instructed to oversee the matters outlined in paragraph 6 of the report of the Finance and Staffing Commission, along with any similar matters arising, and be authorised to make related decisions on behalf of the General Assembly.
2. That the report of the Finance and Staffing Commission be received.
3. That the Finance and Staffing Commission be thanked for its services and discharged.