**UNITARIANS IN EDINBURGH**

**Minutes: Council Meeting 15/01/24 at 7pm on Zoom**

*(Any conflicts of interest to be noted as the meeting proceeds)*

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

Present: Julie Finneran *(Convenor),* Ann Sinclair *(Acting Treasurer),* Mandy Orr, Elyse Jacks, Joan Cook, Gillian (Jill) Woolman (*minute taker)*

Apologies: *none*

Julie extended a warm welcome to Jill. Council members proposed and seconded Jill as a co-opted member of council.

Opening Words were provided by Mandy. At a time of much negative news Mandy introduced council members to: ‘courageous listening’, the importance of listening to those with whom we might disagree, and trying to understand what is at stake for the other person.

1. **Minutes of Council meeting 12/12/23**

The minutes from the previous Council meeting were agreed as correct.

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1. **Treasurer position**

Jill was proposed and seconded to the position of Treasurer as from 15 January 2024. Gratitude was expressed to Kate Foggo who was the last substantive Treasurer, and gratitude was expressed to Ann who has been Acting Treasurer for an extended period of time. Arrangements are in hand between Ann and Jill for a handover, and they will also be working in partnership for the production of the 2023 annual report and accounts. There was discussion about reviewing the number of cheque signatories to ensure it is reasonable **(Jill and Ann to action).**

1. **Update from Ann on financial position, roof repairs and insurance company visit**

Prior to the meeting Ann submitted a summary report on 2023 income and expenditure, and the closing bank balance for the year.

The work on the upper hall roof is coming to an end. The original tender was £124k including VAT. Two invoices had been paid by the financial year end, with one final one expected. The total cost will be £89k including VAT. The decrease is because some of the leadwork and iron guttering originally planned is now deemed unnecessary. The VAT is reclaimable, as the cost relates to restoration of the Grade B listed building.

A final site visit is scheduled for w/b 15 January.

A new control panel is required for the heating in the upper and lower halls. The quote received is £6300. Ann advised that this is reasonable in view of research done previously. Council agreed to support this expense.

There was discussion on the source of funding for capital expenditure. It was agreed that where appropriate Speed funds will be applied for capital expenditure.

The insurance company will undertake a resurvey (Williams Pitt). A questionnaire has been completed as required.

There is a new electricity contract: Opus for church and halls, EDF for basement. There is a new gas contract: British Gas Lite. Both are from autumn 2024. We expect costs for heating and electricity to go up considerably in 2024 and these will need to be shared by hirers.

The monitor and stand purchase is taking place by Euan. The estimated cost is £800.

1. **Review of St. Mark’s policies**

Continuing the periodic review of policies, two were the subject of review and discussion. The Bullying Policy and the Complaints and Grievances Policy were both approved by council subject to minor amendments which Julie kindly offered to process. **(Julie to action)**

1. **Copy infringement issue**

Julie brought council up to date on correspondence about an image that had been used on our website. It has been removed. Julie conducted due diligence to check on the authenticity of the claim, with the agent and photographer, and this was confirmed. In view of our charitable status the fine has been reduced by a third. Council agreed on payment of the requested £100 to settle the matter. Our website and bulletin have been checked to ensure there is no further risk. Council members thanked Julie for all the time she had invested in resolving this matter.

1. **Questionnaire for ‘The Way Ahead’ and date for ‘new SMART goals’ meeting**

Council have previously agreed that the questionnaire will be distributed to give respondents 2 weeks to complete before the SMART goals workshop. Several dates for an in-person meeting were discussed. Subsequent to the meeting the date of Sunday 3 March 2024 has been agreed.

1. **Any Team Updates not covered already**

**Communications team**

Julie and Elyse have had a meeting with Hazel Jane prior to her departure.

1. **Upcoming social events**

The in-person meeting referred to in paragraph 7 will be a social event over lunch. The proposed Princes Street Gardens walk has been postponed due to the cold weather.

1. **Safeguarding issues**

There were no issues to report.

1. **Any Other Competent business**

Joan and Julie recommend that all council members received ‘The Unitarians’. The national newsletter from Unitarian HQ.

GA meetings take place April 4 – 6 in Northamptonshire. The church pays 50% of the costs for two delegates.

1. **Date of next meeting? Who will do next ‘words’**

Next meeting date is Tuesday 27th February at 7:00PM on Zoom.

Elyse will do next words.

 **Closing words by Mandy**

As it was ‘Blue Monday’, Mandy chose a reading to lift our spirits.

*GW*

*18/01/24*