

Minutes from National Council meeting 26th April 2022

Present:

George Kempton, Chris Kitchin

Michael Bennett, Jenny King, Ros Lobo, Pat Oliver, Lorraine Taylor, Helen Dempster, Barbara Ham, Kath Gibson, Loreen Smith, Judith McMurray

In attendance:

John Rostill

Debbie Arnold

Action

Apologies : Suzanne Taylor (new Regional Representative for North Wales), Sharon Slack, Sue Williams

1628	The Chair, George Kempton welcomed everyone to the meeting with special mention of Kath Gibson, the newly appointed Regional Representative for Yorkshire and accepted apologies.	
1629	<u>Notes of National Council meeting held on 1st September 2021 via Zoom.</u> The notes were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.	
1630	<u>Matters Arising</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lorraine Taylor asked whether the votes taken at the previous National Council meeting truly represented members given the confidential nature of the proposals at that time. The Chief Executive commented that, because of the knowledge of and interest in their branch members, the Regional Representatives were considered to be able to speak for them at that stage. • Jenny King asked if there was an update on queries raised at the AGM regarding bank charges for charity accounts. The Chief Executive reported that some banks will waive or reduce charges if the Branch Treasurer already has an account with the bank. He has recently been told that the Co-Op Bank offers a charity account and this will be investigated. Some branches having investigated alternatives have decided to remain with their existing bank because of the inconvenience of moving the account. Judith McMurray indicated that the bank with which Dundee branch has a community account, allows 12 transactions each month free of charge. A report and possibly the recommendation of a preferred bank, will be issued by the end of May. • Jenny King asked about the initiative for joint working with the Bereavement Commission referred to at the September National Council meeting. The Chief Executive reported that no further progress had yet been made but that it was still being pursued. 	Chief Exec./ CO
1631	<u>The Challenge of Change</u> Chris Kitchin gave a presentation similar to the one given at the 1 st September 2021 National Council meeting. It included background information for the benefit of the new Representatives and provided an update on progress since then including the feedback from the eleven Consultation Roadshows. At the last meeting, the information provided was still confidential as the Trustees had not at that point authorised the roadshows As there was confusion amongst the membership about who could join the Fellowship, the Chief Executive would circulate clarification with example. The recommended changes to the Constitution had already been distributed as part of the document 'The Challenge of Change – Next Steps'. Chris Kitchin summarised the key changes needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To create a structure fit for the future that gives members a greater voice and responds to the planned increase in membership ○ Supported by clearer integrated plans for the future, linked with the aspirations of the Members' Council and Trustees Business Plan ○ Provides more members with more opportunities to take part and influence the Fellowship. The Chief Executive reminded the meeting of the past and current membership of the Future Group which had developed the proposals:	Chief Exec./ CO

Chief
Exec /
CO

Original – Chris Kitchin (Trustee and Chair of Future Group), Paul Farenden (Hon. Treasurer), John Toman (Development Officer), Ros Lobo (Regional Representative) and John Rostill (Chief Executive)
Current - Chris Kitchin (Vice Chair of Trustees and Chair of Future Group), Gareth Oakland (Hon. Treasurer), Janine Brooks (Trustee), Mark Bagnall (Trustee), Sally Bundock (Development Officer), Ros Lobo (Regional Representative), John Rostill (Chief Executive)

Once decisions have been made by the Trustees then costings will be prepared.

Those present at the roadshows had been asked if they supported:

1. The need for change
2. The 'county basis' to enable the members' voice
3. 720 postal members having a voice
4. The Members' Council being chaired by one of its own.

Support for 1,3 and 4 was almost unanimous, but point 2 raised questions about the ability to recruit the County Representatives from the current membership.

As a result of the feedback from the Consultation Roadshows, the Future Group had modified its proposals offering the following four choices:

The choices were:

- A. Make no changes
- B. Make no changes for 2 years
- C. Implement changes subject to Ballot and AGM on 23rd October 2022
- D. Abolish member involvement through branches. Elect Members' Council by national vote of all members.

The comments and advice of National Council was now sought for recommendation to the Board of Trustees on 24th May 2022.

Michael Bennett asked if consideration could be given to separating various aspects of the proposals on the ballot paper. The Chief Executive replied that all changes to the Constitution needed to be included in the ballot but that they could be batched together.

Lorraine Taylor queried the change in the initial appointment of Representatives from 3 years to 2 years. The Chief Executive reported that he had been told that some potential candidates were put off by the initial 3 year appointment as being too much of a commitment. Pat Oliver suggested that it may also be the size of the regions, together with the number of branches which could be off-putting, but that changes to the regional boundaries could alleviate this to some extent. Kath Gibson commented that the ability to be able to visit all of the branches in her region without a car was a key part of her decision to take the role.

The current organisation of Scotland and Wales via the Scottish Federation and the All Wales Liaison Committee works well and the proposals for change relate only to England

Lorraine Taylor asked about clause 6.2 in the Constitution which gives the Chief Executive the authority to change the regions. The Chief Executive agreed that such a situation would be unlikely and that this phrase would now be omitted from the document.

The Chair thanked Chris Kitchin and Ros Lobo for their work as part of the Future Group and also thanked Chris and the Chief Executive for spending so much time organising and attending the consultation roadshows.

National Council was asked to consider the options and to decide which to recommend to the Board of Trustees on May 24th.

All members of the Council agreed that there was a need for change and that Option A should not be considered and after some discussion Options B and D were also rejected.

The meeting unanimously agreed that Option C should be recommended to the Board

It was recognised that the procedural processes would still need agreement and that implementation would be gradual. Option C would require Constitutional changes which would be the subject of a ballot at the AGM on October 23rd. The detailed format of the ballot would be considered at the Board meeting and would be designed around a number of key areas subject of legal advice.

If Option C was adopted, a structure based on counties would be implemented, Regional Representatives and Development Officers would be offered assimilation into the new structure, The first meeting of the Members' Council was likely to be in January 2023 and the election of postal members representatives would be held before then.

A Process for the election of the Chair of the Members Council would also need to be agreed.

It was suggested that the P60 recruitment campaign may generate more members who would be willing to stand for office either at branch or county/regional level and it was also agreed that there was nothing to stop new members taking up such positions.

	Chris Kitchin left the meeting after this Agenda item.	
1632	<p><u>Reports from Development Officers</u> These reports effectively demonstrated the activity within the regions including working with trusts, new branches, social media activity. They were generally positive and optimistic following the pandemic. Ros Lobo asked if the reports could be standardised and Jenny King agreed that this would help the Regional Representatives when providing their input to these reports. A basic Word format was thought to be most suitable. The Chief Executive asked if the Council were in agreement and all agreed with the suggestion.</p>	Chief Exec / CO
1633	<p><u>Chief Executive's Report</u> Regional Representatives had raised a number of issues from their branches prior to the meeting. The Chief Executive asked that any issues which had not already been answered or which were not covered in this report should be raised with him after the meeting.</p> <p><u>P60 campaign</u> The campaign started two weeks before this meeting and a number of initial teething problems have now been resolved. The following was reported to date : 575 calls received with 226 sign ups representing a 40% conversion rate. 70% of sign-ups are as postal members and 30% are to branches. The campaign has generated increased interest in the Fellowship and this has been reflected in the increase in followers of the Facebook page and also by members joining via the website. Central Office has reported that over 100 new members have joined via the website or by calling Central Office since the campaign started. Just under 500,000 P60's have been mailed out so far. Loreen Smith reported that she does not receive her P60 through the post as she views it through a portal online. This meant that she did not receive the Fellowship leaflet. The Chief Executive reported that prior to the start of the campaign this possibility was examined, but that he was assured that no-one was viewing their P60 online at that time. Hillary Robb is investigating this further but it is believed that only a very small number (in Scotland only) have used this method of obtaining their P60's at this stage. Scotland also sent a small number of P60's to pensioners prior to the agreed start date and therefore Central Office staff manned the phones in the office to cover those days before the Connect Assist call centre became operational. The Chief Executive reminded the meeting that a lot of extra work had taken place behind the scenes in Central Office prior to the start of the campaign. The initial teething problems were as a result of communications between Connect Assist and their partners and were outside of the control of Central Office. A couple of small issues relating to emails received by branches informing them of new members have now also been resolved. Ros Lobo thanked the Central Office team for their work in setting up the process and for the publicity via Facebook and the Chair added his thanks for the hard work and extra hours that had been worked by the team. Michael Bennett asked for a recap of the process for callers wishing to join a branch and the Chief Executive summarised as follows: P60 leaflet received – 0800 number called - answered by Connect Assist – address of caller confirmed – nearest branch recommended – if acceptable, full subscription taken over phone and caller informed of next meeting (one month ahead) – weekly emails to branches identifying new members – monthly transfer of full subscription via bank transfer to branch. In January 2023 the branch will then pay the capitation fees to Central Office as normal. Michael Bennett asked whether branch membership would be promoted to postal members – the Chief Executive answered that this could be considered, but attempts in the past had been unsuccessful as some people much preferred to be postal members. Information relating to interest in branch membership in areas currently without a branch is being collected with the aim of trying to set up new branches if there are a sufficient number of people in an area.</p> <p><u>Fellowship Extra</u> The draft copy of the next Fellowship Extra was included as a prompt to help Regional Representatives to promote and publicise the benefits to members. The Blue Light Card was highlighted as a number of members have saved several hundred pounds by using it when booking holidays.</p> <p><u>Mirthy</u> The offer from Mirthy for a continuation of the service was considered in the light of its cost and likely interest from members. The Chief Executive acknowledged that the Fellowship was hugely grateful to Mirthy for its services during the pandemic but now that people's lives have begun to return to normal, there was much less enthusiasm for the services and the Council agreed that the cost was now excessive in relation to the number of members who were likely to use the service</p>	All

	<p><u>Short Story Competition</u> All were encouraged to promote this competition and to encourage members to enter</p> <p><u>Fellowship Holiday</u> An advertisement from Newmarket Holidays is still awaited. Michael Bennett reported difficulties in obtaining information from anyone in the company relating to the holiday. I was agreed not to promote the holiday currently</p> <p><u>AGM and Conference 22nd/23rd October 2022</u> The Chief Executive asked National Council for recommendations of speakers for the evening of Saturday 22nd and the Conference on 23rd. Judith McMurray queried the choice of Sunday for the AGM as travel, especially from Scotland can be difficult at weekends. The Chief Executive explained that because of a greatly increased demand for conference facilities this year following the pandemic, venues were more difficult to find. Jury's Inn Hinckley Island was selected as it offers the facilities required in an good location but availability was limited to the chosen weekend. Jenny King had previously raised a query relating to the ease of day delegates getting to a venue for the usual start time and this was considered likely to be more of an issue on a Sunday. The Chief Executive agreed to consider a revised start time. The programme will include a disco on the Saturday evening and a band (Union Gap) on the Sunday. For those who wish to stay for the following day, there will be a trip to the National Arboretum possibly including the laying of a wreath at the nurses memorial. IOW Tours will provide booking details for the Conference shortly.</p> <p><u>Other issues</u> Lorraine Taylor asked for more information about the process of election of postal member representatives to Members' Council. The Chief Executive replied that following the AGM, a note would be sent to all postal members asking for expressions of interest and a brief summary of their experience and how they would represent other postal members as part of the Council. A ballot would then be held amongst the postal members to select the two Representatives.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>All</p> <p>Chief Exec.</p>
1634	<p><u>Comms. Report</u> The Chair thanked Head of Comms. Lucia Hiden for her work on updating the website in preparation for the P60 campaign. Michael Bennett reported that the Facebook page is a useful tool for developing interest in the Fellowship into membership and cited a recent example. Two Representatives reported that they had left Facebook as their accounts had been 'hacked' and asked for assistance in preventing this. Lucia Hiden to be asked to provide advice.</p>	<p>CO/ Lucia Hiden</p>

Date of next meeting :

Tuesday 6th September at 12 noon venue to be confirmed

The meeting closed at 14.20

Debbie Arnold
28.04.22

Chairman	Date.....
----------------	-----------