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## WELSH CHURCH ACT ESTATE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Remote meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2025.

The Committee agenda is available [here](#).

The recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

Present: Councillor M.R. Wilson (Chair); Councillor P. Drake (Vice-Chair);  
Councillors C.E.A. Champion, J.E. Charles and M.J. Hooper.

### ANNOUNCEMENT –

Prior to the commencement of the business of the Committee, the Chair read the following statement: “May I remind everyone present that the meeting will be live streamed as well as recorded via the internet and this recording archived for future viewing”.

### APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE –

This was received from Councillor H.C. Hamilton.

### MINUTES –

RESOLVED – T H A T the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2024 be approved as a correct record.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST –

No declarations of interest were received.

### INVESTMENT STRATEGY – VERBAL UPDATE (DCR) –

The update was provided by the Operational Manager for Accountancy, who advised that since concerns had been raised by Members of the Committee regarding the ethics of some of the businesses that the fund invested with, particularly with regards to Amazon, CCLA had responded to these concerns, advising that they received similar queries regarding Amazon from investors quite frequently, and that they were working with Amazon and many other companies with the aim of improving their ethical practices under three ‘pillars’ – Better Environment, Better Work and Better Health. CCLA had advised that they had achieved some success working with Amazon in relation to their Better Health work, whereby Amazon had introduced more support for employees. Under their Better Environment ‘pillar’, CCLA were

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also working with other investors to 'push' Amazon in the area of more comprehensive emissions disclosure. The Operational Manager had proposed a workshop between Members of the Committee and CCLA, to better understand the issues and any suggestions around potential amendments to the portfolio, based on Committee's concerns. CCLA were available to attend such a workshop and Officers would arrange a suitable date. The Operational Manager further advised that CCLA were also holding a briefing event for all investors to gain further insight regarding their investments, which Members were able to attend.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently:

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the verbal update on the Trust's investment strategy and ethical investment aims, be noted.

(2) T H A T a workshop be arranged with Members of the Committee and CCLA, to discuss concerns around the ethics of some of the companies invested with further, and potential adjustments to the portfolio of investments to address these ethical concerns.

#### Reasons for decisions

(1) Having regard to the verbal update and discussions at the meeting.

(2) For Members and CCLA to identify options for ethical investment.

#### APPLICATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE 2024-25 TRANCHE 3 (DCR) –

The report was presented by the Operational Manager for Accountancy, who advised the following:

A budget of £60k had been set for issuing grants during 2024/25.

The total general unrestricted reserve stood at £167k as at 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2024.

It was proposed £20k of this sum be utilised in 2024/25 for the provision of grants and therefore the total grants budget for 2024/25 was now set at £80k.

One grant claim awarded in 2023/24 for £10k had been withdrawn and replaced with a grant claim for a new project to be considered at this meeting. Further details were summarised later within the report.

Following the withdrawal of the £10k the total grants budget available in 2024/25 became £90k.

On a trial basis the maximum grant that could be potentially awarded had been increased from £5k to £10k.

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Grants totalling £18.880k were awarded in Tranche 1 at the meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2024 as per the amended appendix attached at Appendix A1 to the report.

Grants totalling £34k set out in Appendix A2 to the report were recommended as part of the report.

A remaining sum of £37.120k was available for allocation during 2024/25.

Following presentation of the report, Councillor Hooper asked whether, as the grant scheme had not received enough applications to award all of the funds available this year, there were any additional work that could be done to aim to increase the number of applications being made to the trust. In response, the Operational Manager advised that both the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff Councils could look to increase promotion of the grant scheme through their respective communications teams to build awareness of the scheme, and that communications regarding the grant opportunity could be shared with Town and Community Councils (TCCs). The Chair added that this information could also be shared with Glamorgan Voluntary Services and Cardiff Third Sector Council. Committee Members subsequently noted that many of them had made their local churches and TCCs aware of the scheme.

With no further comments or queries, Committee subsequently:

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the applications for grant assistance, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved.

(2) T H A T work be undertaken to raise awareness of the grant scheme and the process for applying, with a view to increasing applications. This would ideally include promotion via the communications channels of both the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff Councils, and also include forwarding information on the scheme to the Vale of Glamorgan's Community Liaison Committee, to Town and Community Councils via their clerks, and to third sector organisations such as Glamorgan Voluntary Services and Cardiff Third Sector Council.

#### Reason for decisions

(1&2) In furtherance of the objectives of the Trust.

#### PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT COSTS WELSH CHURCH ACTS (DCR) –

The report was presented by the Operational Manager for Accountancy, who advised that a saving had been identified by the Vale of Glamorgan Council as part of the 2024/25 budget in respect of charging the cost of staff support by officers of the Council to the Charity.

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The charges were based on an hourly rate of direct staff costs (including on costs) for Property and Accountancy staff and the standard consolidated rate for legal staff which included research time etc.

The Charity SORP made provision for these types of charges as set out in the report.

Whilst the original saving sum outlined was approximately £10k it was felt that a sum of £5k was more appropriate based on the time allocations set out in the report.

Following presentation of the report, and as Members did not require any additional information than that set out in the report and presentation, the Operational Manager, and all other officers who were relevant to the proposals in the report, left the meeting before any further debate took place.

Members of the Committee expressed their view that the report was clear and straightforward, and that the proposals to recharge officer time to the fund represented good value for money regarding the assistance these officers provided to the Committee (and Trustees of the fund).

Having fully considered the matter, Committee subsequently:

RESOLVED – T H A T the proposed 2024/25 charges and indicative 2025/26 charges set as out in the report, be approved.

#### Reason for decision

To ensure the support provided to Welsh Church Act Trust was sustainable and the Council was appropriately reimbursed.