

1. Meeting the Need in a Period of Uncertainty in the Housing Market

In 2009 the Society reported on how we were meeting the challenges presented by the uncertainty of the housing market. A plan had been agreed by the board to ensure that best use was made of available resources; £2.5 million had been borrowed from the Auxiliary Fund and Methodist Chapel Aid; and new applicants had been encouraged to identify a property from the list of those vacant rather than looking for one to purchase on the open market.

We are pleased to report that the steps taken during that year have meant that not only were 21 new retirees requiring assistance provided with a home, but five tenants transferred to accommodation more suitable for their needs. Fifteen existing and two bequested properties were refurbished thereby significantly reducing the number of purchases required. This has enabled the Society to repay £2 million of the £2.5 million borrowed.

The policies adopted with regard to the use of existing properties rather than purchase has been continued and we are working with those retiring in 2010 to identify properties and managing the resulting refurbishment programme.

This change in the way homes are provided has required new retirees to accept that their choice is limited and be more flexible in the location of their retirement home. We wish to record our thanks to all those who retired in 2009 and to those retiring in 2010 for the gracious way in which they worked with us, showing a willingness to consider areas they had not originally thought, recognising the challenges the Society was facing and being so positive about the home provided.

2. Looking to the Future

Throughout the celebrations for the Society's 60th anniversary in 2007/8 emphasis was placed on planning for the future to ensure that assistance will be available to those Methodist ministers and deacons retiring in the future who do not have the resources to provide for themselves.

We have contacted all ministers and deacons retiring between 2011 and 2016 asking them to confirm their retirement date, if they are able, and to indicate whether they are likely to need assistance. The replies are currently being analysed and will be considered by the board in May 2010 when work begins on producing the 5 year plan from 2011–2016.

The Society's charitable rules state that we house retired ministers, deacons and their widow(er)s upon terms appropriate to their means. Applicants with less than £50,000 are not expected to contribute towards the cost of their home whilst those with in excess of this amount are expected to contribute through our shared equity scheme. Ministers with over £185,000 are expected to provide their own housing. In the financial year 2009/10 the Society's maximum contribution is £145,000.

The Society received donations from the Fund for the Support of Presbyters and Deacons and Methodist Insurance PLC together with donations from individuals, churches and circuits. No grants are received from statutory bodies and the financial and prayerful support of the Methodist family is therefore greatly appreciated by all those involved in the Society.

3. Governance

The Society's rules require board members to step down after a six year period. As a result two vacancies arose in February 2010. Following interviews Revd Alan Ashton and Deacon Karen McBride were appointed to the board.

*****RESOLUTION**

57/1. The Conference received the Report.