

Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) and the Church of Scotland

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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	Decision
Draft Resolution	52/1. The Council agrees the full and permanent membership of the Church of Scotland in the Joint Public Issues Team.
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	The composition of JPIT reverts back to consisting of the three original members.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	Informing the Council of the outcome of a year-long trial period where the Church of Scotland has been part of the Joint Public Issues Team, and inviting the Council to formalise this working arrangement.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of one year pilot • Findings of review very positive • Some operational and strategic challenges • Recommendation
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	SRC/15/5 – Proposal for one year pilot SRC/16/3 – Findings of pilot
Consultations	Strategy and Resources Committee

Summary of Impact

Financial	Minimal additional travel expenses
Personnel	JPIT would gain a team member from the Church of Scotland
Wider Connexional	Would formalise ecumenical relations and strengthen the impact of public issue work
External (eg ecumenical)	Strengthens the ability to work with ecumenical partners.

JPIT and the Church of Scotland

Introduction

1. In February 2015 the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC) approved a one-year pilot membership of the Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) where the Church of Scotland would be a JPIT member. The pilot commenced in March 2015 and an interim review was carried out in autumn 2015.
2. In February 2016, the SRC was informed that the final review had taken place and that following its meeting on 14 January 2016, the JPIT Strategy and Policy Group (SPG) was recommending to its four members (Baptist Union of Great Britain, Methodist Church, United Reformed Church and Church of Scotland) that the Church of Scotland become a permanent member of JPIT.
3. The purpose of this paper is to inform the Council that the SRC agreed to endorse the full and permanent membership of the Church of Scotland in the Joint Public Issues Team, and this is now presented to the Council for approval.

Review Process

4. The interim review was conducted using a questionnaire that was sent to JPIT team members, members of the SPG and denominational representatives. Its findings were presented to the SPG in December 2015. Whilst raising a number of areas where improvements could be made (primarily around communications), the interim review was overwhelmingly positive. At this point the SPG resolved to carry out the final review internally with a view to bringing a positive recommendation to the different denominations by early February 2016.

The Value of the Relationship

5. In carrying out both the interim review and the final review, a significant number of ways in which the pilot had enriched the overall work of JPIT were identified, including:
 - An increased and more diverse expertise in both the JPIT team and the SPG which makes JPIT more effective,
 - A louder and wider reaching public voice,
 - A greater capacity to both respond to issues arising in the public square as well as tackling longer term projects,
 - The recognition of a stronger relationship and understanding of the Scottish Government as well as a stronger link to one of the main parties in Westminster,
 - A deeper pool of creativity from both the staff and volunteers connected to the denominations,
 - A greater wisdom drawn from the history and experience of an increased number of participants at the table,

- Links and learning to the Poverty Truth Commission – especially the ongoing efforts to ensure that work done on an issue always involves those who are most affected by it,
- A step on the journey to a true embodiment for those churches who exist in three nations,
- The increased partnership ensures the work and focus is less London and Westminster-centric,
- A broader ecclesiology within the partnership means that some of the more traditional differences are less marked and helps us all see things from different perspectives,
- Recognises the importance of Scottish issues as being ones which affect the whole of Great Britain.

Operational and Strategic Challenges

6. Any new piece of work will inevitably bring its challenges and a number of these have been identified during the review process. These have been separated between operational and strategic.
7. Operationally, the challenges relate primarily to how the team can meet ‘virtually’ most effectively and ensuring increased knowledge of the different operational patterns of the denominations involved. Responsibility for addressing these issues will rest with the JPIT Team (and its Team Leader).
8. Strategically, a number of issues have also been highlighted, including: the different ways in which the partners of the four denominations relate to JPIT; the requirement for a new Service Level Agreement; a potentially increased role for SPG in long term planning; and how the JPIT members (and other denominations) work most effectively in Scotland. Responsibility for addressing these issues will rest with the SPG.

Recommendation

9. It is recommended that the Council agrees that the Church of Scotland, through its Church and Society Council, become a full and permanent member of the Joint Public Issues Team. This will see the widening of both the JPIT staff team and the SPG to incorporate the Church of Scotland.

*****RESOLUTION**

- 52/1. The Council agrees the full and permanent membership of the Church of Scotland in the Joint Public Issues Team.**