

## Letting residential property for Afghan Refugees under Model Trust 20

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<b>Status of Paper</b>	Final
<b>Action Required</b>	Decision
<b>Resolutions</b>	83/1. The Council receives the report. 83/2. The Council agrees that Managing Trustees of Local Church, Circuit and District Model Trust property may grant assured shorthold tenancy agreements of residential Model Trust property at below the market rent where the properties are to be occupied under the “Afghan Citizens’ Resettlement Scheme”, without the need for the consent of the Council under Model Trust 20 in each individual case.

1. The Council is asked for a decision regarding lettings of Methodist-owned residential property to rehouse refugees from Afghanistan where the agreed rent is less than market rent.
2. When letting residential Model Trust property Managing Trustees must ask their letting agent to confirm the market rent of the property. If the agreed rent is below this figure, the Managing Trustees must obtain the Council’s approval under Model Trust 20.
3. In October 2015 [\[MC/15/91\]](#) the Council agreed to the principle of letting residential Methodist properties, including manses, at an undervalue under Model Trust 20 where such lettings will further the charitable objectives of a Circuit or Local Church.
4. In 2017 the Conference accepted a Memorial (M19) which removed the need for specific Council approval when letting any residential Model Trust property, including manses, at an undervalue under the government’s “Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement” programme (VPR). This assisted Local Churches, Circuits and Districts seeking to provide hospitality and support for refugees and asylum seekers. The full memorial and its reply are set out at Appendix A below.
5. In August 2021, in response to the crisis which is currently unfolding in Afghanistan, the government announced a similar programme to the VPR programme, namely the “Afghan Citizens’ Resettlement Scheme” (ACR) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-citizens-resettlement-scheme>).
6. TMCP have recently received a number of queries from Managing Trustees asking about the rehoming of Afghan refugees under this ACR scheme.
7. Therefore, in a similar way as was permitted by the Conference in 2017 for the government’s VPR programme, the Council is asked to agree that Local Churches, Circuits and Districts be permitted to grant assured shorthold tenancy agreements of residential Model Trust property at below the market rent where the properties are to be occupied under the ACR scheme, without having to seek the Council’s approval to every letting under Model Trust 20.

### \*\*\*RESOLUTION

**83/1. The Council receives the report.**

**83/2. The Council agrees that Managing Trustees of Local Church, Circuit and District Model Trust property may grant assured shorthold tenancy agreements of residential Model Trust property at below the market rent where the properties are to be occupied under the “Afghan Citizens’ Resettlement Scheme”, without the need for the consent of the Council under Model Trust 20 in each individual case.**

## APPENDIX A

### **M19 (2017) Leasing a manse to house Syrian refugees**

The East Solent and Downs (26/7) Circuit Meeting (Present: 51; Voting: unanimous) draws the Conference's attention to the complex and lengthy process for leasing a vacant manse to the local authority for the purpose of housing Syrian refugees under the government's Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) programme.

The Circuit Meeting asks the Conference:

- (a) to agree that Circuits be allowed to lease manses to local authorities under the Syrian VPR programme at below market rent without seeking further approval from the Methodist Council;
- (b) to request TMCP to produce, as a matter of some urgency, a pack which provides step by step guidance to Circuits on leasing manses to local authorities for the purpose of housing Syrian refugees under the Syrian VPR programme. The pack to include an outline of the likely process from start to finish and also to include appropriate model leases.

### **Reply**

The Conference thanks the East Solent and Downs Circuit Meeting for its memorial and for highlighting the continuing plight of Syrian refugees. The Conference gives thanks for individuals, Local Churches, Circuits and Districts seeking to provide hospitality and support for refugees and asylum seekers.

The Conference notes that since the Methodist Council agreed in October 2015 to the principle of letting residential properties including manses on an assured shorthold tenancy at an undervalue where such lettings will further the charitable objectives of a Circuit or Local Church, it has become clear that the rents involved are often not far below market rent.

The Conference accepts the principles of the memorial, and in doing so:

- directs the Council to amend its policy under Model Trust 20 to permit a Church Council, Circuit Meeting or District Policy Committee to grant assured shorthold tenancy agreements at below the market rent where the properties are to be occupied under the VPR programme without the need for the consent of the Council;
- directs the Council to draft guidance on this matter and to liaise with TMCP regarding the production of precedent leases.