



The
United
Reformed
Church

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH - WESSEX SYNOD
Property Handbook 061
PROVISION AND MAINTENANCE OF MANSES

Ministers, Pastorate Property Representatives and (where applicable) Interim Moderators must be fully familiar with the content of this section of the Handbook.

At the March 2001 Synod, a new policy for the provision of manses in the Wessex Synod was approved. The prime purpose of the policy is to ensure that all stipendiary ministers in the synod are properly housed. The relevant parts of the policy are set out below. They address the standard of accommodation required and the financial responsibilities for providing and maintaining a manse. The matter of vacant manses is covered in another section of the Handbook (➤ 063). The new policy does not apply to manses which are subject to a Sharing Agreement.

The responsibilities of the pastorate for the care of manses and the ongoing financial responsibilities for the day-to-day expenses of the manse are covered in the "Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration", available via the 'Key Documents' page of URC Wessex web-site (www.urcwessex.org.uk).

The manse is provided for exclusive occupation by the minister and spouse and their immediate families. Permission needs to be given for any request by the minister for medium or long term occupation by other persons. This request must first be reported to the relevant Property Officer who will refer it to the appropriate Synod officers and the Wessex Trust having consulted with the local pastorate.

Pastorate Property Representatives

The pastorate is to appoint Property Representative(s) to liaise with the minister in respect of the ongoing maintenance of the manse. The Synod Property Officer will act to provide back-up support and advice where this is needed.

Standard of Accommodation

The standard accommodation and facilities for a replacement manse are as follows:

- Separate lounge, dining room and ground floor study. ***The study should have minimum floor area of 7 m² and have provision for telephone/broadband access.*** Dining facilities in the kitchen are desirable but not essential. Four bedrooms of which two should be double. Ground floor W.C (***not accessed via family rooms***)
- Sound construction, good thermal insulation, full central heating and modern kitchen and bathroom. ***Bathroom to include a plumbed in shower if there is not a separate showerroom;***
- Safety and security facilities in accordance with the Synod guidelines as set out below;
- Medium sized garden, garage with/and storage, visitor parking and access for those with physical disabilities;
- Convenient (typically walking) distance from the church(es), but not on the same site as the church or next door to it;
- ***Convenient distance from local transport, services and schools;***
- The location and the property should be such as to make resale straightforward.

The agreed standard could be relaxed in exceptional circumstances where it could not be satisfied by property within the community/ies in which the pastorate is set, e.g. on a new housing estate. It may not always be possible to replace manses which are on church sites and which do not meet the other elements of the agreed standard. It is intended that manses should be

comfortable and easy and inexpensive to maintain and, for these reasons, older property is unlikely to prove acceptable.

At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that property which exceeds the above standard is unlikely to be deemed appropriate as it represents a standard of accommodation which is in excess of what is required and much in excess of what most people in the congregation are accustomed to. The Synod Property Officer will set a target maximum cost figure in the light of local property values and in consultation with the pastorate.

Safety and Security

At the time that a manse is being prepared for occupation by an incoming stipendiary minister, the following requirements will be met:

- five lever locks to all external doors;
- door restraint chains on external doors at which visitors call;
- solid doors to have a spy hole fitted;
- patio doors and French windows to be secured to deter unauthorised entry;
- all windows to have appropriate locks;
- smoke detectors at each floor level (preferably two per floor);
- other appropriate fire protection equipment such as extinguishers and blankets;
- inspection and servicing of gas appliances and a Landlord's certificate issued;
- **electronic** carbon monoxide detectors fitted in rooms where gas appliances are used;
- electrical wiring inspection and appropriate certificate issued for property more than twenty years old;
- motion detector courtesy/security lights fitted at the front elevation and to other vulnerable elevations;

The following additional facilities are desirable and should be provided as and when appropriate:

- UPVC doors to have three hinges and three bolts;

- electrical circuits protected by an earth leakage trip, preferably fitted as a consumer unit adjacent to the incoming mains supply;
- at least one window on each of the upper floors fitted and identified as an emergency escape;
- lower half of the front door **and any adjacent glazed panelling** to be obscured so that mail is not seen from the outside;
- all windows above ground floor to be fitted with opening restrictors to prevent children falling from heights;
- in cases of particular vulnerability, an internal alarm system to be fitted **and maintained** in accordance with an agreed specification.

Improvements and Replacements

Where existing manses require modernising or extending in order to meet the agreed standard, on the recommendation of the Synod Property Officer, the Wessex Trust will be responsible for the cost of:

- Modernisation and replacement of kitchen and bathroom equipment
- Central heating boiler replacement
- **Major** electrical rewiring
- Installation **or improvement** of roof insulation, **cavity wall insulation**, double-glazing and security facilities
- Major roof and other structural repairs not covered by insurance
- Extensions.

The full cost of purchasing new or replacement manses and, if required, of bringing them up to the agreed standard, will be borne by the Wessex Trust. The Wessex Trust will also be responsible for the cost of provision and replacement of carpets, curtains and cookers. Where the synod initiates a house move within the province as a result of this policy all expenses incurred in the relocation, including removal costs, will be met by the Wessex Trust.

No major improvements to, or replacement of a manse, will be undertaken against the wishes of a minister who is the current occupier. Care will be taken to minimise the tax liability for a minister occupying a manse which may arise from implementing some improvements.

The Synod Property Officer, in consultation with the local pastorate, has the responsibility to determine the acceptability of a property as a manse.

The detailed procedure for the purchase or replacement of a manse is set out in another section of the Handbook (➤ 062).

Periodic Inspections

In order to preserve the fabric of the manse and to ensure that the minister and family are content with the decoration and facilities an annual inspection shall be carried out. This shall be conducted by the Pastorate Representative(s) in liaison with the minister. A 'check list' form (see attached) shall be used to ensure all major aspects are covered. All work highlighted for action shall be completed within the timescales stated on the form, unless there are practical reasons for a delay, e.g. leave external painting until summer months. Any work considered to be of an emergency nature is to be highlighted on the form. The Synod Property Officer is to be informed by the Pastorate Representative(s) or minister if the inspection has not been carried out within one calendar month of its due date and an agreed date has not been arranged. Similarly, the Synod Property Officer is to be informed by the minister if any specified work has not been carried out within the agreed timescale. The Wessex Trust may subsequently arrange completion of the work and invoice the pastorate accordingly.

Notwithstanding the above, the minister has a duty to report to the Pastorate Representative(s), at any time, if there are apparent problems which require further investigation.

Every two years the annual inspection shall be carried out with the Synod Property Officer present, who will then report back to the Synod Finance Committee. As well as reviewing the overall fabric of the manse the report will also address the manse's ongoing suitability in respect of compliance with the latest Manse Policy and the continuing suitability of its location in the pastorate and to local facilities. This review needs to be conducted in a sympathetic way and may require separate discussions with the minister and pastorate representatives.

Redundant Manses

The provisions of Part 2 of Schedule 2 to the URC Act of Parliament apply:

- The decision of the Church Meeting(s) is normally required in order to enable the Synod to give the Wessex Trust the power of sale.
- Redundant manses will be sold or, if the manse is integral to a church site, management transferred to the Wessex Trust. The capital and income arising to be added to the General Funds ***of the Wessex Trust.***

Pastorate Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the pastorate while the manse is occupied by a minister, ***or until it is suitable for letting during a vacancy,*** comprise:

- Payment of Council tax, water rates and ***building*** insurance. ***(During a vacancy the Wessex Trust will pay the insurance premium from the first renewal date.)*** The Synod will require adequate insurance cover;
- Payment for an annual gas safety inspection (➤ 064);
- Internal and external decoration;
- Repairs, except major structural repairs covered by the Wessex Trust and not covered by insurance;

The pastorate remains responsible for the upkeep and tidiness of the property and garden after a minister leaves up until the responsibility of letting is passed to the Wessex Trust.

To help ensure that manses are properly maintained the pastorate can claim up to £500 per ***calendar*** year for the expenses of repairs and maintenance against invoices. This £500 allowance can be rolled forward ***one year*** if not used in a given year. ***Claims will only be accepted when made within the calendar year of expenditure or the following calendar year. Provision of the allowance is subject to confirmation that the annual inspection and gas safety check (the cost of which is claimable within the £500 limit) have been carried out.***

Housing Allowances

If it has been agreed that the minister will live in his or her own property, rather than a manse, then a Housing Allowance in accordance with the

terms of the Plan for Partnership will be paid to the minister by the Wessex Trust. The net payment will be grossed up to allow for Income Tax and National Insurance and for tax reasons must be paid by the pastorate via the URC central payroll system. The Wessex Trust will fully reimburse the pastorate in advance, thus ensuring there are no cash flow difficulties. The manse (if there is one) will then normally be let under the same terms as during a ministerial vacancy.

Occupancy by a new minister

At present, and for the foreseeable future, it is anticipated that there will be an appreciable length of time between the leaving of a minister and the calling of a new minister. In general, during this vacancy the manse is likely to be let and these aspects are covered elsewhere in this Handbook (➤063). (Note: if there is not already an existing manse when a new minister is called then the procedures as detailed in section ➤062 of this Handbook apply.)

In preparing the Pastorate Profile for review by potential new ministers the pastorate must include significant detail of the manse. This shall include its location relative to the pastorate and local transport and services, preferably with a simple map. A number of photographs of the exterior and interior shall also be provided. (Availability of a video 'walk-through' on DVD could be considered to send to ministers who request an introduction to the vacancy.)

It is important that the Interim Moderator has visited the manse and has agreed the details provided in the Profile so that he/she can answer any questions raised by the prospective minister or Moderator.

If the manse is compliant with the Synod Manse Policy then it would not be expected to be changed for the incoming minister. This aspect must be clearly stated in the Profile.

As a supplement, this section of the Handbook could be included in the Profile so that prospective ministers are aware from the outset of their, and the pastorate's, responsibilities.

If the manse has been let during the vacancy then the Wessex Trust is responsible for ensuring the satisfactory condition of the property at the

end of the Tenancy. The pastorate will become responsible for all items listed under 'Pastorate Responsibilities' from the date that the manse is occupied by the incoming minister, except that they will not be required to pay the building insurance premium until the next renewal date.

Manses used for Part-time Stipendiary Ministers

The policy for housing part-time stipendiary ministers will be no different from that for full-time stipendiary ministers except that ***the pastorate and the minister shall share the costs of Council Tax and Water/Sewage charges in the proportion of the ministry provided.***

Manses used for Housing Non-Stipendiary Ministers

It would not be normal for housing to be provided for a non-stipendiary minister. Where there is a vacant manse which might be used to house a non-stipendiary minister, the Synod could agree to instruct the Wessex Trust to let the property to the minister at a commercial rent should the Church Meeting(s) request it.

Housing for Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs)

The policy for housing CRCWs will be generally as for stipendiary ministers, except that the standard of accommodation provided will not be required to conform to the specification given above, but will be appropriate to the task. ***In general within all the above sections, reference to 'minister' shall also imply 'CRCW'.***

Housing for Synod Employees

The policy for housing stipendiary employees of the Synod who are provided with accommodation will be generally as for stipendiary ministers, except that the standard of accommodation provided will not be required to conform to the specification given above, but will be appropriate to the task. Annual inspections will be carried out as for manses except that the Synod Property Officer will carry out all these inspections.

Approved November 2008.

MANSE POLICY – INSPECTION REPORT

Manse Address Date of Inspection
 Inspected by Occupied (yes/no)

SUBJECT OF INSPECTION	O K	Needs further investig ation	Repair/r emedy needed	Details and comments, including implementation date
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EXTERNAL

1	Boundary fences/walls in good state of repair/decoration			
2	Gates in good working order and good state of decoration			
3	Paths, driveways, paving etc in good order and safe			
4	Garden in good order			
5	Trees and shrubs under control			
6	Garden shed and garage in good order			
7	Roof coverings in good state of repair (no leaks)			
8	Chimneys & flashings intact – no lead missing			
9	General condition of walls			
10	No ivy or other vegetation growing on walls			
11	Pointing to walls satisfactory			
12	Damp proof course clear to 2 courses of bricks			
13	Rainwater goods intact (no reported leaks) and clear			
14	Drains and manhole covers in good order			
15	Decorative condition satisfactory			
16	All timber free of signs of infestation			

INTERNAL

17	Floor coverings in good order			
18	Ceilings undistorted and free from leak stains			
19	Walls in good order – no excessive cracks			

20	Decorative condition satisfactory			
21	Door & window locks satisfactory			
22	Windows free of cracks & in good order			
23	Sanitary fittings free from cracks and generally sound			
24	Internal plumbing in good order			
25	Central heating operating effectively and efficiently			
26	Electrical appliances operating effectively			

SAFETY

27	Evidence of gas safety check within past year			
28	Carbon monoxide detector(s) functional			
29	Smoke detectors and fire protection equipment functional			
30	Date of most recent electrical inspection			
31	Electrical appliances connected safely			
32	No evidence of asbestos			
33	Loft space accessible and uncluttered			
34	No rubbish accumulating in any part of the property			

OTHER COMMENTS

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