

**VACANT MANSES & LETTING**

Manses are held in trust for the purpose of housing URC "church workers" under the terms of the URC Act. Part II of Schedule 2 of the Act sets out the trust provisions. Clause 5 relates to the sale of redundant manses (➤ 061) and Clause 2(e) to letting. At the March 2001 Synod, a new policy for the provision of manses in the Wessex Synod was approved. The aspects of that policy which relate to manses that are not redundant, but not currently required to house a minister, are set out below.

Policy

Subject to the resolution of the Church Meeting(s), the Synod will authorise the trustees to let the manse. During the period of letting, all the costs of the manse, including insurance and any Council Tax, will be met from the rental income. Any balance of rental income will be paid to Synod General Funds.

Procedure

It is illegal for a local church or its officers to enter into a Tenancy Agreement for a manse. Only the trustees of the property have that power and they must fulfil all the requirements of the Charities Act 1993 (➤ 621).

The trustees will employ a managing agent to oversee all aspects of the tenancy, including finding a tenant, collecting the rent and arranging for necessary repairs. The Charities Act 1993 (➤ 621) requires the trustees to seek advice on the level of rent that is the best that may be obtained in the open market. The agent will take references before recommending tenants.

The trustees will ensure compliance with the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1994 and that furnishings and electrical appliances comply with the relevant safety regulations.

Local Church Responsibilities

The local church must advise the Insurers of the manse that it is let. The trustees will also rely on some help from the local church in providing access to the property and furnishing any relevant information about the manse to the letting agent.

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Termination

Bearing in mind any need for re-decoration or other works, the trustees should be advised as soon as possible of the likely date at which vacant possession of the manse will be required. Two clear month's notice has to be given to the tenant to quit.