Harrow and Hillingdon Circuit

Circuit Manse Policy

Introduction

The circuit currently owns 9 manses. Maintenance of the manses is managed by a Circuit Property Manager (CPM), assisted by Local Manse Stewards (LMS) (see job description appendix 1).

The CPM is responsible for the planning, authorisation, scheduling and execution of most works within Manses. The exception to this is that a Minister can arrange "small job works", where the cost is under £100. Small job works should be of an urgent nature, and the CPM should still be advised at the earliest possible date.

The CPM is responsible for monitoring the budget for the maintenance of each property and consequently must have visibility of all expenditure.

1. Maintenance and manse expenditure

1.1. The circuit provides manses in accordance with the requirements laid out in CPD Book VII Part 2 'Guidance on Provision of Adequate Accommodation for Manses' and S.O. 533.

1.2. The circuit aims to maintain those manses in a good condition in line with the latest Methodist 'Guidelines for Manses' (on the Methodist Church website) both for the benefit of the occupants and to safeguard the asset value for the circuit. To this end repairs, maintenance and modifications are made as and when necessary.

1.3. The following will be taken into advisement when considering expenditure on manses:

1.3.1. Manses need to be kept in an adequate state of repair, so that any defects in the building fabric are dealt with promptly.

1.3.2. A higher priority needs to be given to defects relating to damp penetration, either from roof defects, or internal water leaks. Also, to defects relating to timber deterioration.

1.3.3. Internal decoration is dealt with during a change in minister. The exception is usually where decoration is required as a result of another event occurring e.g. damage caused by a roof leak.

1.3.4. Kitchens and bathrooms need to be upgraded when required. The timing of these items tends to depend on a number of factors. The standard of the upgrade needs to reflect on the overall value of the property.

1.3.5. A roofing check needs to be carried out every 8 - 10 years. This would be a detailed check on all the roof components.

1.3.6. A test of the electrical wiring should be carried out every 5 years.

1.3.7. Annual servicing is required for the heating system, and the security system.

1.3.8. Windows and external doors need to be regularly checked for defects.

1.3.9. External decoration needs to be carried out every 7 – 8 years. This needs to be a thorough process treating all paintwork, and carrying out any repairs that may be needed.

1.3.10. Carpets and floor coverings need to be checked at every minister change.

1.3.11. Boundary fences need to be regularly checked and kept in good repair.

1.3.12. The maintenance of the garden is the responsibility of the minister (see 'Gardens' section below), but circuit funds can be provided to carry out specific improvements to make maintenance easier. This would include trimming trees and shrubs, grassing over planting beds, and covering planting beds with shingle.

1.3.13. Curtains and lampshades are provided by the circuit, and these should be regularly monitored.

1.3.14. Study furniture is provided by the circuit and this needs to be checked over at minister change.

1.3.15. The lawnmower is provided by the circuit, and this needs to be regularly checked.

1.3.16. Records need to be kept of the communications systems available at each manse, and specific arrangements made at each minister change.

1.3.17. All external paving needs to be regularly checked.

1.3.18. An annual inspection of each manse is carried out at the end of the Summer. From this visit a list is prepared of all the jobs that need doing. These are priced. If the total for all the manses is less than the year`s budget, they can all be done. If not, some may have to be delayed until a later year.

1.4. The circuit provides an overall annual budget for expenditure on manses occupied by a members of circuit staff. This will be spread as evenly as possible across these manses but there is flexibility where some manses might require more work than others in any given year. The proportion for each manse for work to be carried out is at the CPM's discretion in consultation with, and the agreement of, the Circuit Resources Network (CRN).

1.5. A separate budget will be set for the maintenance and repair of spare manses entered into letting agreements.

1.6. The manse maintenance budget will be increased annually in line with inflation in accordance with the CPI index.

1.7. Additional major works deemed essential to maintain the condition of the manses can be paid for from the Property Maintenance Fund (a reserve fund set up to fund major building works such as a roof replacement).

1.8. An additional allowance will be allowed for increased costs incurred at minister change.

1.9. Minor works, or small jobs, up to an agreed sum may be carried out by ministers in manses:

Small Job Scheme

1. The basis of this scheme is to enable ministers to arrange for small jobs to be carried out without having to contact the manse steward or the CPM.
2. Small jobs work should be undertaken when it is deemed to be that the normal process cannot be followed and the work is of a nature that it must be expedited quickly.
3. Small jobs are defined as those costing less then £100, although ministers are asked to treat this limit with some flexibility.
4. Ideally, the invoice would be sent to the CPM for authorisation and payment. If the contractor is not happy with this, the minister will need to pay the invoice. It should then be sent to the CPM, and arrangements will be made to reimburse the minister. Please do not include this payment in your normal monthly expense claims – it needs to be treated separately.
5. Please let the CPM know if you have any queries.

2. Letter of Understanding

Each minister in the circuit will receive a letter of understanding that will include details of the rights and responsibilities of a manse occupant and of the circuit.

The Circuit, with the support of the District Manses Committee, is committed to uphold the standards of good practice set out in the 'Charter for Outgoing and Incoming Ministers' and 'Guidelines on

Provision of Adequate Accommodation for Manses' (CPD Volume 2 2022) and in S.O. 803. The Circuit also upholds the principle that the care of the manses is a matter of partnership and cooperation between the occupant(s) and the Circuit Stewards. Circuit Stewards must have whatever access is necessary, whilst respecting the privacy of the manse, to ensure that the property is kept in good repair. It is the responsibility of the occupant(s) to ensure that the manse is kept clean and presentable. An annual review and ongoing programme of maintenance and redecoration will be sustained by the Circuit.

When the occupant(s) vacate the manse, the guidance contained in the publication of CPD at the time should be followed.

In the event an outgoing minister does not vacate the manse in the condition specified in the above articles, the circuit will intervene to complete the work. All costs involved in this intervention will be presented to the CLT.

The CLT will consider the condition the manse was left in, and the work needed to bring it to an acceptable condition. It will also consider any mitigating circumstances that prevented the minister completing the cleaning and outgoing tasks.

The CLT will decide where responsibility lies. If they consider the minister is wholly or partly responsible the CLT will seek reimbursement.

3. Gardens

In principle it is the view of the CLT that it is the clear responsibility of the occupants of Circuit manses not only to keep their manse clean and presentable but also to maintain the manse garden, throughout the period of occupation, keeping it properly cultivated and weeded, the hedges cut and the grass mown regularly during the growing season and all ditches and drains free from obstruction. Household and garden waste should be regularly removed and garden maintenance should not be left until shortly before a changeover.

Exceptional circumstances will occasionally arise in which, for various reasons, occupants are unable to fulfil this basic obligation - in which case arrangements should be negotiated with the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) on behalf of the Circuit Meeting, through an initial contact with the CPM.

Examples of exceptional circumstances, with regards to garden maintenance, that may require professional or other help include:

- tree felling, lopping, pruning or hedge-cutting/trimming at a height for which a ladder is reasonably required unless necessitated by the occupant's failure to trim or prune regularly;
- replacing boundary walls and fences;
- removal of ivy, wisteria or other climbers in order to maintain garden walls and fences or manse walls and gutters and drainpipes in good repair and condition;
- any other garden maintenance work agreed by the occupants with the CLT, through the CPM.

Note that:

- the decision by an occupant to employ someone to carry out garden maintenance shall not of itself entitle the occupant to be reimbursed by the Circuit out of Methodist Church funds.
- In any case where re-imbursement is sought the occupant shall obtain the CLT's agreement through the CPM to the nature of the work and the charge or hourly rate to be incurred.

4. Upgrade and replacement

The circuit will keep under review the number, suitability and location of manses and will replace manses when deemed necessary for the work of the circuit and the wellbeing of the circuit staff.

5. Use of surplus manses

5.1. The recommendation to rent or sell any manses not occupied by ministerial staff will be reviewed regularly and based on a combination of factors affecting future finances and future ministerial deployment. These factors will include, but not be restricted to, the most recent versions of the Circuit Mission Strategy and Manse Review.

5.2. The letting of manses will be kept under review by the Circuit Leadership Team.

6. Review and Report

6.1. This policy will be reviewed annually.

6.2. The Circuit Leadership Team will report on manse matters to the Circuit Meeting as appropriate.

Signed: …….. Dated: *10th September 2025*

Position: Superintendent Minister

Appendix 1 – Job Definition for a Local Manse Steward

HARROW AND HILLINGDON CIRCUIT

Local Manse Steward Job Description

- The role of the Local Manse Steward (LMS) is to assist the Circuit Property Manager (CPM) with maintaining a single manse; which could include arrangements with contractors to carry out various works that are required and visits while contractors were on site.

- The LMS would work closely with the CPM. Regular meetings/conversations will ensure that all necessary assistance can be given for preparing schedules of work, and contacting contractors.

- The LMS will work with the CPM to carry out an annual visit, usually in Aug/Sep. this visit will include identifying any work that needs to be carried out; completing the check list and risk assessment for the Annual Property Return. Guidance and instructions will be provided by the CPM prior to the visit.

- It would be helpful if LMS could make periodic visits to the manse to identify any maintenance and repairs required.

- The LMS would be the first call if there is a property emergency at the manse. If the issue could not be resolved, and action had to be taken immediately, then the LMS would have the authority to arrange emergency work to be carried out up to the cost of £250. The LMS would notifying and keep the CPM appraised of the situation. Any work in excess of £250 would need authorisation by the CPM.

- A suggested list of contractors, with contact information, would be provided by the CPM.

- Circuit agreed procedures and policies would be provided including easy to follow instructions for work & payment authorisation.