

Manse Policy

The prime purpose of the Manse Policy, originally adopted at the March 2001 Synod, is to ensure that all stipendiary ministers in Wessex Synod are properly housed. This policy does not apply to manses which are subject to a Sharing Agreement or not held on the Statutory Trusts.

The responsibilities of the pastorate for the care of manses and the ongoing financial responsibilities for the day-to-day expenses of the manse during a period of ministry are covered in the URC's 'Plan for Partnership in Ministerial Remuneration', available for download from the URC website, currently at: <http://www.urc.org.uk/images/Finance/Plan-for-Partnership.pdf>

Ministers, Pastorate Property Representatives and (where applicable) Interim Moderators should familiarise themselves with the relevant parts of this policy.

The historical minute references detailed throughout the policy in the style (##F##) refer to the applicable minutes of the former Synod Finance and Property Committee.

1. THE PROVISION OF MANSES

The manse is provided for exclusive occupation by the minister and their spouse/partner and their immediate families for the duration of the period of ministry. The minister is expected to exercise responsible stewardship of the property. He/she is responsible for repairing any uninsured damage caused to the property, other than normal wear and tear, and for returning the property in the condition in which it was received when they leave the property. The Wessex Trust will use an independent inventory service to protect both parties' interests in this regard.

Permission needs to be given by the Wessex Trust for any request by the minister for medium or long term occupation by other persons. The minister/spouse/partner and any other person must not run a business from the manse unless specifically agreed in writing by the Wessex Trust. Such requests must first be reported to the relevant Synod Property Officer who will refer it to the appropriate Synod Officers and the Wessex Trust having consulted with the local pastorate.

1.1. 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 a minimum floor area of 7 m² and have provision for telephone/broadband access. Dining facilities in the kitchen are desirable but not essential. Ground floor W.C. All rooms on the ground floor should ideally be accessed off a common hallway to minimise the impact on the wider family of any visitors who call on the minister at home. Four bedrooms of which two should be double, one with an en-suite bathroom;
- Sound construction, good thermal insulation (including double-glazing and loft insulation), full central heating (as secondary/supplementary heating will not be provided O2F93) and modern kitchen and bathroom. Bathroom to include a shower (not off the bath taps) if

there is not a separate shower room and adequate extractor ventilation in both if applicable;

- Safety and security facilities in accordance with the Synod guidelines as set out in Section 1;
- Medium sized low maintenance garden, garage with/and storage, hardstanding parking and 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; and
- The location and the property should be such as to make resale straightforward.

The agreed standard can be relaxed in exceptional circumstances where it cannot be satisfied by property within the community/ies in which the pastorate is set, e.g. on a new housing estate. Depending on the timescale within which the manse is to be purchased and made available to a minister, the agreed standard can also be accommodated through building and/or renovation work.

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 agreed 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 Executive Officer will set a target maximum cost figure in the light of local property values and in consultation with the pastorate.

1.2. Safety and Security

At the time that a manse is being prepared for occupation by an incoming stipendiary minister and at any other time on the recommendation of the Synod Property Officer (extending O2F46), the Wessex Trust will be responsible for the agreed cost of providing:

- Five lever mortice deadlock conforming to BS 3621 (wooden doors)/key-operated multi-point locking system (UPVC doors) to all external doors;
- Door restraint chains on external doors at which visitors call;
- Solid doors to have a spy hole fitted;
- All windows to have appropriate locks;
- One smoke detector at each floor level;
- One fire extinguisher and fire blanket for kitchen use;
- Inspection and servicing of gas appliances and obtaining a landlord's gas safety inspection certificate;
- Carbon monoxide detectors in each room where gas / solid fuel appliances are fitted;
- Electrical wiring inspection and consequent works required to obtain a Domestic Electrical Installation certificate for the property which advises that the consumer unit and installation are 'satisfactory';
- Motion detector courtesy/security lights fitted at the front elevation and to other vulnerable elevations;
- Fencing provision, maintenance, repairs and/or replacement (replaces part of O1F49); and
- Boundary wall maintenance, repairs and/or replacement (replaces O1F49).

The following additional facilities are desirable and should be provided as and when appropriate on the recommendation of the Synod Property Officer:

- 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 on the request of the minister can be fitted with opening restrictors to prevent children falling from heights; and
- In cases of particular vulnerability, an internal alarm system to be fitted and maintained in accordance with an agreed specification.

1.3. 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 agreed cost of:

- Modernisation and replacement of kitchens (including utility rooms if applicable, but not including any fitted kitchen appliances, except cookers with extractor ventilation) and bathrooms;
- Replacement of the central heating boiler, hot water tank, radiators (not thermostatic radiator valves) and control panel and any necessary cleaning of the system at the time of installation;
- Installation or improvement of loft insulation and cavity wall insulation (where appropriate and having obtained specific advice from the Synod Property Officer);
- Installation and replacement of conventional and double-glazed windows and doors (extends 04F57);
- Repairs and replacements of conventional windows and doors in manses which are listed or in a Conservation Area (extends 04F57);
- All Safety and Security facilities;
- Major roof (including flat roof (replaces 01F104)) and other structural repairs or replacements not covered by insurance;
- Extensions;
- Redecoration/tiling to areas affected by the carrying out of other works for which the Wessex Trust is responsible (02F46);
- Replacement of rainwater goods and other drainage (extends 01F104);
- Decoration, maintenance and repair of wooden fascias and soffits (replaces 05F38); and
- Installation, maintenance, repair and replacement of UPVC fascias, soffits and cladding (replaces part of 01F49, 01F104 and 05F38).

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 agreed cost of provision and replacement of carpets, curtains/roller blinds and cookers. Where the Synod initiates a house move within Wessex 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. Any unavoidable additional tax liability will be met by the Wessex Trust.

The Executive Officer, in consultation with the local pastorate, is responsible for determining the acceptability of a property as a manse. The Executive Officer may recommend that a manse should be replaced, usually during a vacancy, where it is not judged possible to improve or extend it to the required standard. The final decision is made by the Wessex Trust following local approval by the Church Meeting.

The purchase or replacement of manses is managed by the Wessex Trust through the Executive Officer who will consult with the pastorate about the location and suitability of any proposed purchase. In no circumstances should a local church make an offer for a property, or accept an offer for sale, or enter into any discussion that could be construed as a contract. Any refurbishment or improvements to a newly acquired property will be managed by the Synod Property Officer, with the objective of completing them before occupation.

2. PASTORATE RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the pastorate while the manse is occupied by a minister, or up until the responsibility of letting it is handed over to the Wessex Trust (See Section 3), comprise:

- Payment of Council Tax, water rates and building insurance to the manse's full reinstatement value. During a vacancy the Wessex Trust will pay the insurance premium from the first renewal date. As a consequence the pastorate will not be eligible for a pro-rata refund of their last insurance premium, but similarly the Wessex Trust will not seek to recover such a pro-rata refund when the manse is returned to the pastorate for occupation by a minister;
- Central heating maintenance and repairs;
- Costs of obtaining an annual landlord's gas safety inspection certificate (whether arranged and obtained by the pastorate or the Wessex Trust);
- Secondary/supplementary heating provision, maintenance, repairs and costs of obtaining an annual landlord's gas safety inspection certificate in respect of them, if applicable (02F93);
- Internal and external decoration (02F46);
- Cleaning/repairs of carpets, curtains/roller blinds and cookers;
- Maintenance and repairs of rainwater goods and other drainage (replaces 01F104); and
- All other maintenance, repairs and replacements not covered by insurance.

2.1. Pastorate Property Representatives

The pastorate must appoint a Property Representative 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.

2.2. Annual Maintenance Allowance

To help ensure that manses are properly maintained the pastorate can claim up to £500 per calendar year (£750 from 2016) for the expenses of repairs and maintenance against invoices. The date of the invoice will determine the applicable calendar year. Any unused balance of this allowance can be rolled forward for two years if not used in a given year. The allowance of future calendar years cannot be claimed in advance. This carry-forward mechanism allows pastorates to programme redecoration projects over two or three years. The pastorate cannot claim for any calendar years throughout which the manse is let.

Provision of the allowance is subject to the prior provision of copies of: an annual Manse Policy Inspection Report checklist signed by both the minister and the Pastorate Property Representative

carried out within the last 12 months, a current landlord's gas safety inspection certificate (the cost of which is claimable from the annual maintenance allowance) and a current buildings insurance schedule, indicating the period and sums insured (if the manse is not already insured on the Synod's block buildings insurance policy).

To claim the allowance, copies of these items and the invoices for work completed, together with written confirmation that all of the invoiced work has been satisfactorily completed, should be sent to accounts@urcwessex.org.uk or posted to the Wessex Trust at the Synod Office. Subject to receipt of all of the necessary supporting documents, payment of an agreed claim will normally be made directly into the nominated account for the pastorate within 10 working days.

2.3. Annual 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 must be carried out. This should be conducted by the Pastorate Property Representative in liaison with the minister at a time that is convenient. A 'check list' form (appended to this policy and available for download from the Synod website) must be used to ensure all major aspects are covered. All work highlighted for action should 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. All scheduling of non-urgent work should also take into account the convenience of the minister and family. 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 Property Representative 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 if necessary arrange completion of the work and invoice the pastorate accordingly.

Notwithstanding this process, the minister has a duty to report to the Pastorate Property Representative, at any time, if there are apparent problems which require further investigation.

Every two years the annual inspection should be carried out with the Synod Property Officer present, who will then report back to the Wessex Trust. 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.

2.4. Annual Gas Safety Inspection

The minister should agree with the Pastorate Property Representative who will arrange the annual gas safety inspection by a suitably qualified gas contractor. It is important that this should be completed in a timely manner.

3. PERIODS OF VACANCY

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.

As noted in Section 2, the pastorate remains responsible for the maintenance, upkeep and tidiness of the property and garden after a minister leaves, up until the responsibility of letting it is handed

over to the Wessex Trust by a Church Meeting resolution and the transfer of all necessary supporting keys and documents, such as Council Tax and utility accounts.

The Synod will also need to authorise the Wessex Trust to let the manse as soon as possible after it is vacated because the Wessex Trust cannot deal with the letting until both of those resolutions are in place.

Since the pastorate's building insurance will remain in force until the next renewal date, they should inform the insurer that the manse is to be let and provide details to the Executive Officer. The Wessex Trust will arrange for the current buildings insurance policy to be cancelled on the next renewal date and will transfer it on the same day to ensure continuance of cover to a block Synod / Wessex Trust policy held with Ansvar and managed by David Edwards Insurance Brokers.

After the manse has been made available for letting, all the costs related to the manse will be met by the Wessex Trust from the rental income; any balance will be paid into the unrestricted general funds of the Wessex Trust.

Such lettings are the responsibility of the Wessex Trust and not the pastorate. All dealings will be through the Wessex Trust's officers or their appointed agents. The Wessex Trust has a responsibility to obtain the best rent available in the open market.

All property maintenance during the letting and any necessary inspections will be arranged by the Wessex Trust.

4. ARRANGEMENTS FOR A NEW MINISTER

In preparing the Pastorate Profile for review by potential new ministers, the pastorate must include significant detail of the manse. This should include its location relative to the pastorate and local transport and services, preferably with a simple map. An Energy Performance Certificate and a number of photographs of the exterior and interior shall also be provided. Availability of a video 'walk-through' 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 or can be made compliant with this Manse Policy then it would not be expected to be changed for the incoming minister. This aspect must be clearly stated in the Profile. The approach to manse improvement or replacement is covered in Section 1.

As a supplement, this Manse Policy 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 vacancy period and will endeavour to complete all necessary works before occupation by the minister. The Wessex Trust will accept responsibility for items that are found to be defective during the first fifteen months of occupation by a minister (06F175).

The pastorate will become responsible for all items listed under 'Pastorate Responsibilities' in Section 2 from the date that the manse is occupied by the incoming minister, except that they will not need to pay for the building insurance until the next renewal. The manse will remain on the block Synod / Wessex Trust policy held with Ansvar and managed by David Edwards Insurance Brokers and the applicable annual insurance premium in respect of it will be annually recharged to the pastorate.

4.1. 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.

5. REDUNDANT MANSES

The provisions of Schedule 2 Part II of the United Reformed Church Act 1981 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;
- Where the future use of a manse is uncertain, the Wessex Trust will arrange lettings as during a vacancy until it becomes clear whether the manse is required or redundant; and
- The capital and income arising from these actions will be added to the unrestricted general funds of the Wessex Trust.

6. OTHER USES FOR MANSES

6.1. 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.

6.2. 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 manse to the minister at a commercial rent and using an Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement should the Church Meeting(s) request it.

6.3. House for Duty

Where a Area Synod Pastoral Committee recommend that there are particular circumstances which do not make stipendiary ministry feasible in the short-medium term, or in a particular geographical area where it is difficult to provide ministry, a manse may be provided to a minister on a 'house for duty' basis. In the first instance this will be for a period of 3 years and in no circumstances beyond 7 years. Before a minister occupies a house there must be an Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement with the Wessex Trust and a clear arrangement for housing at the end of the term.

Any manse provided need not necessarily conform to the agreed standard, although it would normally involve the use of an existing manse. If no manse were available, the Synod would consider other options. The pastorate responsibilities would be identical to those in respect of any other manse.

6.4. 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 agreed standard, but will be appropriate to the task and the individual (01F49). In general within all the sections, reference to 'minister' shall also imply 'CRCW'.

6.5. Housing for Synod Employees

The policy for housing 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 agreed standard, 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.

MANSE POLICY – INSPECTION REPORT

Manse Address:		Inspected by:	
Occupied:	Yes / No	Date:	
Date of occupancy:		Date house built:	

Subject of inspection	OK	Further inspection needed	Repair / remedy 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 repair				
3	Paths, driveways, paving, etc., in good order and safe				
4	Garden in good order				
5	Trees and scrubs under control				
6	Garden shed and garage in good order				
7	Roof covering in good state of repair (no leaks)				
8	Chimneys and flashing 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				

Subject of inspection	OK	Further inspection needed	Repair / remedy needed	Details and comments, including implementation date
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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 and window locks satisfactory				
22	Windows free of cracks and 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 detectors functional (tested monthly and cleaned 6 monthly)				
29	Smoke detectors functional (tested monthly and cleaned 6 monthly) and fire protection equipment 'in date'				
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				

Subject of inspection		OK	Further inspection needed	Repair / remedy needed	Details and comments, including implementation date
35	Consumer unit fitted with RCD				

OTHER COMMENTS

Signed:

Name:

Minister:

Signed:

Name:

Pastorate Property
Representative: