



1st Edmonton Company. Edmonton Methodist Church.

Captain, Mr Paul Bracher, 07748 963541, p.bracher@sky.com.

Object The advancement of Christ's Kingdom among boys and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self-Respect and all that tends towards a true Christian Manliness.

Motion to Brigade Council

Motion in the name of **Paul Bracher** 1st Edmonton, **Paul Haggan** 1st Sittingbourne, **John Tibbles** 1st Charlton Kings, **Vicki Brownlee** 5th Hull, **Calvin Hanks** 2nd High Wycombe.

“Council instructs the Brigade Executive, to ensure that a new property (following the sale of Felden Lodge) will be acquired by the Brigade, to provide residential and non-residential accommodation for training and events in England.”

Background to the Motion

On 17th November 2021 the Brigade announced that following a review of its property assets that it was necessary to place Felden Lodge on the property market. In January 2022 a webinar was held by the Brigade addressing the financial position of the organisation and this included some further discussion around the potential sale of Felden Lodge. In a further update on 31st August 2022 it was confirmed that following an extensive and robust review the Brigade Executive had agreed to accept an offer to sell Felden Lodge. At the current time it is unclear to the membership when this will be completed and what will happen next when it comes to the relocation of offices and plans for future events and activities that would have taken place at Felden Lodge.

For over 70 years the Brigade has owned Felden Lodge and it has provided during that period a base for training and events as well as an office for Brigade staff. Thousands of young people and leaders have been able to visit Felden Lodge over the years and those past and present will have a special place for Felden in their hearts. In the last 12 months Felden Lodge has hosted large events including Unite and Life 2 the Max, as well as young people's training, leaders training, camps, indoor residentials, regional competition finals, national & local area meetings and other BB activities. It has also of course been the venue for many other organisations, Churches and businesses, and to this end Felden Lodge has been making a surplus annually which has been going back into the Brigade. It is important to consider the opportunities that such a property provides to young people and leaders today. For many even if they only visit once or have never had the opportunity to, they will see Felden Lodge as the home of the Brigade, part of our identity as an organisation. The same will also be said of Carronvale House, for members in Scotland and the more recently acquired and renovated site in Newport for members in Northern Ireland.

It is important to recognise though that Felden Lodge is a large site of some 30 acres, with a number of buildings and there are notable areas that require maintenance, etc. The continued upkeep of such a large site is something that puts

financial pressure on the Brigade and can at times no doubt distract the Brigade Executive and Staff from the organisations primary objective and vision. It is therefore understandable that the Brigade has decided through its review to sell Felden Lodge. Although it is not so clear why there is no clear plan that has been communicated to the wider Brigade around the future of a new site in England. Based on this it is feasible that the Brigade Executive is looking to go down the route of not purchasing a new site, and instead as a minimum could be looking at renting some office space for use by Brigade Staff. This could potentially mean that the Brigade would not have any permanent base in England. If this was the case the Brigade could also see significant income being spent on renting or hiring out office space and other venues for training/events.

The sale of Felden Lodge provides the Brigade with an opportunity to develop a site that can continue to provide many opportunities to the young people and leaders of today as well as future generations. It's an opportunity to make the site something that meets the needs of the organisation today, linked to our Vision, Mission and Values and our Strategic Plan.

It has been interesting to see how Northern Ireland District sold Rathmore House, its site in Larne, a base for training, events and offices for many years but a site that needed considerable investment to be maintained. The sale enabled the District to purchase a former school in Newport which was aligned to its current needs and over a number of years this has been converted into a modern and versatile site providing residential and non-residential facilities as well as offices. The opportunity to do something similar in England with a percentage of the proceeds of sale from Felden Lodge will help ensure similar opportunities are secured for this and the next generation.

Based on the above there should be no illusion that anyone is suggesting that a new property would have all the facilities offered by Felden Lodge. But that a new site would provide relatively modest residential accommodation as well as indoor and outdoor space to meet our current needs. With expectations that such a site would be extensively used by all levels of the Brigade (including as an affordable option for Companies, Battalions and Districts) but also open to other organisations at other times. The motion is specifically not going into any detail about what the new property would be, as it is essential that these decisions are affordable and sustainable.

Of course, the decision to put Felden Lodge on to the property market and subsequently to accept an offer to sell came about from looking at the financial position and challenges the Brigade is facing. Based on this it has been communicated that the proceeds of sale from Felden Lodge would be invested and the investment income generated from this capital would be used by the Brigade, in part to reduce the reliance on income from capitation fees. With this in mind allocating a percentage of the proceeds of sale into purchasing a new site, whilst investing the remaining percentage to provide investment income would provide on all fronts. With the Brigade benefiting from a fixed property asset which will see growth, whilst also having a significant source of additional income to help support annual operating costs through investment income.

On the other hand, if the Brigade is intending to not purchase a new property, and rents office space and hires external venues for training and events instead, it is conceivable that a significant percentage of the investment income that is generated could be spent annually on this rent/hire.

There are also advantages (if the decision has not already been made) to commit to the purchase of a new property before moving out of Felden Lodge. These include being able to make informed decisions about future storage of equipment, archives and resources; and around furniture and fittings that could be transferred from Felden Lodge to kit out a new property.

Through the webinar run by the Brigade and questions raised by a number of parties in other ways over the last 18 months this motion would also help to satisfy the concern that some members have around how the Brigade has managed the proceeds of sale from property in the past, by ensuring that at least part of the proceeds are reinvested into property assets owned by the Brigade.

This motion is focussed on moving forward and not looking back, ensuring that the Brigade is well placed to deliver on its vision and plans for the future.

It is hoped that by putting this motion forward the Brigade Executive will be able to move swiftly in terms of locating a new home for the Brigade in England.