

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Saturday 10 February 2024, by video conference

Minutes

Present: Georgina Bailey, Catherine Brown, Kit Fotheringham, Ursula Fuller, Kate Gulliver, Ellie Harding, Carolyn Hayman, Jo Hills, Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Kit King, Silas Price, Danielle Walker Palmour (Assistant Clerk), Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer)

In attendance: Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk; Vipin Narang, Finance Director (except minute BYMT/24/02/09); Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Oliver Robertson, Head of Witness and Worship; Lisa San Martin, Chief Executive, Quiet Company (minutes BYMT/24/02/10 to 15)

Visitors: External members of BYM Trustees' Audit Committee: John Ashcroft and Janet Slade (minute BYMT/24/02/08); Sarah Donaldson, Quaker Church Affairs team (minute BYMT/24/02/13); David Loxton, Head of Communications & Fundraising (minute BYMT/24/02/14 to 15)

BYMT/24/02/01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check

We welcome three new trustees to this meeting: Ursula Fuller, Jo Hills and Kit King. Ursula joined us as an observer at our last meeting. For Jo and Kit this is their first meeting and we hope all three will find it interesting and rewarding.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest. For items where Friends have connections to one aspect of the issue or other, we will declare this as we go along.

We confirm our agenda.

During our opening worship, we heard 25.01 from *Quaker faith and practice* of the Religious Society of Friends in Britain:

The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.

John Woolman, 1772

BYMT/24/02/02 Continuing business

We receive a list of continuing minutes including the extracts from the following minutes of our last meeting:

BYMT/23/11/06 Preparation of 2022 annual accounts;

BYMT/23/11/10 Risk register;

BYMT/23/11/13 Audit committee's report on response to the pandemic;

BYMT/23/11/17 Drayton House;

and BYMT/23/11/20 Link Trustees.

BYMT/24/02/03 Minutes received

We receive the following minutes:

- Quaker Life Central Committee 27–28 October 2023 – we note plans to deliver Quaker Life Representative Council differently in future and read with interest about their discernment contributed to the Trustees' Handbook under development.
- Quiet Company 14–15 November 2023 – we note the very good results for the company 9 months into the financial year and the improvement in the profitability of the Quaker Centre.
- Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee 17–18 November 2023 – we note in particular from QPSWCC 23/60 Grants Group: We encourage BYM Trustees to consider how this grants work can support progress towards becoming an actively anti racist church, specifically through reparations work. Any steps towards linking existing small funds and re invigorating the QPS fund would also assist.

BYMT/24/02/04 Trustees' annual report and accounts for 2022

At our last meeting on 10 November 2023 we approved the annual accounts and financial statements by minute BYMT/23/11/06. The documents were filed with the Charity Commission, 14 days after the relevant deadline, on 14 November after final checks by the external auditor.

BYMT/24/02/05 Insurance report

We note paper BYMT 2024 02 04b setting out a summary of BYM's main insurance policies. The renewal premiums for 2024 amount to £154,735.85, an increase of £16,892.78 from last year.

BYMT/24/02/06 Finance report

a) Minutes of Finance & Property Committee

We receive minutes of the meeting of Finance and Property Committee held on 5 February.

We note the helpful 2023 IT annual report, the more rigorous analysis of the past failings in the implementation of the Finance system and the project management approach being applied. We are pleased that the meeting allowed time for a review of the diverse property portfolio and the consideration of some of the strategic issues relating to how we manage key assets in future.

We are pleased to hear of the progress toward the sale of the property at Lesser Slatters. We hear that we have a buyer and will convene a brief meeting of trustees to consider the sale and appoint the signatories on the final agreement when it is reached.

b) Pollard & Dickson Trust

We note minute FP 24/11, which recommends that we accept in principle the offer of restricted funds from the possible winding up of the Pollard & Dickson Trust.

We agree that these funds could be used to further hardship grant-making programmes and to support the travelling ministry through other work of Britain Yearly Meeting within the scope of the restrictions, and agree in principle to accept this transfer should the trustees of the Pollard & Dickson Trust so decide.

c) Estate of Robert Matthews

We note minute FP 24/10, which recommends providing tenants of the property concerned with a rent holiday as a good will gesture while they find alternative accommodation. This would mean foregoing 1.2% of the value of the legacy.

We authorise the Treasurer to apply to the Charity Commission for the required permissions.

d) Marsh legacy

We note the agreement by the Committee to the use of an additional £150,000 from the funds received from the Marsh Legacy towards a number of workstreams relating to exploring a reparative response to Quaker involvement in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and economic exploitation. We are pleased to see the steady development of the structures to support this work.

We ask for Finance and Property Committee to revisit the overall purposes of the Marsh Legacy in light of our emerging discernment.

e) Rentals of Friends House

Most of the rentals charged to tenants in Friends House are below market values. The organisations we let to are also beneficiaries of grants by BYM for Quaker work. Any rise in rents may result in requests for larger grants. For the sake of transparency, we agree that we should have valuations to show current market values, and, where we continue to charge below that, we will show that as a gift or contribution in kind.

f) Audit preparation for 2023 accounts

We have heard an update from the Director of Finance on the progress of preparing the 2023 accounts and the associated external audit. Although there is still a lot of work to do, and some of the issues experienced last year have continued in 2023, we are reassured that we are on track to produce timely set of accounts this year, and progress is being made with the recommendations of last year's audit report.

We expect to be able to sign off the 2023 accounts at our June meeting, and will want to receive early warnings if anything should cause delay.

We note that this was the last Finance and Property Committee meeting to be attended by Paul Henderson Grey as Head of Estates. We convey our thanks and good wishes for a fruitful retirement.

BYMT/24/02/07 BYM Trustees' Employment Committee

We receive a report from our Employment Committee on its activity in 2023 (paper BYMT 2024 02 05).

We note the considerable work the committee has overseen on developing employment policy and other issues, such as negotiation of the cost of living increase for staff salaries. We are pleased the staff team is settling following the disruption from the pandemic. We are grateful to the committee, the People Team and the union for their contributions towards developing equity, diversity and inclusion within BYM and helping us become an anti-oppressive employer.

As the report concludes, “the employment committee continues to be a space to discuss, explore and shape a key element of how we live our Quaker values and testimonies in a real way, in a real time”.

We ask our Nominations Committee to consider how best to maintain continuity on this committee given that both trustee members will reach the end of their terms at the end of 2024.

BYMT/24/02/08 Audit committee’s report on the preparation of the 2022 annual accounts

Further to our minutes BYMT/23/09/13 and BYMT/23/06/05, we welcome two of the external members of the Audit Committee – John Ashcroft, and Janet Slade – to our meeting. The Committee’s Clerk, John Ashcroft, has introduced their report (paper BYMT 2024 02 06) to us.

The report includes a timeline of events along with observations and suggestions from the Committee about systemic issues to be addressed to ensure we prevent as far as possible, or mitigate, a recurrence of the problems identified. Twenty-two recommendations are summarised in an appendix, grouped under nine headings. It is acknowledged that a number of issues are already being addressed.

We note key areas highlighted for consideration by trustees:

- Further learning from the Covid-19 pandemic regarding remote working;
- The way that projects, especially IT projects, are managed, governed and overseen;
- The appearance of over-stretch within (parts of) the organisation;
- Verifying the proper documentation and operation of financial procedures;
- Sustaining competence-driven recruitment and appraisal processes;
- How to ensure sufficiency and resilience of management capacity and capability;
- Risk management;
- The respective roles of Finance & Property, who have the responsibility of responding to and following the audit’s recommendations, and Audit Committee – the latter looks at internal processes and only has one opportunity a year to sit with the auditors; we need to discern whether the scope and terms of reference of these committees are right or need to be reviewed and changed.
- Organisational culture. We may be too willing to accept assurances and be supportive, rather than probing and challenging. We need to work towards a

better balance between these two necessary approaches. We must take more notice of the feedback and warnings from the auditors.

We thank John Ashcroft and Audit Committee for the very thorough report on the preparation of the accounts. We note the impacts of wider governance and management decisions on organisational risks and capacity. We ask that Management Meeting review the table included in Annex 2 and report to us on progress toward resolving the management issues identified. We reflect on the development of a culture of constructive challenge within the organisation and between governance structures and the staff. We ask Finance and Property Committee to consider the key signals of system problems – the “orange flags” – that it will monitor going forward. This will include issues arising from consultation with our external auditor or consultants. We will return to these matters at our June meeting when we expect to see an action plan and progress arising from the recommendations in Annex 2. We will consider the functions and relationship between the Finance and Property and Audit Committees with a view to ensuring the gifts of Friends, engagement of staff and organisational resources are used most effectively.

BYMT/24/02/09 Recording clerk’s report and dashboard

We receive a report from the Recording Clerk for the period November 2023 to January 2024 (paper BYMT 2024 02 07a).

The report gives updates and news under the headings of BYM’s strategic priorities:

- Thriving Quaker communities: outreach, Head of Inclusive Quaker Communities, preparing for Summer Yearly Meeting. We look forward to taking part in an interest group jointly with Meeting for Sufferings.
- Sustainable and peaceful world: war in Israel and Gaza; ecumenical accompaniment programme in Palestine and Israel; slide into war.
- Simpler structures and practices: reviews of BYM structures; simpler governance at local level; nominations.

The report also informs us of the following:

- Regulatory matters: Permissions issue with Business Central; safeguarding serious incident.
- External relations: Woodbrooke; Glebe House (Friends Therapeutic Community Trust); Friends School Council; London Quakers Property Trust (Pollard and Dickson Trust).
- Estates and property.
- Quiet Company.

The Recording Clerk provides insight into key highlights in recent weeks including an All-Staff Conference, some additions to the senior staff team and Operational Managers, and the question of our presence at Yearly Meeting 2024. We were heartened to hear of the addition of new energy and capacity to take forward our work and the effort to manage the risks inherent in any staffing changes.

We reflected on the developing usefulness of the dashboard information and the data from Central Nominations. We were pleased to hear of the good progress toward the simplification of Quaker governance structures in Wales.

BYMT/24/02/10 The Salter Lecture 2024

The clerk introduced this item with a call to ministry from Friends on the issues outlined in the Recording Clerk's paper relating to the possible repercussion of the Quaker Socialist Society's (QSS) proposed Salter Lecture on war and peace to be given jointly by Paul Ingram and Jeremy Corbyn, MP, as part of the Yearly Meeting event in July. She clarified our responsibilities as trustees as relating to the stewardship of the resources of the Yearly Meeting including the staff, programmes, facilities and reputation of the charity.

The Recording Clerk outlined the background to the current lecture and the meetings held to date. He set out the risk factors identified by staff in relation to participation by Jeremy Corbyn, MP in this event, and the clerk summarised the points raised in correspondence by QSS.

In worship we reflected on the need to make decisions on 'kinder ground' with QSS and other Friends. We recognise that QSS is an independent Quaker organisation. We may as trustees express that holding this lecture during Yearly Meeting might be a distraction from the wider Spirit-led work of the Society without expressing a view that the Lecture should not happen at another time or context as it has done before. Our duty of care to our staff that will need to manage the difficult communications that will arise from a speaker addressing an event within the annual gathering of our church community, leads us to recommend that the lecture as currently proposed is not held at Yearly Meeting in July 2024. We ask Friends and staff engaging with QSS and others within the Society do so with tenderness and respect for maintaining relationships and work with QSS towards enabling their lecture to go ahead.

We send this minute to Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee and QSS.

BYMT/24/02/11 Update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Further to our minute BYMT/23/02/07 we receive a report from the Deputy Recording Clerk on the progress made against our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda.

We are pleased to note the progress made since the last report in February 2023, particularly in respect of Equity and Justice as an Employer, with the EDI Action Plan and the recruitment of two fixed term team members – a Workplace Equity Coordinator and a Reparations Coordinator, and the availability of two working hours per month or three days per year for staff to undertake this work.

We also note the development of an equity network to unify the equity agenda and develop the interconnections between groups of people (with protected characteristics or not) and between people and the earth.

We read with interest the examples of work on EDI being done in some parts of the country with the support of Local Development and Youth Development Workers.

We are concerned about the burden carried by staff tasked with moderating our social media presence on topics where there are differing views, for instance affirming trans identity due to the development of the debate in an adversarial public arena. We hope for some more positive outcome from reconciliation and listening work in Scotland, and similar work by London Quakers.

We note the work of Woodbrooke in putting together resources to help Meetings explore and fulfil the commitment to inclusion at local level.

We note the work of Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations (QCCIR) in the field of anti-racism and reparations. We hope the committee may consider producing a document along the lines of *We are but witnesses* to show the theological underpinning of our commitment to inclusion and affirmation of trans people. We also hope to see a Quaker response, in line with minute 31 of Yearly Meeting 2021, to the government's consultation on non-statutory advice to schools on the management of "gender-questioning" children, due by 12 March 2024.

Work is progressing on all age participation and new ways of belonging.

We send this minute to QCCIR.

BYMT/24/02/12 Reparations Working Group

Further to minutes BYMT/22/06/09 and BYMT/23/02/08 we receive a report from the Deputy Recording Clerk on the work of the Reparations Working Group including a copy of the Group's most recent minutes (BYMT 2024 02 09).

We hear that the group is dynamic, energetic and enthusiastic. The workstreams that the group is focussing on are:

- Historical Research into Quaker involvement in the Trans-Atlantic chattel slavery trade;
- Financial effect of Quaker involvement and how to quantify the cost of the damage;
- Outreach; and
- Theological justification for enslavement.

Trustees are supportive of including reparations in the "Room Sharing" Policy (currently being reviewed by staff in QPSW) and ask that records are kept of how this offer contributes to our reparations activities. We recognise that this is a preliminary phase of the work, a time for scoping what we will need to address in future. When that becomes clear we will need to put in place robust governance and delivery mechanisms for any work that is discerned.

BYMT/24/02/13 Group to Review Central Structures

See minute BYMT/23/06/06.

We are joined by Sarah Donaldson from Quaker Church Affairs team.

We receive a paper (BYMT 2024 02 10a) with an update on the work of the Group to Review Central Structures (GRCS) which includes minutes from their meetings held on 14 November 2023, 11 December 2023 and a joint meeting between GRCS and

the Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gathering and Meeting for Sufferings on 12 January 2024.

The Group has also provided a paper (BYMT 2024 02 10b) on the governance of GRCS and options for the development of the work.

Ellie Harding sets out the importance of the right level of trustee oversight to enable the appropriate reporting to Yearly Meeting on this topic. We hear of the considerable time and energy required of all the Friends involved which may not be sustainable for the length of the project. We are pleased to hear that the consultancy support for the Group is already adding value to the programme.

We consider the key questions identified:

- Membership: We noted that two of the three trustees serving on the committee finish their terms at the end of this year. We would wish to see one or both of them to continue to serve until after Yearly Meeting 2025. We also ask Nominations Committee to look for a new convenor, if necessary by adding a further member to the group.
- We would like to express our gratitude to Ellie for the work she has put into steering this work thus far as convenor, and are pleased she is willing to continue to support the work of the group as a member of it.
- We ask the Recording Clerk to ensure sufficient resources are in place to support this work.

BYMT/24/02/14 Social Media Policy

We welcome David Loxton, BYM's Head of Communications and Fundraising, to our meeting who has introduced his paper with a draft social media policy (BYMT 2024 02 11). This policy covers both our strategic use of social media and expectations on staff use.

We recognise the centrality of social media to our communications and to our mission. We have clarified that this policy also applies to those representing Quakers on external bodies.

We approve this policy as amended in this meeting, and ask Employment Committee to monitor its implementation on our behalf.

BYMT/24/02/15 Revision of Friends House Lettings Policy

Through our minutes BYMT/23/02/07, BYMT/23/02/09 and BYMT/23/04/09 we have previously considered the need to revise the Friends House Lettings Policy as lettings might conflict with positions of Yearly Meeting. Two trustees, Carolyn Hayman and Kit Fotheringham, were appointed to work with staff on considering the policy and we now receive some recommendations from them (paper BYMT 2024 02 12). David Loxton introduced the policy.

We note the revisions have been seen and approved by both Management Meeting and the Quiet Company Board. We have also received legal opinion that the policy is workable but needs to be applied with great care and may still be challenged in the

courts, as there is no case law to affirm the right to deny services to any person or organisation that enjoys protected status under the Equality Act 2010.

We approve the revisions to the policy as set out in the paper.

BYMT/24/02/16 Appointments

Our Nominations Group brings us the following nominations and requests for release:

a) Appointments

Property Development Steering Group

Jo Hills to serve for the lifetime of the project

Anti-oppression champion

Kit King to serve for two years

Group to review central structures (GRCS)

Ellie Harding to be released as convener

We agree to these appointments and release.

b) Record of appointment

BYM Trustee Finance & Property Committee Clerk

Catherine Brown was appointed by between meetings process to serve as co-clerk with Danielle Walker Palmour for the next two meetings and then take on the full clerking role.

c) Reviewing the number of trustee bodies and appointments

Our Nominations Group has reviewed the bodies and roles we appoint Trustees and others to. We agree to lay down:

- Reference point for developing MoU with AMs
- Senior Staff Grievance & Disciplinary Group. If a grievance or disciplinary arises in connection with a senior staff member the Clerks of Trustees will convene an ad-hoc group made up from trustees and other Friends (eg a clerk of Meeting for Sufferings or Yearly Meeting)
- Communications Guide Task and Finish Group
- Lettings Policy Group

We note the minute from the Engaging Young Adult Quaker Grants Group (now known as Young Adult Quaker Grants Group (YAQGG)) asking for a change of reporting and nominating body. We ask staff to discuss options for the future governance of this grant-making programme with clerks of F&P, QLCC and BYMT Nominations Group – along with YAQGG – and bring a recommendation to us at a future meeting.

BYMT/24/02/17 Board effectiveness

We agree to defer this item to our next meeting.

BYMT/24/02/18 Register of interest check

At the start of each year we review our declarations of interest. We have done this and the register has been updated.

BYMT/24/02/19 Review of scheme of delegation

Our scheme of delegation is routinely reviewed every two years. Some small updates are required and are set out in BYMT 2024 02 15a. We agree to these changes.

We also note Finance and Property Committee has been given responsibility for oversight of IT strategy and ask for this to be added to the description of that committee and for this to be reflected in point 3.22 of the scheme.

BYMT/24/02/20 Whistleblowing annual report

We receive the Recording Clerk's annual report on BYM's whistleblowing policy and note there have been no whistleblowing cases in 2023.

BYMT/24/02/21 Delivery of the 2023 operational plan

We receive a report from BYM's operational managers on the delivery of the 2023 operational plan.

We appreciate the hard work by the staff in delivering against this full plan.

BYMT/24/02/22 Trustees' news

We receive a report of recent activities of trustees (BYMT 2024 02 17).

BYMT/24/02/23 Preparing for Meeting for Sufferings

We have prepared for Meeting for Sufferings in March.

BYMT/24/02/24 Communicating trustees' work

We have discussed how we might communicate our work.

BYMT/24/02/25 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT/24/02/26 Time with Recording Clerk

BYMT/24/02/27 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

Marisa Johnson
Clerk