

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Friday 7 June to Sunday 9 June, Swarthmoor Hall and by video conference

Minutes

Present: Georgina Bailey, Catherine Brown, Kit Fotheringham, Ursula Fuller, Kate Gulliver, Ellie Harding (minutes BYMT/24/06/01–10, 17–24), Carolyn Hayman, Jo Hills, Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Kit King, Silas Price, Danielle Walker Palmour (Assistant Clerk), Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer)

Prevented: Elizabeth Redfern

In attendance: Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk; Vipin Narang, Finance Director; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk

Visitors: Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives (minutes BYMT/24/06/09–10), Margaret Bryan, Convener Group to Review Central Structures (minute BYMT/24/06/11), Sarah Donaldson, Quaker Church Affairs (minute BYMT/24/06/11), Suzy Lidbury, Head of Governance (minute BYMT/24/06/04), David Loxton, Head of Communications and Fundraising (minute BYMT/24/06/12), Ann Morgan (minute BYMT/24/06/16), Mark Mitchell, BYM Safeguarding Officer (minute BYMT/24/06/04), Jane-Eve Straughton, Governance Manager (Team Lead) (minute BYMT/24/06/13)

BYMT/24/06/01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest

The clerk welcomed trustees and staff in the room to the meeting, and Ellie Harding, Suzy Lidbury and Mark Mitchell online. This should have been Liz Redfern's first meeting, but unfortunately she is prevented.

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We confirm our agenda and welcome the annual reports we are receiving for different areas of our Yearly Meeting's work.

We gather together with glad hearts in this very special place, in the 400th anniversary year of the birth of George Fox. We find hospitality and nourishment in this place still, just as George Fox did from the generous welcome of Margaret Fell. We continue to draw inspiration from them, and all our founding Friends and those who have shaped our community since.

During our opening worship, we heard quoted *Quaker Faith & Practice* 29.01. As our founding Friends gathered together within these walls to shelter from the religious and political storms of their time, we, like them, put our trust in the guidance of the Spirit, whose presence is in the darkness as well as the light.

BYMT/24/06/02 Continuing business

We receive a list of continuing minutes including the extracts from the following minutes of our meetings in February: three matters we are returning to at this

meeting: BYMT/24/02/08 Preparation of 2022 annual accounts; BYMT/24/02/12 Reparations Working Group; BYMT/24/02/17 Board effectiveness; and one matter we expect to return to at a meeting later in the year: BYMT/24/02/16 Young Adult Quaker Grant Group.

BYMT/24/06/03 Minutes received

We receive the following minutes:

- Quaker Life Central Committee meetings held 31 January 2024 and 9 March 2024
- Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee meeting held 23-25 February 2024
- Minute '2024-3-11 Salter Lecture' from Yearly Meeting Agenda Committee. We note the conclusion of their discernment.

We note some important risks that may impact performance, and we expect this to be addressed when operational plans are drawn up.

BYMT/24/06/04 Safeguarding annual report

We are joined by Mark Mitchell, BYM's Safeguarding Officer, and Suzy Lidbury, Head of Governance. Mark has introduced paper BYMT 2024 06 03 which we receive.

Mark highlighted the work being done to strengthen the safeguarding arrangements for Yearly Meeting and Junior Yearly Meeting, the adoption of new objectives for the improvement plan, the introduction of network meetings for safeguarding coordinators and the development of a safeguarding culture within the staff.

We are pleased to note most actions in the safeguarding improvement plan were either complete or in progress and a new two-year plan has been produced. We acknowledge that safeguarding is an area where it is important to work continually on our approaches to ensure we meet best practice and keep those who are young and vulnerable safe.

The report outlines the staffs' current activities; their work to support Quaker meetings; training and development; safer recruitment; recording keeping; governance; and communications.

We also hear about how to instil and develop a safeguarding culture in BYM. We are pleased to hear that further work is underway this year to measure how this develops.

We are responsible for oversight of BYM's own safeguarding policy which we note is under review – along with the underlying procedures – in consultation with a professional safeguarding agency. We note further that the revised policy will be submitted to us at a future meeting for our approval.

Following a discussion relating to a programme run by the Quiet Company which posed a potential safeguarding risk, we ask that any future programmes developed

which carry a safeguarding risk have clear governance in place for the management of that risk.

Safeguarding at BYM and in our Quaker meetings is a priority. We are updated on the outcome of a safeguarding investigation that consumed considerable staff time. Although the incident related to an Area Meeting, it helped both affirm the soundness of our policies and areas of good practice as well as being an opportunity to clarify and improve some of our own approach. We are grateful to those leading this work and ensuring we all remember that this is a responsibility shared by us all.

BYMT/24/06/05 Audit annual report

We note paper BYMT 2024 06 04 reporting to us on: the work of the Audit Committee in 2023, its current priorities and the plan of its work for 2024. We note the Committee's remarks on its changing role and we plan to return to this when we discuss our committee structure later in this meeting.

BYMT/24/06/06 Recording Clerk's report

We receive a report from the Recording Clerk and Management Meeting informing us of new and positive developments as well as areas of concern. We also receive the reporting dashboard dated May 2024 with indicators of key information on compliance, communications and organisational health.

We welcomed the new format of the report, and ask that we continue to receive it in this form.

BYMT/24/06/07 Finance report

We have heard an update from the Finance Director along with receiving paper BYMT 2024 06 06.

We have considered:

- the progress of preparing the 2023 accounts and the associated external audit. We are pleased that the audit process is currently on track to meet the expected timelines. We plan to meet virtually on 18 July at 8.30 am to approve the accounts in time for Yearly Meeting
- the levels of expenditure and designated funds
- the management accounts for quarter 1 of 2024
- an update on property matters including the lease of Drayton House and the current status of the sale of Lesser Slatters.

We are asked to confirm our support for Friends House (London) Hospitality Ltd in an annual letter of support. We ask our Treasurer and our Clerk to sign on our behalf.

BYMT/24/06/08 Quiet Company annual report

We hear from Paul Whitehouse and Carolyn Hayman, Quiet Company Board members who introduce the report and give us highlights from the 2023 report and key issues for 2024.

We record our gratitude to the Board and the staff of Quiet Company who have contributed to the strong recovery of the company following the pandemic and who have made 2023 an outstanding year for performance so that conferencing, hospitality, the café and the bookshop have all exceeded expectations.

The Quiet Company puts faith back into business, one event at a time, and is indeed a beacon in the hospitality industry while raising income for Britain Yearly Meeting that we are able to use towards our work.

The report also looks ahead to 2024 and the Company's development plan.

We note that Matt Baker's term as clerk will end at the end of the year and that existing board member Carol Rowntree Jones will take on the role for 2025. The search is underway for a clerk to begin a full term of service in 2026.

We also note that the company's performance in quarter 1 of 2024 is down on expectations and budget. This may be due in part to overconfident budget in light of the excellent performance in 2023. There are issues to be addressed, for instance the relatively high level of staff sickness, the company's costs structures and improvement needed in the bookshop. The café is exceeding its budget targets.

We have had an opportunity to see for ourselves the programme of refurbishments at Swarthmoor Hall, a property that we hold in trust on behalf of the entire Quaker world. The work is being funded by restricted funds we hold for the benefit of maintaining the estate. The appointment of a new manager, John Moffat, offers the opportunity of investing in marketing the facilities available, and generating more income for the benefit of maintaining the site, and contributing to the outreach efforts of BYM as a whole.

BYMT/24/06/09 Collections development and management annual report

We receive an annual report (paper BYMT 2024 06 08) from Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives, on collections development and management, and Libby joins us for this item.

We note updates on new acquisitions and collecting activity in 2023 (including the impact of the closure of Woodbrooke Centre), development work including the refurbishment of the reading room at Friends House and the work at Swarthmoor Hall, and plans for 2024–2026 aided by additional resource to ensure this is delivered.

We are reminded of the potential impact of current decisions on the shape and content of our collection in the future. We hear of efforts to focus staff resources to reflect priority areas including engaging broader audiences in Quaker heritage and witness. We welcome the efforts to work across the organisation including the Quiet Company and Communications to increase the accessibility of our Quaker story. We look forward to hearing in future reports of the fruits of this important work.

BYMT/24/06/10 Information Governance annual report

We receive paper BYMT 2024 06 09 with a report on information governance and we are joined by Libby Adams, Head of Library and Archives, who holds operational management of this area of work.

We did not have any major data breaches in 2023. We note an incident regarding the introduction of a new finance system that led to some data being visible to more staff than necessary. We are reassured the risk is low, does not need to be reported to regulators and that Management Meeting is dealing with this matter appropriately.

We note staff undertook a revised scoring exercise of our compliance using the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) accountability framework. We note some areas have improved, while some areas need attention; the report outlines the plans to address these matters.

As well as BYM's data governance, staff also provide support to meetings on their own information governance. The report includes a summary of this support in 2023.

We raise the following points in discussion:

- how risks that may arise in operational areas are escalated in the organisation in hybrid work environments and actions taken thus far
- the functioning of the information governance group
- the dynamics of raising of operational concerns within the organisation.

We ask that Management Meeting brings a paper on the internal processes of raising concerns to us following their further considerations of the issue.

BYMT/24/06/11 Review of Central Structures

We welcome Margaret Bryan, clerk of Group to Review Central Structures (GRCS), and Sarah Donaldson, consultant in Quaker Church Affairs to our meeting.

We receive paper BYMT 2024 06 10 updating us on recent work of GRCS, along with the outline of the emerging proposal. We note the group is working through the details of how this proposal may work in practice. We also receive minutes from the Group's meetings in February, April and May 2024.

The paper sets out a timeline for future stages of work and asks trustees for input.

We asked the team for clarification of some of the structures underpinning the on-going discernment relating to simplification and their relationship to wider Yearly Meeting engagement.

We review the detail of the functions outlined in the structure diagram including changes to language to reflect the will of the Society and the relationships between various functions of testing, threshing, planning and stewardship.

We affirm and uphold the work of the Group as they continue to develop the proposals to include:

- Reflecting the central work supported by trustees alongside the work of Quaker Recognised Bodies and natural networks of shared interests that operate outside that framework
- Designing a nominations process that is more inclusive and involves more people willing to give service for a shorter period of time
- Demonstrating the dynamic relationships between the different parts of structures

BYMT/24/06/12 Communications strategy: more proactive and focussed communications

We are joined by Head of Communications and Fundraising, David Loxton, who has introduced his paper (BYMT 2024 06 11).

The proposed strategy – More proactive and focussed communications – supersedes the current strategy and covers the period to 2027.

The document sets out how to build on the achievements of the past three years so that our communications help deliver our strategic priorities and address the mitigation of two of our strategic-level risks: a reduction in membership and unsustainable reduction in income.

In considering the paper, we discussed:

- The importance and framing of communications support of outreach and how local meetings respond to the results of outreach
- Staffing capacity to support the strategy
- Measures of success that are under consideration including reach and engagement

We approve this strategy as a mechanism for managing communications activities for the next 3 years and ask Management Meeting to implement it in the context of other pressures on existing resources.

BYMT/24/06/13 A fresh look at our strategic risks

We welcome Jane-Eve Straughton, Governance Manager in Quaker Church Affairs, to our meeting.

Paper BYMT 2024 06 12 includes an update on how the seven strategic-level risks are being managed.

We have discussed the two top risks, SLR1 (Major changes to Quaker community) and SLR2 (Operating model becomes unsustainable or unstable). We agreed that they are both too broad, and need to be better focused.

There may be merit in separating the risks concerning “people” (SLR1) and income (SLR2). We considered the instability of income streams and the cumulative effect of unpredictability which make it more difficult to plan.

We ask Management Meeting to reflect on the detailed points made and noted, in particular differentiating between risks and issues, and return to us with a revised draft of how these risks can be articulated.

Next year we will be considering the next iteration of the strategic priorities for the next five years, and will be discussing these with the Yearly Meeting. The work that is being done on risk management needs to inform that process and be aligned with it.

BYMT/24/06/14 Board effectiveness

We have received an update on four areas of effectiveness we previously agreed to prioritise: diversity of the trustee body, induction, accessibility of documentation and support for our meetings.

Areas of possible development suggested in our discussion of our effectiveness are, firstly some experiments we can undertake such as:

- Using Teams to raise questions and comment on the papers as part of our preparation for our time together
- Having a rolling programme of training in key areas for trustees such as anti-racism/anti-oppression, safeguarding, trusteeship
- Considering the role of the exchange of information about our Quaker lives summarised in Trustee news to include any training undertaken
- Reflecting on the processes relating to trustee meetings

We ask staff to come back to us at a future meeting with an overview of Friends' thinking and existing information within the charity sector on how we might address the economic barriers to charitable service facing Friends.

BYMT/24/06/15 BYMT's committee structure

Our trustee body is currently served by three standing committees: Finance, IT and Property Committee (FIPC – previously called Finance and Property Committee), Audit Committee (AC) and Employment Committee (EC). Paper BYMT 2024 06 14 encourages us to consider if this arrangement is working – particularly the roles of FIPC and AC along with the relationship between FIPC and Friends Trusts Ltd (FTL).

The paper also includes a draft memorandum of understanding with FTL for our consideration.

We agree the following points:

- Maintaining separate FIPC and Internal Audit & Risk Committees and the clarification of their respective terms of reference to ensure it is clear that the function of Audit Committee is internal audit issues
- We will agree a clear work programme for Audit Committee and that it is resourced appropriately to carry out its work

We agree that our clerk should sign the memorandum of understanding with Friends Trusts Ltd. We understand that this will in future mean that we will appoint some Directors of Friends Trusts Ltd to serve as members of our Finance, IT & Property Committee.

We ask staff to prepare revised terms of reference reflecting these changes for approval at a later meeting.

BYMT/24/06/16 Reparations

Ann Morgan, the convener of the Reparations Working Group and a member of Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith Relations, joined us for a discussion on how we are called to respond to the Yearly Meeting's minute on reparations.

We are impressed by the commitment of Friends who are leading this work on our behalf in meticulously researching and documenting the whole story of the Quaker involvement in the transatlantic chattel slave trade at both institutional and individual/family level. The first step in reparation work is to acknowledge and understand our history – the whole of it, the prophetic vision and the defiance, the faithfulness and disregard for discipline and failing to recognise that of God in other human beings. We see much the same in our own days, when the Spirit, clearly heard in our Yearly Meeting calling us to new witness, is often hindered from rapid progress by resistance in our own midst.

Time will come when apologies will need to be offered, and more tangible reparations. We cannot do this work alone, and must engage with the communities who have inherited the disadvantage of this sad history, so that we may be properly guided in doing what is just in mitigating, to the best of our ability, the great harm that has been done, and from which many of us have inherited unearned privilege.

We note receipt of minutes from the Reparations Working Group meetings on 21 March and 18 May.

BYMT/24/06/17 Appointments

Group to Review Central Structures

The terms of reference for the Group to Review Central Structures need to be revised to allow the appointment of additional trustees and of a non-trustee as convener. The following changes are agreed (new wording marked in bold type):

2.1 The Group shall consist of:

- Up to ~~three~~ **four** Friends serving as BYM Trustees at the time of appointment on the nomination of BYM Trustees' Nominations Group
- 1 member of the Group to Review Yearly Meeting, Yearly Meeting Gatherings and Meeting for Sufferings on the nomination of this group
- 1 or both co-clerks (or their designate) from Central Nominations Committee (CNC) on the nomination of CNC
- 1 or both co-clerks (or their designate) from Quaker Peace & Social Witness Central Committee (QPSWCC)
- 1 or both co-clerks (Quaker Life Central Committee)
- **Up to two additional Friends (if required) on the nomination of BYM Trustees' Nominations Group**

2.3 Trustees will appoint a convener from among the ~~Trustee~~ members of the Group.

The following appointments were made by the Clerks as between-meeting decisions and are noted here for recording:

- **Kit Fotheringham**, BYM trustee to serve with immediate effect for the lifetime of the review
- **Margaret Bryan** (York Area Meeting) to serve as convenor with immediate effect for the lifetime of the review

Employment committee

The following appointments were made by the Clerks as between-meeting decisions and are noted here for recording:

- **Ursula Fuller** to serve for 3 years (from now until end December 2026)
- **Ellie Harding** to be released from service with immediate effect

Audit Committee

The following appointments were made by the Clerks as between-meeting decisions and are noted here for recording:

- **Liz Redfern** to serve for 3 years (from now until end December 2026)
- **Kit Fotheringham** to be released from service with immediate effect

Finance IT & Property Committee

The following appointments were made by the Clerks as between-meeting decisions and are noted here for recording:

- **Jo Hills** to serve for 3 years (from 16 April until end December 2026)
- **Danielle Walker Palmour** to be released from service from 15 April 2024

Nominations Group

BYMT Clerks bring forward the following proposed changes to the BYMT Nominations Group:

- **Ursula Fuller** to serve for 3 years (from now until end December 2026)

The end dates for the two current serving members of the Nominations Group will be revised to achieve better rotation and continuity:

- **Kate Gulliver** will now serve until the end of December 2024
- **Silas Price** will now serve until the end of December 2025

We agree these appointments.

BYMT/24/06/18 Memorandum of understanding between constituent charities of the Religious Society of Friends

We receive paper BYMT 2024 06 17 from the Deputy Recording Clerk on the current position of the memorandum of understanding between trustee bodies of area/general meetings and BYM. The final version of the document is included in our papers.

Area and general meetings are now signing this document and returning it to BYM.

We agree to enter into this memorandum of understanding between the organisations forming the Religious Society of Friends in Britain, on this date and authorise our clerk to sign the document on our behalf between each area and general meeting. We will retain a copy of each document for reference alongside our other key governance documents.

BYMT/24/06/19 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/24/06/20 Trustees' news

We received a report of recent activities of the clerk and treasurer (BYMT 2024 06 18). In our meeting we have heard updates from Kit King, Kate Gulliver and Catherine Brown on developments in their Quaker service.

BYMT/24/06/21 Preparing for Yearly Meeting

We have reviewed the most recent Meeting for Sufferings and prepared for Yearly Meeting in July.

BYMT/24/06/22 Reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting.

BYMT/24/06/23 Time with Recording Clerk

BYMT/24/06/24 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

As we close our meeting we look forward to joining local Friends in Swarthmoor Local Meeting, still held in the building, once a barn and cottage, bought by George Fox and gifted to Friends for the purpose of holding worship. We remember the many journeys Friends made from this beautiful and isolated place, reaching so many faraway countries. Later this year the whole family of Friends will gather in a plenary meeting in Durban, South Africa. Some of us will be joining in person or virtually. All of us will uphold Friends as they bear witness to the faith and hope that have sustained our community in such diverse places and times, and will go on leading us closer to the Kingdom of love and justice we long for.

Marisa Johnson
Clerk