

Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees

Friday 22 November, by video conference

Minutes

Present: Georgina Bailey (minutes BYMT/24/11/01 to 08 and BYMT/24/11/15 to 19); Catherine Brown (until minute BYMT/24/11/15), Kit Fotheringham (minutes BYMT/24/11/09 to 19), Ursula Fuller, Ellie Harding (minute BYMT/24/11/01 to 08 and BYMT/24/11/17 to 19), Carolyn Hayman, Marisa Johnson (Clerk), Kit King, Silas Price, Danielle Walker Palmour (Assistant Clerk), Liz Redfern, Paul Whitehouse (Treasurer) (minutes BYMT/24/11/09 to 19)

Prevented: Jo Hills, Oliver Robertson

In attendance: Siobhán Haire, Deputy Recording Clerk; Vipan Narang, Finance Director; Paul Parker, Recording Clerk; Lisa San Martín, CEO Quiet Company

Visitors: Lis Burch, Liz Law and John Lewis, incoming Trustees from 1 January 2025; Simon Best, Woodbrooke (minute BYMT/24/11/14); Margaret Bryan, Convener Group to Review Central Structures (minute BYMT/24/11/15); Sarah Donaldson, consultant (minute BYMT/24/11/15); Jane-Eve Straughton, Quaker Church Affairs (minute BYMT/24/11/09 to 11)

BYMT/24/11/01 Welcome and introductions, agenda check, conflicts of interest check

There are no unrecorded conflicts of interest.

We considered our agenda.

During our opening worship, we heard read John Woolman, *Quaker faith & practice* 26.61: *There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath different names; it is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep and inward, confined to no forms of religion nor excluded from anywhere the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren.*

BYMT/24/11/02 Continuing business

We receive a list of continuing minutes, including the minute BYMT/24/09/05 BYM Trustee Meeting Dates following our meeting in September, to note.

BYMT/24/11/03 Minutes received

We receive the following minutes:

- Audit Committee, 10 September 2024
- Reparations Working Group 19 September and 12 October 2024

BYMT/24/11/04 Submission of annual return to Charity Commission

We note confirmation that the annual return and submission of the annual accounts for 2023 to the Charity Commission have been completed ahead of the deadline.

BYMT/24/11/05 Lesser Slatters

The potential sale of Lesser Slatters as noted in minute: 'BYMT/24/02/29 Lesser Slatters – sale of property' fell through.

The property was put back on the market and revalued by an independent designated adviser. It was sold on 29 October 2024 for £260,000.

Trustees have seen the Designated Adviser's Report by Jo Maynard dated 14 October 2024 and are content that the final offer was in line with the market value of the property.

The sale contract was signed by Paul Whitehouse and Danielle Walker Palmour as previously agreed.

BYMT/24/11/06 Recording Clerk's report

We receive a report covering September to November 2024 from the Recording Clerk and Management Meeting. It sets out new and positive developments as well as areas of concern. We also receive the reporting dashboard dated November 2024 with indicators of key information on compliance, communications and organisational health.

The autumn has been very busy, with a lot going on internally and externally, more than usual because the summer Yearly Meeting concentrated the activity of the latter part of the year.

Later in this meeting we shall consider a proposal to add capacity to the Senior Management Team to continue to do the great deal of work required to move to a continuing Yearly Meeting in 2026, as per the decision taken by Yearly Meeting earlier this year.

Quakers in Britain have been active in supporting the charity sector and civil society space to mitigate the very serious consequences of legislation enacted by previous governments to restrict the ability of the sector to protest and campaign.

Members of Management Meeting provided us with further clarification of items covered in the report and responded to the questions we posed to them. We thank the team for this helpful overview.

BYMT/24/11/07 Health, safety and environmental committee annual report 2024

We receive a report on the work of the Health, Safety and Environmental committee for the past year (BYMT 2024 11 05), introduced by Lisa San Martín. The report outlines the essential work to ensure we meet our obligations on building compliance and making Friends House, Swarthmoor Hall and the Yorkshire Centre safe for our visitors and staff. We note what has been put in place to implement our lone-worker system to support staff who work outside of our buildings and who often travel, such as local development workers. We appreciate the steps taken following accidents and the central place that training is given. The report also covers sustainability; unsurprisingly, as Friends House continues to welcome back increasing numbers of users following closures during the Covid pandemic, we see that measures such as carbon emissions have risen. Carbon emissions have also grown because they now include additional measures – such as the carbon cost of employee travelling to work and IT software.

We heard that Kirsty Baker has replaced Tony Richards as Head of Estates & Facilities following his departure in September. We note the Committee affirms it has

sufficient in-house expertise to carry out its work without external consultancy support.

We note the issue raised in relation to moving on homeless people in our properties and how we do this with respect and love. We are glad to hear that there is on-going work with a homelessness charity to connect people to suitable services and that this work will continue.

BYMT/24/11/08 Finance matters

a) Finance, IT & Property Committee minutes and Quarter 3 management accounts

We receive minutes of the Finance, IT and Property Committee, from its meeting on 12 November 2024 and a quarter three report on our finances in 2024 (papers BYMT 2024 11 06a and 06b).

We note that legacy income is below projections and we will seek to manage this risk in the 2025 budget in the next item.

We note income is £1.54m below budget while expenditure is also below budget by £0.5m.

We are pleased that the finance and IT functions are continuing to develop their systems and ways and working. In particular, we thank Elizabeth Redfern for her work with the IT team on the Customer Relationship Management system and project management.

b) Loan facility for Quiet Company

We have heard that there is a need to change the arrangement for the debenture we have in place with Quiet Company. We authorise our Clerk to sign a letter to the Board of Directors of Quiet Company proposing a reduction in the loan facility to £0.5m and changing the way it is treated in the annual accounts.

BYMT/24/11/09 Budget 2025

We receive a proposed budget for 2025 and note Finance, IT and Property Committee's minute FIPC 24/56 recommending it to us for approval. The Recording Clerk and our Finance Director introduced this item, outlining the improved processes in the finance department and beyond in relation to the good stewardship of funds given to us to manage in support of Quaker work. We hear that the budget before us represents an operating deficit of £1.24m on unrestricted funds and that efforts in coming years will aim to return us to a balanced position.

We hear that key changes in approach proposed in 2025 concern the use of some of the Risk Management Fund established for the purpose of smoothing variations in income and maintaining current levels of staffing.

We approve the proposed budget, including changing our reserves policy to require the maintenance of our reserves at a target level of 4 months' operating costs. We thank the staff for the work that has gone into improving our capacity to set a realistic budget.

BYMT/24/11/10 Operational plan 2025–27

We receive paper BYMT 2024 11 07b which introduces the operational plan document. The Deputy Recording Clerk has expanded on the report.

We note the operational plan document evolves over time and is used as a tool by Management Meeting and Operational Managers to monitor progress and delivery. That said, we are told the plan covering next year and beyond has been built from scratch based on key priorities for centrally managed work. Operational Managers and Management Meeting did this work together to help create a whole-organisation approach to planning.

We acknowledge that this document is primarily a working document for management and staff, and should follow a format that is best suited to this purpose. We also need to maintain our overview of the work that we report back to Yearly Meeting about. We need to have enough insight into the detail to be able to understand the best use of resources when making decision on priorities. We will continue to be in dialogue with staff over the best presentation of this important information.

We approve the operational plan.

BYMT/24/11/11 Risk management

We are joined by Jane-Eve Straughton, Governance Manager in Quaker Church Affairs, for this item.

At our meeting in June 2024 we asked staff to reconsider strategic level risks 1 and 2 and bring back proposals to us. We now receive these along with an update on how all the strategic-level risks are being managed (paper BYMT 2024 11 08).

We endorse new wording for Strategic Level Risks (SLR) 1 and 2 and SLR 3 to bring the risk approach into better alignment with operational and other plans. We hear that these changes provide more clarity and transparency to risk management as well as the possibility of accommodating change. We are also asked to endorse a light touch review of tools and techniques for risk management.

We note the recast risks will enable the risks to align to operational activity and see more clearly the distribution of responsibilities for risks. We ask that Management Meeting further consider this.

We agree these changes and ask staff to work with Audit and Risk Committee in order to draw on their expertise.

BYMT/24/11/12 Appointments

We receive the following nominations and request for release from our Nominations Group:

Assistant Clerk

- Kit King to serve 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2026

Anti-oppression champion

- Release Kit King from 31 December 2024

Audit Committee

- Janet Slade (Manchester and Warrington AM) to serve as an external member for a second term 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027

Employment committee

- Ursula Fuller to serve as Clerk 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2026

Quiet Company

- Carol Rowntree Jones (Leicester AM) to serve as Clerk 1 January to 31 December 2025
- Tony Clodd (Mid Essex AM) to serve as an external member for a second term 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2027

BYMT Elder

- Danielle Walker Palmour to serve 1 January to 31 December 2025

Health & Safety champion

- Ursula Fuller to serve 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2026

Lead trustee for Safeguarding

- Silas Price to serve 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2026

Trustees make appointments to the Reparations Working Group receiving nominations from bodies represented on this group. At this meeting the following names are brought for appointment:

Reparations Working Group

- Rita Remi-Judah (North West London AM), representative from Black, Brown, People of Colour Friends Fellowship
- Debby Flack (Staffordshire AM), representative from Black, Brown, People of Colour Friends Fellowship
- Ann Davison (Southern Marches AM), representative from Meeting for Sufferings

We agree to these appointments and release from service and thank Nominations Group for bringing us this report.

BYMT/24/11/13 Reparations Working Group

We receive a report from the Reparations Working Group summarising their work over the past year (BYMT 2024 11 12). We hear from Paul Whitehouse who represents BYM Trustees on the Working Group. We reflect that this work is an on-going area of concern for Friends and that a continuing Yearly Meeting may provide more opportunities for dialogue and engagement with the wider body of Friends. We thank the group for this report and wish them well for their continued work.

BYMT/24/11/14 Climate Crisis: spiritual nurture and learning project

We are joined by Simon Best, Woodbrooke's Head of Programmes and Partnerships.

We receive an annual update on progress of this project being delivered by Woodbrooke. Simon highlighted the growth in participation and engagement with the Eco-Church scheme, especially in relation to Quaker buildings; the development of networks and ways of connecting Friends engaged in this work; signposting to the

Faith in Action team in Quaker Peace & Social Witness, particularly to ensure that the progress made can continue to develop beyond the end of the programme.

We thank Simon and the Woodbrooke team for this comprehensive report and some initial ideas on how the impact achieved thus far might be made sustainable after 2025.

BYMT/24/11/15 Group to review central structures

We are joined by Margaret Bryan, Convener of the Group to Review Central Structures (GRCS) and Sarah Donaldson, consultant in Quaker Church Affairs.

We receive an update from the Group along with minutes from GRCS meetings on 2 September and 18 October (paper BYMT 2024 11 09).

The Group has consulted widely and received a large number of responses. Having reviewed these responses, the Group considers that now is not the right time to continue with the proposal to create a new single central committee with oversight of the centrally managed work. The Group wishes us to encourage the existing Central Committees, as time and resources allow, to experiment with new ways to engage Friends in participating in central Quaker work.

The Group also highlights a key concern over prioritisation of resources, made more complex by the artificial division between Worship and Witness in our current structure. They have encouraged Trustees to seek ways to remove this division in the prioritisation of resources within the scope of Trustees' existing responsibilities as set out in *Quaker faith & practice* 8.18.

The paper asks some specific questions of trustees, answered in our discernment below.

We need to listen to respondents, as well as be mindful of the voices not represented, and the significant proportion of Friends who have welcomed the proposal to simplify our central structures. We will consider how we can go forward in ways that respond to the discernment of Yearly Meeting requesting us to move to simple structures. We understand the complexity of being more transparent about the ways we prioritise resources against a challenging backdrop. We also wish to wait to see how the introduction of a continuing Yearly Meeting will affect both engagement, participation and oversight of governance decisions.

We agree with the recommendation that the current proposal is not ready to be put to Yearly Meeting 2025. We would welcome further thinking by Management Meeting on how trustees might more effectively prioritise resources to support Quaker work within their current authority, and would welcome a paper on this from the Recording Clerk in 2025.

We are keen to take forward the work of encouraging participation by more, and more diverse, Friends in the centrally managed work further. We will engage the Central Committees in finding strategies to enable this. Experimentation in this area can be used to inform future structural changes when the time is right.

We are grateful to the current GRCS members, and to those who have served previously in the several years the matter has been under consideration, particularly our trustees Carolyn Hayman, Ellie Harding and Kate Gulliver. We believe that the

work of the group should be considered complete after they have had an opportunity to debrief and bring us a concluding reflection and recommendations for developing further the work that has been done so far.

BYMT/24/11/16 Preparing for Meeting for Sufferings

We have prepared for Meeting for Sufferings on 7 December 2024. The clerk will prepare an oral report, with support from the treasurer on the 2025 budget, which will be circulated to members of Meeting for Sufferings with the minutes of the meeting on 7 December.

BYMT/24/11/17 Time with Recording Clerk

We spent time with the Recording Clerk.

a) Additional Management Meeting capacity to support changes to governance

We receive a paper from the Recording Clerk proposing the creation of a part-time position of Senior Change Leader: Quaker Governance, for a fixed term of two years. This post would add capacity to Management Meeting. We understand there will be an open recruitment process. We ask our clerks to arrange for the involvement of a BYM Trustee in the recruitment.

BYMT/24/11/18 Communicating our work and reviewing the meeting

We have reviewed the meeting and heard reflections from retiring BYM Trustees and new appointees. We heard about the new Governance news feed and look forward to seeing the opportunities that this will open up to share more about ourselves and our work.

BYMT/24/11/19 Time without staff

We have spent time without staff.

Marisa Johnson
Clerk