

**CENTRAL ENGLAND QUAKERS  
MEETING FOR CHURCH AFFAIRS  
Blended Meeting July 2021  
on 15.07.2021 at 18.00 hrs  
Warwick Meeting House and Zoom**

Clerk: Alison Ironside  
Assisting: Stella Roberts  
Assisting: Vic Grainger (on ZOOM)

**Agenda**

1. Opening Worship
2. Representatives
3. Membership Matters
4. Memorial Minute
5. Minutes and Notes Received
6. CEQ Safeguarding Report and Policy
7. Meeting for Sufferings Report
8. Edgbaston Vision Group Report
9. Nominations and Appointments

Warwick Meeting will be pleased to welcome any Quakers booked in for Area Meeting on 15th July to bring a picnic to eat in the garden beforehand.

Warwick Friends expect to be serving warm drinks from 5pm before AM

## From Cotteridge LM: 2021/25 Memorial Minute for Val Hill

*Ring the bells that still can ring  
Forget your perfect offering  
There is a crack, a crack in everything  
That's how the light gets in (\*1)*

Our Friend Val Hill died on 17th May 2021. We have considered in worship how we have witnessed the Grace of God through Val's life.

Val was a woman of wisdom. Her understanding of people and her quiet presence in meeting were a clear sign of the divine grace. She trained as a nurse but found her vocation later in life when she trained as a counsellor and psychotherapist. She had not had an easy life and knew how life's events could hurt. She was able to listen carefully and reframe difficulties enabling us to see things more approachably.

Many in our meeting have spoken in gratitude of her spoken ministry, often supported by a poem or quote from her little notebook. Her ministry was profound and captured an awareness of the spirit.

*[...] provide me [...]  
[...] a white light  
in the back of my mind to guide me. (\*2)*

We are grateful for the Light Val has shown us at Cotteridge Meeting and we send this minute to Area Meeting.

*\*1 from Anthem by Leonard Cohen*

*\*2 from Prayer before birth by Louis Macneice*

# MINUTES & NOTES RECEIVED

---

## **From: CEQ Meeting House Management Group**

The Meeting House Management Group met on Monday 14 June 2021 and the final item on the agenda was concern for the Friends continuing to meet at Barnt Green & Redditch and Kings Heath local meetings. Although this is outside the remit of MHMG, the current situation is relevant to some of our decisions about the care and management of properties. Now that the responsibility for the finances and buildings is with trustees the Friends are able to focus on building their worshipping communities and their own spiritual lives.

We are pleased that the Elders & Oversees Support Group and others are seeking ways to support these Friends. However, we are aware that the area meeting discerned that it does need to look more carefully at our infrastructure and find ways of simplifying some of our local meetings.

Twelve area meeting friends attended the Woodbrooke/BYM Simpler Meetings course in the spring, and we hope that any insights gained from this programme can be shared with the area meeting soon. Then we can find creative and new ways for Friends to meet as a local meeting without having too many roles and responsibilities.

We ask that an action plan is brought to area meeting to explore how ideas from the Simpler Meetings project can support some of our local meetings.

We ask that this section of the notes of the meeting is sent to the area meeting clerk.

Clare Peat, James Bradbury, Mina Tilt, Bob Morris, Judith Jenner, Claire Bowman, Andrew Callan (ex-officio) and Wendy Wolfendale (ex-officio)

---

## **From: Bull Street LM**

### **Minute 2021/38**

A concern has been shared that some Area Meeting papers are circulated late.

Important and complex matters, such as safeguarding, need more time for fuller consideration and discernment.

The Meeting asks that the Clerk forwards this Minute to the Area Meeting Clerk in advance of the next Area Meeting of Central England Quakers on July 15th

# CEQ Safeguarding Report

## The new BYM and CEQ Safeguarding Policy

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, (2014) set up by the British government to examine “whether public bodies and other non-state institutions have taken seriously their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse in England and Wales”, included the investigation of all churches and faith groups.

BYM safeguarding policy and practice was found to be generally effective, although changes in the law and a growing awareness of the range and incidence of abuse in faith communities, prompted an interrogation of current practice. BYM worked with the organisation Red Snapper to complete an audit of its practices, policies and record keeping, and interviewed a number of safeguarding coordinators of LMs across the country. Working closely with 31:8<sup>1</sup> (formerly Churches Child Protection & Advisory Service CCPAS) BYM prepared a new safeguarding policy that would be in line with other churches and faith groups and fit for purpose in the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Area Meeting Safeguarding Co-ordinators, Sarah Fishpool, Carole Pannell and Marina Manassei, received the new policy from BYM in 2020, and together with Tricia Bradbury, have been working together to make the policy relevant to CEQ. The Policy has been approved by Trustees and is now coming before Area Meeting. We have until December 2022 to complete the roll out of the policy, which may sound like a long way ahead, but there is still much to be done. Not only is there the written policy, there is also a ‘Toolkit’ which offers information, guidance and a variety of forms to cover most eventualities from reporting abuse to risk assessments. We have yet to complete the work to make the Toolkit relevant to CEQ by, for example, completing details of safeguarding leads, and district contacts for social services.

Juliet Prager’s introductory letter to the proposed new safeguarding policy from BYM sent in December 2020 indicates that there will be new ways of working and describes four key changes to the safeguarding policy:

The four key changes:

1. In every AM, one of the AM Trustees will act as Safeguarding Co-ordinator. *Currently Tricia Bradbury is the link trustee with responsibilities for safeguarding so she will be acting as safeguarding co-ordinator. Tricia will be supported by deputy Safeguarding coordinators; Carole Pannell & Marina Manassei.*
2. Area and Local Meetings will use ‘safer recruitment’ for nominating and appointing some roles. *This means that there will be an increase in roles requiring DBS checks.*
3. Each AM will send a short written annual report to Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM). *There is a form to be completed by LMs that will feed into the AM report to BYM.*
4. AMs are asked to update their policies and procedures using the model documents provided by BYM.

---

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs 31:8 Open your mouth for those with no voice.

These changes have been agreed by Quaker Life Central Committee, following careful consideration, consultation with expert agencies, and discussion with Friends who hold safeguarding roles in local and area meetings.

The letter acknowledges that some 'will feel daunted by the amount of material and some of the changes suggested. If so, I hope I can reassure you that all of this is a really positive step forward in demonstrating our commitment to keeping children and vulnerable adults safe'. In the penultimate paragraph of the letter, Juliet Prager writes, 'I know we all want our Meetings to grow. We want new people to experience Quaker worship - young people, families, ex- offenders, and seekers from all walks of life. Keeping the doors wide open means *we have to make sure everyone is safe*, and can be fully included in our Quaker communities'.

Welcoming all, means protecting all, and that is what this policy seeks to do. To some, the detail in this policy may seem contradictory to our message of 'All are Welcome' and not in the spirit of Quaker Worship and values. Sadly, those of us involved in Safeguarding are well aware that trusting in 'that of God in everyone', will not necessarily keep us all safe. It is, therefore, our responsibility, and our duty of care to put in place mechanisms to protect everyone. Inevitably this will mean that more people will be expected to undergo safeguarding training and DBS checks. This may feel as though the trust that we have in one another, and which forms the basis of our relationships, is being undermined, and we anticipate that some may struggle with this. Our hope is that these changes are accepted willingly, in the understanding that they have been made after much consultation and careful consideration and with the safety of our Friends, young and old, at the heart of this endeavour.

We are planning to distribute hard copies of the Policy to all Local Meeting Clerks and to provide training in the late Autumn/ Early Spring to introduce the toolkit. This training will be for Local Meetings' Clerks, representatives of Elders and Overseers, and those who are involved in running children's meetings and events. There will also be separate training for Nominations Committees on Safer Recruitment.

*Report author: Carole Pannell - written in collaboration with Tricia Bradbury and Marina Manassei*

29 June 2021

## Meeting for Sufferings Report

Meeting held via zoom videoconferencing on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### Main agenda items

- Quaker Recognised Bodies
- Young adult representation on Meeting for Sufferings
- Report from BYM trustees and BYM treasurer
- Meeting for Sufferings dates for 2021 – 22
- Minutes from Area Meetings
- Quaker Peace and Social Witness strategy
- Supporting Quaker communities

Here is the link to the papers for this meeting:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/meeting-for-sufferings/papers-and-minutes>

the meeting began with worship, during which one of the elders read out to us from Quaker Faith and Practice, 23.10:

*We need both a deeper spirituality and a more outspoken witness. If our spirituality can reach the depths of authentic prayer, our lives will become an authentic witness for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, a witness which becomes the context for our prayer. Out of the depths of authentic prayer comes a longing for peace and a passion for justice. And our response to violence and injustice is to pray more deeply, because only God can show us the way out of the mess that the world is in. And only God gives us the strength to follow that Way.*

There were 94 Friends at Meeting for Sufferings, that's four zoom screens to keep in mind, or in sight. Excellent tech support is provided, and over the last eighteen months we have all improved our zoom-knowledge. One difference for this meeting was that the clerks and the assistant recording clerk were all at the newly opened Leeds Hub.

### **Quaker Recognised Bodies**

In 2015 MfS agreed a new way for BYM to relate to other Quaker groups; a Quaker Recognised Body is an independent group where concerned Friends explore a common interest, seek affirmation, or carry out witness. Once a group is registered, it participates in a periodic review to reaffirm its recognition and registration. At today's meeting we were asked to renew the registration of five QRBs: Quaker Disability Equality Group; Quaker Values in Education; Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs; Quaker Decriminalisation Network; and Quaker Roots (formerly Roots of Resistance). The recommendations in the paper (MfS 2021 07 07) were accepted.

### **Young Adult Representation on Meeting for Sufferings (MfS 2021 07 09)**

The Engaging Young Adult Quakers project has been working to increase the involvement of young adults amongst Quakers in Britain since it began in 2017. One of the initiatives was to create four reserved places on MfS for young adult Friends (under the age of 35) until the end of the current triennium. The paper before us proposed bringing the experiment to an end and makes suggestions for future involvement:

- i) Encourage Area Meetings to nominate a representative or alternate who is under 50 years old;
- ii) A buddy or mentor system for young adult reps and alternates.

The young adults who took part generally agreed that it had been a good and positive experience, but had concerns about it being rather tokenistic as they had no appointing Quaker body to report back to. The area of difficulty in appointing young adult Quakers to MfS remains the system of Area Meeting representation. Many young adult Quakers do not necessarily have a close connection with an Area meeting.

Recommendations in the report suggest looking more creatively at the links a young adult Quaker may have to an Area Meeting - previous connection, for example.

Ministry expressed in the meeting felt that the AM/MfS link is very important; it is how we communicate from local to central quaker work. It will be a step towards increasing and improving our age-diversity if AMs can manage to appoint one representative or alternate who is under 50.

### **BYM trustees and treasurer – Caroline Nursey, clerk of trustees and Linda Batten, BYM treasurer**

Caroline began with a short update and clarification on the matter of slavery and the renaming of the William Penn room at Friends House: trustees are planning to hold threshing meetings to enable wider consultation; slavery is not just about names of rooms and needs much wider consideration.

Linda Batten told us the 2020 accounts and will shortly be published on the Quakers in Britain website. We are encouraged to read and spread the word! Covid obviously had a very big effect on income which is significant for our work. The Quiet Company in particular was badly hit by the pandemic and income from it dropped hugely from around £5m to £1.5 in 2020. There was also good and positive news – contributions from Friends, Meetings and Quaker bodies was significantly higher at £3m. We need sustained income and friends are urged to continue with or increase this level of contribution. To recover the loss of income, the contributions from Friends and Meetings would need to triple. The aim is to have a balanced budget by 2023.

Caroline Nursey spoke to us of the enormous amount of work the trustees have done during the pandemic, and answered many of the concerns expressed about the role and responsibilities of trustees. There has been disquiet amongst Friends at the redundancies at Friends House, and the reduction in some areas of centrally managed work. This is not just the result of the pandemic – in 2019 we heard that we will have to make choices; we cannot keep on exceeding our income!

### **Meeting for Sufferings dates**

Concern over reducing the number of meetings from five to four over the next triennium was expressed at the last meeting for Sufferings, and Arrangements committee was asked to review this. However, the review still recommended four meetings in 2022, but with online preparation sessions in advance of each meeting.

This was not well-received by the meeting. There were requests to look at our structures and responsibilities; to have time for real discernment; for meetings of trustees and sufferings to be more in synch with each other; for the Young People's Participation day not to be post.

The minute recorded that MfS in 2022 would meet as planned, plus two more meetings to be added.

### **Minutes from Area Meeting**

The renaming of the William Penn room was the matter in several minutes. We were assured that there is no intention to write William Penn out of Quaker history, but to rebalance our understanding of different people's experience.

North Wales AM sent a minute regarding Covid security in prisons: Local Meeting clerks are urged to contact their MPs asking them to address the issue of covid security in prison, including the availability of vaccination for both staff and the men and women leaving the facility.

## **Quaker Peace and Social Witness Central Committee strategy (MfS 2021 07 14)**

The papers for this item run to 24 pages: an introduction prepared by staff, minutes of QPSW Central Committee, and twelve pages of minutes sent by nine AMs.

Robert Almond and Jeff Beatty, clerks of QPSWCC spoke to the documents. They acknowledged some unhappiness being expressed in the Friend, and in the minutes from Area Meetings, and accepted that communication could have been better. It is necessary to read the papers to gain a real understanding of the complexities of this matter.

## **Supporting Quaker Communities (MfS 2021 07 15)**

Since April 2020 when the Quaker Life Central Committee's Strategy for Supporting Quaker Communities was shared with Meeting for Sufferings, staffing arrangements in Quaker Life have been reshaped.

We heard from staff member Rachel Matthews (Head of Supporting Quaker Communities), Wendy Hampton (Local Development Worker/North West), and Bridget Holtom (newly appointed LDW/Yorkshire).

Rachel talked us through the Integrated Strategy diagrams which set out how Quaker communities are being supported, and who is involved. Members of QL staff, Woodbrooke, and Local Development Workers are beginning to deliver on the strategy – staff restructuring has only been in place since May 2021. The themes of work remain 'Our Faith in the future' – thriving Quaker communities; Meeting for Worship is the bedrock; quaker communities are loving, inclusive, all-ag; all Friends understand and live by Quaker discipline.

## **Other business**

- i) Prison and court register – three Friends were recorded: MfS 2021 07 06.
- ii) The transfer of Leigh-on-Sea Local meeting to Mid-Essex Area Meeting was minuted.
- iii) The Simplification of Central Governance Structures: MfS 2021 07 11. This is a short first report, to explain what has been undertaken since last MfS. Five workshops have taken place and more are planned for wider consultation.

Cathy Khurana

# Edgbaston Vision Group Report to Central England Area Meeting

## 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021

### History of the Vision Group

Just at the point in 2020 when it became clear that Edgbaston Local Meeting was going to be laid down the Birmingham Centre for Arts Therapies contacted me via a friend. Once again BCAT was interested in making the building their base. Their interest had been thoroughly tested some time previously and it had been apparent to Friends that the building was actually too small for their needs. It was suddenly clear to me that the building was going to become a Quaker and Community Centre for Friends and local people and I told BCAT to accept another offer. I mentioned my vision for the building to various Friends who liked the idea and I was asked to come along to the forthcoming joint meeting of Trustees Property Committee and Elders and Overseers Support Group, convened to consider the future of Edgbaston meeting and meeting house, and tell them about it.

This group gave rise to a working group which met on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2020. Those present were enthusiastic about the concept of a Quaker and Community centre and decided to explore the option further.

I was asked to go ahead and make contact with people living near the meeting house and find out what interest there was in the idea of a Quaker and community centre. It was suggested that I speak to Liz Dancey in the first instance. Liz lives very near the meeting house and had been known to members of Edgbaston local meeting and other Friends for a long time. She was able to organise a meeting for me with eight people who all live very near the meeting house, which was held on Zoom on Monday the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2020. They were excited by the idea and had many suggestions. Their energy and commitment towards their culturally and spiritually diverse wider local community was inspiring.

On 24<sup>th</sup> October 2020 Area Meeting received the Edgbaston working group report and I gave a verbal report about my vision and the meeting with local residents. Part of AM minute 2020.063 reads:

*'We support the working group continuing to develop this concept of an Edgbaston Quaker and Community Centre, bearing in mind that any management of staff and buildings could be an added burden on CEQ and exploring the possibility of it becoming a separate legal entity. We think that Edgbaston Local Meeting should be formally laid down to allow for a new beginning in Edgbaston for a Quaker/Community Centre, building on the links with the existing Quaker community and the wider local community that already exists there. This might include a drop-in midweek Quaker Meeting, 'Stillness in the Suburbs' and other activities which we have mentioned in our report.'*

The first meeting of 'the Vision Group' as it is currently constituted was on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 2021. Four local resident volunteers joined four Quakers in considering aspects of how a community centre could be run at the meeting house. By this stage Peter Ullathorne, chair of the Priory Rooms directors at the time, was already explaining to the rest of the group how it could be possible for Priory Rooms staff to manage hirings, thus saving a potential management committee from having to cope with the complexities of hiring staff themselves. The understanding was that either a management committee within the Area Meeting organisation or a Charitable Incorporated Organisation needed to be formed to run the meeting house when the local meeting ceased to exist. The meeting house would need to be able to pay for itself. The biggest issue in terms of cost might be paying for a manager

to run the project. Colin Morley, a retired accountant offered to look at the figures and draw up a business plan and he and Peter were sent off by the group to work on it.

By the time of our second meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March, new management arrangements had been devised by CEQ Trustees, making use of Priory Rooms staff, who otherwise faced possible redundancy and the Trustees' professional Finance Administrator Wendy Wolfendale, for four meeting houses which were no longer able to manage their buildings and finances, including Edgbaston, where there was now no local meeting. I explained to the group how these arrangements were being set up and that the clerk to AM trustees had said that this should free the vision group to carry on envisioning.

The group considered Colin's beautifully presented business plan and found that it could not be sure, given the circumstances in the middle of a pandemic and with the projected financial situation at the time, that it could make the building pay for itself as an independent Charitable Incorporated Organisation in the near future. Local residents said that unless the Quakers were prepared to underwrite the project it would not be possible to bring it through financially. The group concluded that there would be no point in continuing to envisage the future under these circumstances. Even so the 'Project's Vision' section of the business plan, was generally agreed to be a good Mission Statement for the Project:

- a) The Quakers, in partnership with the local community, to transform the existing Quaker meeting house in Edgbaston into a successful Edgbaston Quaker and Community Centre
- b) Develop a building which will provide a vibrant living environment, where people from a broad spectrum of the local community can come together and feel welcome.
- c) To provide a facility that will be used by all of the local community's diverse group, including the disadvantaged
- d) To maintain and sustain the fabric of the building.
- e) Provide a place where volunteers and their skills can feel appreciated

There was a weight of pessimism as the meeting ended.

By the time of our third meeting on Friday the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 2021 Priory Rooms staff, under the day-to-day supervision of the newly formed Meeting House Management Group, (a subgroup of Trustees Property Committee) had been undertaking work on the four meeting houses, addressing the recent Quinquennial surveys and making the interiors covid-safe in preparation for a reopening on May 17<sup>th</sup>. Edgbaston meeting house, like two of the other buildings, was to serve as a polling station for the local elections. Wendy Wolfendale was continuing to serve as the Edgbaston treasurer and plans were underway to bring the finances of all four meeting houses into one bank account with four separate 'pockets', to make everything easier to run whilst giving a clear picture of how much each individual building is costing and in due course how much it will be earning in lettings so that it can later be seen if they are each paying their way. Vision Group members expressed delight at how things were progressing. Peter Ullathorne reported that the new arrangements could last as far as Priory Rooms was concerned until at least the end of 2022. With a new sense of optimism, the group got down to considering noticeboards and what the building should be called on them etc and agreed to meet again when it would be possible to get together with Andrew Callan and Hannah Baynes from Priory Rooms and discuss with them directly the day to day detail of how the building is being run.

When we met on Tuesday the 16<sup>th</sup> of June we were joined by Clare Peat, clerk of Trustees Property Committee and also of its Meeting House management sub group as well as Andrew and Hannah. Local residents were glad to meet with our staff, ask their questions

and get a better understanding of our processes. Marketing was considered and Friends urged local residents to help with it. Edgbaston was already proving popular, with eight regular hirers already signed up, including a Church on Sundays. The group was satisfied that Priory Rooms staff are between them able to be available on site to manage the lettings as much as is necessary, at least until hiring reaches a high level of occupancy and Clare Peat was able to advise that the Meeting House Management Group has that dynamic under observation and is planning for the possibility. After the visitors had left, the group considered its own future with no firm conclusions. Should it become a meeting house users' advisory group? Whatever its title the depth and breadth of local experience and spiritual enthusiasm of local residents will be a guiding factor in offering discernment about recruiting new groups to use the premises.

Notes of all the Vision Group meetings have been shared with the Meeting House Management Group, which I attend ex officio on behalf of the Vision Group.

### **The way forward**

Discernment from AM would be much valued at this point. Given the situation with Covid I think it to be very desirable that Edgbaston, along with the other three meeting houses has a year or so at least to prove itself in terms of covering its costs. There is the real prospect of introducing therapeutic gardening at Edgbaston meeting house, with the advice of staff at the nearby Martineau Gardens. Stuart Holmes, who has been on the staff of the Martineau Gardens for 18 years and been the inspiration behind its development, paid a visit to Edgbaston Meeting House garden with me on Monday the 5<sup>th</sup> of July and was very positive about its potential. A regular asylum seeker day centre with volunteers trained by Restore is also a real possibility, considering the proximity of the Stone Road hostel. Local residents on the Vision Committee are hoping to establish a monthly concert series based around the outstanding meeting house piano. The first Quaker booking is coming along with a poetry workshop this summer for 18 to 26year olds organised by Ginnie Wollaston with financial support from the BYM Build Back Better initiative, Jai Jagat UK (the Loving Earth poetry project in partnership with Woodbrooke), the Quaker Arts Network, and CEQ Climate Emergency Action. Elders and Overseers Support Group, AM Outreach Committee and AM Children and Young people's Committee are also interested in using the venue for events. Quaker groups will pay to hire the building in line with other groups, to give clarity about income and use. These things take time to organise. There is general optimism now about the viability of achieving good levels of hiring income for the building.

The experience of working with the local community has been very educative for those Friends on the Vision Committee. We have learned how extremely challenging it is to explain Quaker ways to non-Quakers. The energy, patience and commitment that local people have brought to the work has been inspiring, and the potential for Ecumenical and Interfaith development, as they have pointed out, is great in such a culturally, spiritually and economically diverse locality. As Friends learn more about simpler meetings and continue to develop innovative ways of managing the four meeting houses, together we may be led to introduce new, helpful ways of managing all the meeting houses in Central England. Currently the Meeting House Management Group, the Vision Group and AM Trustees are working within a frame of quite a lot of uncertainty with regard to timescales. Does Area Meeting discern that giving Edgbaston, King Heath, Barnt Green and Northfield meeting houses more time to prove themselves is the way forward? The future in my view has to be about getting ever better at working in partnership with other organisations, including with those who may find it difficult to understand our ways. Whether it is about action on climate change or reaching out to welcome migrants we will achieve far more by engaging with the

wider community because we are not currently numerous. Our meeting houses offer locations in which and from which we can, in a distinctively Quaker way, engage with and influence those around us. They help to make our presence visible in the community and give us an opportunity to reach out and tell people about what inspired us to become Quakers and what Quakerism offers. It is humbling to realise that the local residents on the Vision Group respect and value the historical contribution of Quakers to the life of their area and that they want our help to improve the lives of the whole community. Ginnie Wollaston says that in her poetry project she is 'planting seeds for the next generation'. This is something that we earnestly need to do for the future of our organisation as a whole.

On another level, are Friends content with the names suggested for the meeting rooms at Edgbaston – Florence Barrow, Joseph Sturge and George Cadbury and can we call the building Edgbaston Friends Meeting House? The local community are proud of their Quaker meeting house, keen to respect its history and aware, as I say, of the good work that Quakers have done in times gone by. The current owner of George Cadbury's house just opposite the meeting house is serving on the vision group. There is a desire to name the rooms as numbering them is considered confusing and they want Quaker names.

I attach as an appendix my notes from the Vision Group meeting in June with Clare Peat, Andrew Callan and Hannah Baynes, which contain details about naming of the rooms and a few words about each of them. Also attached is the current Priory Rooms hiring poster for Edgbaston FMH. There are similar posters for the other three meeting houses.

Claire Bowman – on behalf of the Edgbaston Vision Group

# Notes on the meeting of the Edgbaston Friends Meeting House Vision Group

Tuesday 16th June 2021 on zoom

Present: Hannah Baynes, Claire Bowman, Andrew Callan, Liz Dancey, Vic Grainger, John Hamburger, Roderick Keefe, Eve Kirby, Colin Morley, Clare Peat, Peter Ullathorne

The main agenda item at this meeting was an opportunity for local residents to meet Clare Peat, clerk of Trustees Property Committee and its subgroup the Meeting House Management Group, Andrew Callan, Priory Rooms Centre Manager and Hannah Baynes, Priory Rooms Head of Marketing. Local residents on the committee produced a set of questions, which were circulated to Clare, Andrew and Hannah in advance.

Friends began by explaining to local residents how the arrangements for managing four of Central England Area Meeting's meeting houses, including Edgbaston, were working:

Under the oversight and instruction of CEQ Trustees and their sub-committee the Trustees Property Committee and a new sub-committee of that committee the Meeting House Management Group - and by arrangement with Priory Rooms Directors for an agreed fee, the staff of Priory Rooms are managing the premises and lettings of Kings Heath, Barnt Green, Northfield and Edgbaston meeting houses. Each meeting house is paying its share of the management fee. It was explained that within the Meeting House Management Group there are two sub-committees - for finance and lettings, and that members of the MHMG work closely with PR staff to authorise expenditure and advise on situations that arise. Each meeting house has a link member of the MHMG.

Local residents then wanted to know how, in this new situation, they fit into the picture. Friends explained that the vision group can and does offer valuable insight and suggestions and that it will report to Area Meeting, our overall decision-making body, in July.

Local residents then asked who was responsible for looking after Edgbaston, locking and unlocking during the day. It was explained that Dragan Obrenovic is tasked with going around the meeting houses, checking the buildings and liaising with car park hirers etc. Long standing hirers have keys, which they have signed for. For new hirers a member of Priory Rooms staff is on hand to explain procedures. All meeting house users sign an agreement regarding their use of the building.

Vision Group members considered potential problems which could arise with regard to meeting house hirers liaising with other groups and proposed the use of a key pad. It was explained that MHMG has considered this option and as the meeting houses become busier post pandemic the situation will be kept under review. Several members of Priory Rooms staff are available for locking and unlocking if needed.

It was suggested that in the future there might be a WhatsApp group of local residents who would keep a watchful eye on the building and be asked to help if absolutely necessary. Residents said that they were comforted to know that the resources of Priory Rooms are behind the running of the meeting house for now.

Edgbaston is the most popular of the four MHMG meeting houses with hirers at the moment with eight regular groups currently booked to use it. It's a good start and we will see how it goes in the next few months.

For local residents the question then was how will it be marketed? Emails have been sent to Priory Rooms users. Fifty leaflets were printed for each meeting house prior to the local elections. The four meeting houses will be advertised on the AM website and Quakers in

Britain have been asked to update their meeting house details. Local residents were invited to market the meeting house as well and Hannah said she would email hiring details to members of the committee. [An e-copy of the leaflet for Edgbaston was circulated with the agenda for this meeting]

Notice boards are in the process of being changed. Liz Dancey was thanked for obtaining details of the notice boards being used by Calthorpe Estates, considered to be of good quality and adaptable, which were supplied to the MHMG for consideration. The Vision Group favour the use of the name Edgbaston Friends Meeting House in future for the building.

Ideas were considered about how the rooms within the building should be set out. Local Residents think that hiring charges are a bit cheap at the moment. Hiring terms and conditions should be clearly visible in each meeting room.

Clare Peat reported that WiFi will be available. A contract is being signed with Virgin Media at £32 per month. It has been agreed to install CCTV as well.

Local Residents think that screens and projectors are necessary in the larger rooms for many hirers. However, it was explained that as no decision has been made by Area Meeting as yet as to the long-term future of the building, provision of this equipment is considered too expensive. If a group needs a screen and projector Priory Rooms has spare equipment which can be loaned. Hannah will alert staff to the need at the time of booking and it can be available on the day. This equipment could be charged for. Committee members pointed out that the evident absence of screens and projectors might put off potential hirers before they get to the point of speaking with Hannah. Roderick Keefe mentioned that First Aid trainers don't use screens any more for training but flat screen TVs. It was thought that the middle room would in practical terms be far better for a screen than the largest room.

It was mentioned that a bell on the outside of the building would be desirable, since hirers would be advised to keep the door closed in case of intruders.

Concern was expressed that the meeting house looks dreary inside. This was remarked on by voters during the recent elections. It needs a fresh coat of pale paint and better lighting. It is difficult to see to read in the middle room. Local residents would like to get involved in sprucing up the kitchen but understand that Priory Rooms staff have made sure that it is clean and covid safe. Hirers are being asked to bring their own crockery.

Peter Ullathorne said that Hannah and Andrew will be talking with hirers. If it is their understanding that work to improve the building will lead to many more hirings they will report this to the MHMG and the Trustees Property Committee who can decide whether to spend more money.

It was considered that an event such as a monthly lunchtime recital would bring more people into the meeting house. Friends confirmed that there would continue to be a ban on alcoholic beverages.

Clare Peat remarked that Meeting Houses and Community Centres are not back to where they were pre pandemic in terms of hirings. Music exams have been taking place on zoom. People have been advised not to travel into the city centre.

Claire Bowman had been asked by the group to suggest Quaker names for the three main rooms in the meeting house as numbering the rooms is considered confusing. The group wants them to be named after prominent local Quakers. It was agreed that the rooms should be named

**Florence Mary Barrow** [*International Aid Worker, humanitarian, Housing Reform Activist, Adult Educator and local resident 1876 – 1964*], **Joseph Sturge** [*Founder of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society(Anti-Slavery International), Peace Activist, Adult Education Founder and local resident. 1793-1859*], **George Cadbury** [*Chocolate Maker and Philanthropist, who lived opposite the meeting house from 1872 until 1881 - b1838 d1922*]

It was requested that name plaques should be placed on the doors to each room and images of those Friends should be placed on the walls of their room as well. Peter Ullathorne remarked that Priory Rooms has this sort of arrangement and will be well able to organise this.

It was decided to meet together at the meeting house to have a look round together sometime on or after July 19<sup>th</sup>

Clare Peat, Andrew Callan and Hannah Baynes left the meeting at this point.

Members of the group then considered the forthcoming report to Area Meeting.

Peter Ullathorne suggested that in the future the group could become a 'users' advisory group'. This would give it a defined purpose. Potentially just one Quaker would be needed to serve on the group.

The group decided to postpone accepting any further members for the time being, during this transitional phase.

Date of next meeting to be decided later. A tour of the meeting house will be arranged

Claire Bowman – Vision Group convenor

# Edgbaston

Quaker Meeting House

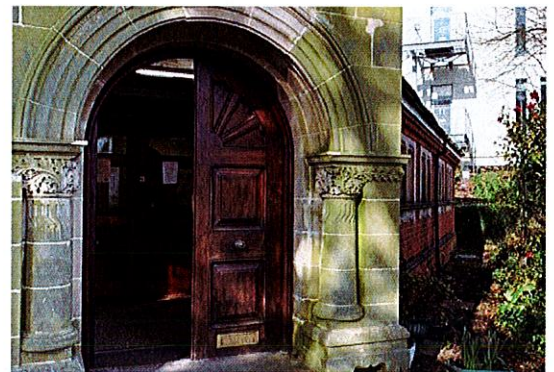


Central England Quakers  
Meeting House Management Group

St James Road  
Edgbaston, B15 1JP

## Facilities:

- Large Room Hire  
accommodates 45  
people
- Medium Room Hire  
accommodates 20  
people
- Small Room  
accommodates 8 people
- Self-catering kitchen  
facilities
- Complimentary WI-FI

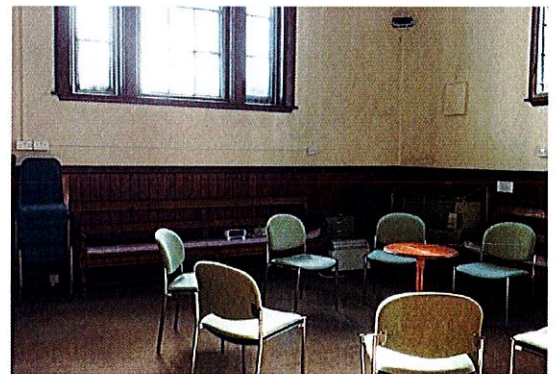


## Room Hire Prices:

Large room - £40 per  
session

Medium room £30 per  
session

Small room £20 per  
session (Session is 3 hours)



Contact us for further  
information:

Tel: 0121-236-2317

Email: [edgbastonmh@theprioryrooms.co.uk](mailto:edgbastonmh@theprioryrooms.co.uk)

# HERITAGE DAY APPEAL

Bournville meeting house has opened for the September Heritage Day very successfully for many years.

It's a hard call for this year. Bournville Friends can't do it alone, so we're appealing to other local meetings for help. To go ahead, we will need to have firm offers of help before we can decide, and 19 July is the deadline for this.

It's on Saturday 11 September from 10.00 - 16.00. We will need stewards on both doors at all times, to manage the greeting and timing of entry if necessary through the front door and the exit through the side door. There will need to be at least 2 people in the hall to keep people moving through the 2 exhibition stands. And a couple of people going where required - possibly to ensure guidelines are followed, making tea for the helpers, talking to those who want to chat [hopefully outside] and so on. So we need 6 people to be present at any one time.

Dividing up the day into 2 hour sessions ie 10.00, 12.00, and 14.00, we will need a minimum of 6 people present for each of these sessions. Without firm commitments, we won't register to open.

Please could everyone give this serious consideration, and make a decision that you would be able to keep to. It's an effective outreach event, and other venues in the area hope to open, but we're not wanting anyone to take risks or agree to something they're not comfortable about. Without a crystal ball it's difficult - if the situation worsened unexpectedly in September we would cancel this at short notice without any hesitation.

In the past we've had some help from other meetings, but this year this support is essential.

If you can offer a firm commitment to help, please email

[bournville@centralenglandquakers.org.uk](mailto:bournville@centralenglandquakers.org.uk).

Many thanks –

Anne Giles HOD organiser and Roderick Keefe, CEQ outreach committee