

Minutes of Central England Area Quaker Meeting held by Video Conferencing on 24th October 2020

Clerk: Alison Ironside

Elders on duty: Robin Bowman, Donald Stubbings

2020.058 Meeting by Video Conferencing

We record that we are meeting again by video conferencing. While Meetings for Worship are, at present, now permitted, restrictions on numbers due to required distancing guidelines mean that we felt unable to meet at Bournville Quaker Meeting House as planned.

Our Meeting, with some 44 Friends present, began with a period of silent worship during which §20.18 of Quaker Faith & Practice was read:

Ever since I first came among Friends, I was attracted to the testimonies as an ideal. I wanted to belong to a church which made the rejection of warfare a collective commitment and not just a personal option. I admired a simplicity, a devotion to equality, and a respect for others which reflected what I already knew of Christ. In a deceitful world I warmed to those who did not swear oaths and strove to tell the truth in all circumstances. But this was a beginning in the spiritual life. The seed that was sown in my mind and my politics struck root in my soul and my faith.

The choice of the word 'testimony' is instructive. The testimonies are ways of behaving but are not ethical rules. They are matters of practice but imply doctrines. They refer to human society but are about God. Though often talked about they lack an authoritative formulation...

A 'testimony' is a declaration of truth or fact... It is not an ejaculation, a way of letting off steam or baring one's soul. It has a purpose, and that is to get other people to change, to turn to God. Such an enterprise, be it in words or by conduct and example, is in essence prophetic and evangelical.

John Punshon, 1987

2020.059 Representatives

The following meetings were represented here today:

B&R; BOU; BUL; COT; COV; HAL; KIN; SEL; SOL; STO; SUT; WAL; WAR;

2020.060 Membership Matters

a) Application for Membership

We have received an application from Martyn Tarbet, who has been an attender at Edgbaston Local Meeting. We ask Nominations Committee to find names of visitors, liaising with Elders and Overseers Support Group through their convener Jane Holt.

b) Transfer In

Arthur Lockett (SEL) from Oxford and Swindon Area Meeting.

c) Transfer Out

Rosemary Loving (WAR) to Surrey & Hampshire Border Area Meeting.

2020.061 Memorial Minute

We have received a memorial minute from Sutton Coldfield Meeting for Kate Mitton and have had parts read to us.

We forward this minute to Elders / Overseers Support Group for their consideration.

2020.062 Meeting for Sufferings Report

We have received a report from Cathy Khurana of the Meeting for Sufferings held by zoom video conferencing over the weekend of 2 – 4 October in 4 sessions. “It wasn’t like a residential weekend but it was a good experience. However, there was an awful lot of business, and a feeling of lack of time for discernment.”

The sustainability monitoring group gave an interesting report and update. We note that Britain Yearly Meeting trustees have been working very hard on behalf of all of us Quakers in Britain.

The Book of Discipline Revision Committee report was very upbeat, enthusiastic and exciting and Cathy recommended their report to us.

The link to all the papers is on the quaker.org.uk website:

[https://quaker-prod.s3.eu-west-](https://quaker-prod.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/store/e214e5822334eedca54cc1b687196b29063eef6c4b82703ab0ea81a4171a)

[1.amazonaws.com/store/e214e5822334eedca54cc1b687196b29063eef6c4b82703ab0ea81a4171a](https://quaker-prod.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/store/e214e5822334eedca54cc1b687196b29063eef6c4b82703ab0ea81a4171a)

It is hoped to set up an Area Meeting group of Friends interested in Meeting for Sufferings matters as a support group for our representative and alternate.

We thank Cathy for her report, which is filed.

2020.063 Edgbaston Working Group Report

We have received the following minute from the Joint Elders & Overseers Support Group (E&OSG)/Trustees Property Committee (TPC) working group together with their report:

Minute to Area Meeting

“We encourage Friends to read the report from our working group which shows the work that has been undertaken and how we have arrived at our conclusions.

We think that Edgbaston Local Meeting should be formally laid down to allow 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 are already there. This might include a drop-in midweek Quaker meeting - “Stillness in the suburbs” and other activities which we have mentioned in our report.

We recommend that the Trustees Property Committee should take over management of the property and the Edgbaston Local Meeting assets, which should be ringfenced.

We are excited by this vision, and, if Area Meeting approves, we aim to develop it further and work over the next few months to prepare for it coming to pass.

We ask for approval in principle from AM to continue developing this concept, consulting widely as we do.”

We agree that Edgbaston Local Meeting should be laid down from 1st January 2021. Therefore, we recommend that Trustees should take over management of the property and the Edgbaston Local Meeting assets, which will be ringfenced.

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 building could be an added burden on Central England Quakers, and exploring the possibility of it becoming a separate legal entity.

We look forward to hearing further in due course and the report is filed.

2020.064 Trustee Minutes Received

a) We have received Trustee Minute **T2020.20E Amendments to CEQ Governing Document** (attached as appendix 1)

Central England Quakers (CEQ) is the working name of “The Central England Area Quaker Meeting Charities”, registered charity number 224571. The charity was established through a Charity Commission scheme dated 16 March 2009. The Area Meeting (formerly known as Warwickshire Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends) is a constituent part of the main charity, and is known as the “Central England Area Quaker Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends” registered charity number 224571-8. This is abbreviated to Central England Area Meeting.

The Governing Document sets out how the Area Meeting operates. It was originally adopted in November 2007 by Warwickshire Monthly Meeting and last amended (with minor changes agreed with the Charity Commission, including the change in charity name) in July 2008.

In March 2020 the UK was caught up in the Coronavirus pandemic and Quaker meetings were unable to meet in person. This affected our business meetings. After consulting the Charity Commission website it was decided that these meetings can be conducted by phone and video conferencing, even though this provision was not included in our governing document. This decision was recorded by minute at each of the business meetings. The Charity Commission advised that the governing document is amended appropriately.

Amendments to the governing document shall be agreed by Central England Area Meeting in Session and recorded by minute of the area meeting. (clause 7i of the Governing Document).

Trustees recommend that the Governing Document should be amended to include the use of phone and video conferencing, to ensure that our business meetings are held in right ordering. (Trustees minute T2020.20E). Trustees also propose that the reference to the appointment of a clerk and assistant clerk be varied to include "or co-clerks".

A draft copy of the Governing Document with the proposed amendments highlighted in red has been circulated before this meeting. (Clause 10 i, iv and v; clause 17 vii and viii; clause 12 i.)

The schedule to the governing document has been updated for changes made since 2008 and the reference to the current version of Quaker faith and practice. (pages 8 and 1).

We approve the proposed changes.

This minute reference will be inserted, and the revised document will be signed, and original copies placed in the CEQ archives and held in the Area Meeting Office.

b) We have received Trustee Minute T2020.29 Recruitment of the principal officer

"At a special meeting Trustees have been told about issues being faced by Priory Rooms directors and staff as a result of the loss of business since April and the lack of bookings in the fourth quarter of 2020. Priory Rooms directors are starting the consultations with the staff that may lead to some redundancies.

In the light of this trustees decided to put the recruitment of the principal officer on hold for the next few months and hope that some of the Priory Rooms staff can be used to cover some of the duties of the principal officer, agreed by area meeting in September, and other tasks to support the work of trustees.

We ask the clerk to forward this minute to the area meeting co clerk."

This is to keep us informed as we had approved by minute 2020.054 that trustees could proceed with the appointment of a principal officer.

2020.065 Understanding Area Meeting Finances

We receive the briefing paper from Trustee Finance Committee Understanding Area Meeting Finances. We separated into 5 breakout rooms to explore how we use our resources and what are our priorities; and each group was asked to report back to the Trustee Finance Committee.

We thank the Finance Committee with the help of Nick Tulley for enabling this process.

2020.066 Nominations

Nominations committee have the following suggestions for service:

- To serve as Clerk to Area Meeting Trustees Judith Jenner (COT) Jan 21 – Dec 22 only
- To serve as an Area Meeting Trustee Anne Austin (COT) 2nd Triennium Jan 21 – Dec 23

- To serve as an Area Meeting Trustee Patricia Bradbury (STO) 3rd Triennium Jan 21 – Dec 23
- To serve as Area Meeting Nominations Committee Co-Clerk Janet Blann (COT) 2nd Triennium Jan 21 – Dec 23
- To serve as a Registering Officer Sarah Evans (COT) 2nd Triennium Jan 21 – Dec 23
- To serve on Record Advisory Committee Jane Stanley (WAL) 2nd Triennium Jan 21 – Dec 23
- To serve on Christmas Parcels Committee Mina Tilt (HAL) Jan 21 – Dec 23
- To serve on Communications Committee Barbara Groombridge (WAL) 3rd Triennium Nov 20 – Oct 23
- To serve on Clerks Advisory Committee Roderick Keefe (COT) Jan 21 – Dec 23
- Journeys into Membership Visitors for Margot Williams (SUT) Cathy Khurana (SUT) Phil Dahl (AML)
- Journeys into Membership Visitors for James Stacey (COV) Mig Kerr (COV) and John Sheldon (WAR)
- To serve as AM Co-Clerk Alison Ironside (SEL) 1 year from Jan 21 – Dec 21

We approve these names and appoint them accordingly and ask the Area Meeting Secretary to inform them

Release from Service

The following Friends have asked to be released:

- Holly Timmermans (EDG) as an Elder/Overseer from 31st December 2020.
- Barbara Clarke (COV) as an Elder/Overseer from 31st December 2020.

We agree to these requests and thank the Friends for their service and ask the Area Meeting Secretary to inform them.

2020.067 AM Dates and Venues for 2021

Further to the dates and times agreed last time by minute 2020.055, we have now received an offer for April from Sutton Coldfield Meeting. We accept this offer with thanks. Our Area Meetings for 2021 are all listed below.

date	venue	date	venue
Sat 16 th January 2.0 - 5.0pm	Bull Street Quaker Meeting House	Thurs 15 th July 6.0 – 9.0pm	Warwick Quaker Meeting House
Sat 06 th March 2.0 – 5.0pm	Bournville Quaker Meeting House	Sat 11 th September 2.0 – 5.0pm	Barnt Green Quaker Meeting House
Thurs 22 nd April 6.0 – 9.0pm	Sutton Coldfield Quaker Meeting House	Sat 16 th October 2.0 – 5.0pm	Stourbridge Quaker Meeting House
Sat 12 th June 2.0 – 5.0pm	Cotteridge Quaker Meeting House	Sat 27 th November 2.0 – 5.0pm	Bull Street Quaker Meeting House

2020.068 Terms of Reference Peace Hub

We receive revised terms of reference for the Management Committee of Peace Hub as approved at their meeting in September. We accept these terms of reference, which will be filed.

2020.069 Next Meeting

We hope to meet again on November 28th from 2.00 p.m. hosted by Bull Street LM. The calling letter for that meeting will inform Friends about the format to be used, whether blended or virtual; it is unlikely to be fully face to face.

Alison Ironside

Clerk this time

Appendix 1

T2020.20E Amendment to the Governing Document

The amendments to the governing document to take into account our decision to use video conferencing during lockdown were circulated before the meeting.

In the light of changes to the way Trustees have met during the closure of Meeting Houses the Charity Commission recommend that the governing document adopted on 10 xi 2007 and revised 3 vii 2008 by Minute 08/28/02 of Central England Quaker Meeting Trustees to include a clause in:

Section 17. Meetings and proceedings of the Trustees to take account of having to make decisions when meeting via video or phone conferencing.

vii) When meeting in person is not possible the Trustees may meet via video and phone conferencing and decisions minuted in the usual way (as in (v) above) without Trustees being physically present together in order to enable good governance of our charity.

vii) will become viii)

Section 10 Meetings for Church affairs

i) Central England Area Meeting shall meet at such frequency, times and places as the meeting itself shall direct. ***This can include video and phone conferencing.***

Following iii) include an additional paragraph

iv) when meeting in person is not possible and video and phone conferencing is used the business will be conducted as in (iii) above and decisions minuted in the usual way.

iv) will become v)

Section 12 Appointments

i) The Area Meeting shall appoint a clerk, an assistant clerk or ***co-clerks***, treasurer etc

We agree to these changes. We ask the clerk to send this minute to Area Meeting clerk to seek approval of these amendments at the next area meeting.