

# Minutes of Central England Area Quaker Meeting held at Bull Street Quaker Meeting House as a Blended Meeting on 27 November 2021

Clerk: Alison Ironside  
Assistant Clerk: Vic Grainger  
Assistant Clerk: Stella Roberts (zoom)

Elders on duty: Wendy Burnett (BUL), Janet Wood (BUL)

## 2021.088 Opening minute

We record that this is a blended Meeting facilitated by Bull Street Meeting.

Our Meeting began with a period of silent worship during which § 2.11 of Quaker Faith and Practice was read:

*True worship may be experienced at any time; in any place - alone on the hills or in the busy daily life - we may find God, in whom we live and move and have our being. But this individual experience is not sufficient, and in a meeting held in the Spirit there is a giving and receiving between its members, one helping another with or without words. So there may come a wider vision and a deeper experience.*

## 2021.089 Representatives

The following meetings were represented here today:

BOU; BUL; COT; COV; KIN; SEL; STO; SUT; WAL; WAR;

The clerks have given permission for the following attender to join us today:

Clive Gordon (SUT).

We also welcome Simon Slater, the director of Ecobirmingham, who is reporting on their work.

## 2021.090 Report on EcoBirmingham

The 2020/2021 Impact Report has been circulated with the papers for this meeting.

Simon Slater, the new director, has spoken of how he began work in November 2020 and he has now been a year in post. He appreciated Ecobirmingham being a “sister” organisation to us, not just with our financial help through the grant but working with the same ethos of sustainability and climate justice.

Despite COVID and some staff furloughed they developed new ways of working, which meant that over 2000 families were helped.

He spoke of implementing the One Planet Living® framework. They will continue with their cycling work of local routes in every constituency within Birmingham. They are building contacts throughout Birmingham, working with others. They hope to have 10 centres, either new or using existing organisations, projected over a five-year plan.

Last year, fuel poverty meant they issued emergency vouchers and gave energy advice; now they are looking to do things slightly differently by training community groups to issue vouchers. Simon acknowledges it will be difficult. He recognises that working in partnership can be hard and he spoke of seeing how things are done and improving on it.

Simon answered our questions including some on their funding. They did particularly appreciate having some core funding including our grant, which stimulates other sources of funding to contribute grants.

We thank Simon Slater for bringing us up to date with the work of Ecobirmingham.

## **2021.091 Membership matters**

### **a) Death**

We record the death of Rosemary Grant (BOU) who died on 14 September 2021 aged 91

### **b) Transfer Out**

Clive Dove-Dixon (WAR) to London West Area Meeting

### **c) Accepted Out:**

David Sargeant (BUL) by Worcester and Shropshire AM from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2022

## **2021.092 CEQ Trustee Report and Accounts (2020) and Budget 2022**

### **A) CEQ Annual Report & Accounts 2020**

The 2020 CEQ Annual Report & Accounts were approved by Trustees and submitted to the Charity Commission in September. Copies have been sent to all LM Clerks and further copies are available from the CEQ Office, and via the CEQ website.

The accounts show figures for both Charity and Group. The Group accounts include figures for Priory Rooms (Bull Street) Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary. 2020 was a difficult year for CEQ (and many of its employees), due to the pandemic, with the Charity accounts showing a net negative movement in funds of £269,604 compared with a positive movement of £372,149 in 2019. The total net assets of CEQ (Group) at the end of 2020 were just over £9m.

We record our grateful thanks to the valuable work done throughout the year by our local and central Treasurers and examiners and by our trustees.

### **B) CEQ central funds budget for 2022**

Central Funds are those managed by Trustees and exclude bank accounts and investments held by Local Meetings and Branches. The forecasts for 2021 are the expected outcomes at the end of 2021 and the budgets for 2022 are how we propose to allocate our resources next year.

A paper has been circulated in advance of the meeting containing a detailed commentary on the budget assumptions and proposals, accompanied by a bar chart illustrating receipts and payments through the Central Fund bank accounts.

James Bradbury, Treasurer to Trustees, has drawn our attention to some of the key budget issues and proposals:-

- 1 Due to the loss of trading in 2020 and 2021 (caused by COVID) the Priory Rooms gifts for this year and next will be zero. In the previous year the gift was £120,000, so this is having a massive impact on the Area Meeting's finances. This income shortfall has coincided with the need to recruit paid staff to undertake some of the charity's central administrative work – currently in the form of a service agreement with Priory Rooms, but followed next year by the employment of a Principal Officer.
- 2 We have had to draw on reserves this year, to the tune of £57,000, to offset a deficit, and the 2022 budget anticipates a similar use of reserves in 2022. Until Priory Rooms returns to profit Central Funds expenditure is likely to exceed income. In the light of this situation, the 2022 General Fund budget assumes: -
  - Reduced grants for all our Branches, and external beneficiaries (eg ecobirmingham, Woodbrooke and BYM).
  - An appeal to Local Meetings to raise at least £20,000 for Area Meeting funds next year.

However, priority will continue to be given in the budget to activities which sustain the life of our Meetings, and support our Committees and role holders.

We have been asked whether the time has come to consider our aims and objectives, to review our priorities and the right use of our resources. Trustees Finance Committee is willing to facilitate a special meeting in the New Year to consider these matters. We ask our Co-clerks in 2022 to arrange this.

We approve the Central Funds budget for 2022, with the forecast payments for 2021, together with the proposal to ask Local Meetings to provide additional financial support for Area Meeting expenditure in 2022.

We thank our Finance Committee for their work.

## **2021.093 Minutes Received**

a) We have received the following Minutes:

Minute from Cotteridge Elders:

### ***2121.21 Supporting Northfield monthly MfW:***

*Hilary has taken this matter to E&O Support Group. There are no clear guidelines regarding the purpose of this MfW. E&OSG does not have the capacity to support more small meetings as we are already heavily involved with other declining LMs and, therefore, recommends that Northfield monthly MfW is laid down. Cotteridge elders originally took responsibility for the MfW and no longer have the capacity to continue. Responsibility for the building was under the care of the Northfield Development Committee who supported the Meeting each month. The building is now under the care of the Meeting Houses Management Group. Hilary will send this minute to the AM clerk, Alison Ironside to ask if we need to refer the matter to the AM.*

Minute from Elders & Overseers Support Group:

***2021.36 Northfield monthly evening MfW - this is not viable; we recommend that it be laid down and attenders be encouraged to find other Meetings to go to.***

We accept that the Northfield Meeting for Worship held on the last Sunday of the month will no longer take place.

We forwarded this minute to Northfield Development Committee.

b) We have received the following minute from Bull Street Meeting:

### ***Minute 2021/62***

*The Meeting agrees to a permanent change to the term Overseer, to take effect from January 2022. The term Overseer will be replaced by Pastoral Friend*

This is a timely reminder that we are asked by Meeting for Sufferings to consider an alternative name. We remind Local Meetings to discern a suitable name instead of Overseer and report back to us and Elders & Overseers Support Group.

## **2021.094 Quaker Life Representative Council Report**

Anna Edelsten, our representative, has written a report on the Quaker Life Representative Council zoom meeting held over 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

We thank Anna Edelsten for her report and the RESTORE framework, which are filed.

We forward the report to Claire Bowman, the editor of our newsletter, for possible inclusion in the next edition.

## **2021.095 Local Development Worker**

Your clerks have heard from Alistair Fuller, a team leader on Quaker Community from Britain Yearly Meeting, that we will be getting a Local Development Worker (LDW). We will be sharing this LDW with

Staffordshire AM and Worcester & Shropshire AM. We understand that the post will be advertised during February 2022, with the hope of a suitable appointment by May 2022.

We have heard how a similar post is being advertised in the current issue of The Friend.

## 2021.096 Nominations

Nominations committee have the following suggestions for service:

John Sheldon (WAR) to serve as Area Meeting Co-clerks (Jan 22 – Dec 22)

Vic Grainger (SEL) to serve as Area Meeting Co-clerks (Jan 22 – Dec 22)

Stella Roberts (COV) to serve as Area Meeting Co-clerks (Jan 22 – Dec 22)

Fran Wilde (STO) to serve on Communications Committee (Dec 21 – Nov 24)

Rhiannon Grant (BOU) to serve on Birmingham Church Leaders Group (Dec 21 – Nov 24)

We approve these names and appoint them accordingly and ask the Area Meeting Office Administrator to inform them and any clerks of the relevant committees.

## Release from Service

Tina Helfrich (COT) to be released from Northfield Development Committee

Ruth Livermore (KIN) to be released from Registering Officer

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

## 2021.097 Nominations for Area Meeting Nominations Committee

Local Meetings have suggested the following names:

Andrew Rigby (COV) to serve on Area Meeting Nominations Committee

Barbara Cockcroft (SUT) to serve on Area Meeting Nominations Committee

John Kimberly (BUL) to serve on Area Meeting Nominations Committee

Philip O'Shea (BUL) to serve on Area Meeting Nominations Committee

Alison Ironside (SEL) to serve on Area Meeting Nominations Committee

These names being acceptable we appoint them to serve on Area Meeting Nominations Committee from January 22 – December 24.

## 2021.098 Dates of Area Meetings in 2022

We confirm the following dates, times and places for our Area Meetings in 2022.

Dates and places for CEQ Area Meetings in 2022<sup>F11</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

date	venue	date	venue
Sat 15 <sup>th</sup> January 2.0 - 5.0pm	Bull Street Quaker Meeting House	Thurs 21 <sup>st</sup> July 6.0 – 9.0pm	Warwick Quaker Meeting House
Sat 12 <sup>th</sup> March 2.0 – 5.0pm	Bournville Quaker Meeting House	Sat 17 <sup>th</sup> September 2.0 – 5.0pm	Selly Oak Quaker Meeting House

27 <sup>th</sup> April 6.0 – 9.0pm	Zoom (Sutton Coldfield)	Sat 22 <sup>th</sup> October 2.0 – 5.0pm	Coventry Quaker Meeting House
Sat 18 <sup>th</sup> June 2.0 – 5.0pm	Cotteridge Quaker Meeting House	Sat 26 <sup>th</sup> November 2.0 – 5.0pm	Bull Street Quaker Meeting House

## **2021.099 CEQ Climate Emergency Action**

Chris Martin gave a short update on their work. We heard that the CEA co-clerks are suggesting:

- sharing our Quaker experience of reducing fossil fuel reliance in our buildings with other faith groups
- working and educating with other faith groups about eating sustainably.

We agreed to circulate the written update with these minutes.

We thank Chris Martin for his update.

## **2021.100 Thanks and next meeting**

We thank the Elders serving today and for help with the blended Meeting. We hope to meet again, at Bull Street QMH on January 15<sup>th</sup> from 2.00 – 5.00pm.

Alison Ironside  
Clerk