



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON ZOOM  
MONDAY 11<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2021 AT 10.00am**

PRESENT: Sue Brownlie, Faith Cartwright, Charles Henderson, Phil Parratt, Margaret Stocks

PREVENTED: Brian Collingridge, Margaret Stenhouse

John Bell has joined us today as an observer on behalf of Spiceland Meeting

**WELCOME AND OPENING WORSHIP**

**21.01 READING**

A poem entitled 'Wonder', written by Jenny Gateau of Minehead Meeting, has been read during our opening worship.

**21.02 ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA**

The Agenda has been accepted.

**21.03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FOR THIS AGENDA**

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

**21.04 APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT CLERK**

We decide not to appoint an assistant clerk at this time.

**21.05 TREASURER'S REPORT**

a) General situation

The treasurer reported that the current situation remains largely unchanged from that outlined in the last report.

Lockdown has affected hiring, but the Area Meeting's general income is largely unaffected. The AM Treasurer is liaising with our bookkeeper, Jane Ruell, and expects to produce an unexamined set of accounts by the end of January 2021

b) Support for the Warden at Taunton MH

With regard to the new government job support scheme, an application was made for support for the warden's salary. Jane Ruell, bookkeeper to the AM, is dealing with the matter.

The scheme is currently paying 50% of the Warden's salary at a rate of 80%. This is expected to last until at least April 2021.

c) Property matters

The AM Treasurer has received an email from Peter Blaker of Wellington LM in regard to internal electrical heating systems for the Meeting House. Only one of the firms contacted produced a firm suggestion. This related to under-seat heating of the benches surrounding, and attached to, the walls of the meeting room. Queries were raised regarding any requirement for competitive tendering and the views of the Heritage Officer for listed buildings.

This matter needs further consideration. Possible names of people who might be consulted have been offered.

We ask Brian Collingridge, Trustee for Wellington LM to prepare a paper for Trustees to consider.

We thank our Treasurer for his report.

## 21.06 DISBURSEMENT FROM BRISTOL AND WESSEX GENERAL MEETING

### Minute of Record

Following the laying-down of Bristol and Wessex General Meeting, monies have been disbursed to the Area Meetings that previously formed its constituent parts. This AM has received £354. This is free of any restrictions and has been placed in the General Fund of the AM's account with the CAF bank.

## 21.07 TAUNTON MEETING HOUSE MANAGEMENT (TMHMC) COMMITTEE'S EMAIL

### Minute of Record

On 4th December 2020 Trustees received an email from the 'Covid-19 group' members of the Taunton Meeting House Management Committee, querying the possibility of slightly altering the set of instructions to which hirers of the building were expected to adhere.

It seems that it was mistakenly sent to all Trustees. This was unfortunate, as some Trustees responded directly to the query, which impeded the discernment process. Eventually, as one of the co-clerks had a conflict of interest in the matter, the other co-clerk contacted each of the other Trustees individually to permit some means of discernment. The document prepared as the result of that rather cumbersome process, which was then sent to the co-clerks of TMHMC and copied to Trustees, is reprinted below.

With the advent of TMHMC, Trustees delegated the management of Taunton Meeting House to that committee.

It follows that, while Trustees have responsibility for policy, so need to be kept informed of the actions of TMHMC, they do not concern themselves with operational detail.

TMHMC has itself devolved specific responsibility during this pandemic to a smaller group of experienced Quakers, some of whom possess professional expertise, to oversee matters at this time.

Rigidity can result in lack of care for those in need and may well result in damage to our reputation as a caring community.

As Trustees our brief is to ensure that:

- a) we fulfil our Quaker duty to those in need in our community
- b) we do not rush to judgment
- c) we respect the advice of our delegated Friends

All hirers of the Meeting House are expected to have their own criteria to enable them to work within government guidance. The criteria under which this particular potential hirer operates clearly do just that. Moreover, they already operate under the same criteria in other parts of the SW region. There are two sections within the government guidance on hygiene and face coverings that allow some flexibility. The proposed small change of wording does not infringe that guidance. As such, it cannot affect our insurance, could benefit the community and might also bring in some income to the Taunton Centre.

I would also point out that once a hirer's group is within its designated room, all responsibility for following any procedures appropriate to the group devolves to the hirer. We do not, nor would we wish to, police their behaviour.

Having seen a copy of the expectations of the group wishing to hire, I could not be more comfortable with their specific procedures.

I have now consulted with the majority of the Trustees. Accordingly, I plan to thank the TMHMC 'Covid-Group' for keeping us informed about the very small change of wording they propose. I shall also reassure them that, as the group charged with the operational care of the Meeting House in these abnormal times, they have our support.

Margaret Stocks, co-clerk, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020

We here record that our Trustee Charles Henderson wishes to stand aside from this document and has asked it to be made clear that he is not in unity with its contents.

## 21.08 ORAL REPORTS FROM EACH LOCAL MEETING'S TRUSTEE ON THEIR CURRENT SITUATION

- **Bridgwater**

Meeting for Worship is now held using zoom. People rarely seen at face-to-face meetings often attend on zoom. The Meeting has decided to share responsibility by splitting into East and West areas to try to maintain more comprehensive oversight and to relieve Gilly Lee of the responsibility for all members.

- **Burnham-on-Sea**

We understand that North Somerset Area Quaker Meeting is not actively pursuing the matter of the possible transfer of Burnham LM just now but will be in touch when there is something to report. Sue Hammond-Lovatt's news of their system using email is reprinted below:

'Our email meetings are working well. At the beginning of lockdown very few of us could do Zoom but nearly all could receive emails so we agreed to meet using email for contact. Whereas when we met in person we only averaged 3 or 4 people at MfW at the beginning of the first lockdown we averaged 8! This included one person who normally worked Sundays, several people with children, and one person who was stuck on Vanuatu doing voluntary work. Since the summer numbers have dropped off because people had been doing more. Time will tell if numbers increase again in this lockdown,

Carinne and/or I send round an email at tenish to say good morning. Carinne normally attaches the next A&Q and a few words, I sometimes add a picture of flowers from the garden. Some people share a few words when they join us. At 10.30 each person shuts off their devices and sits quietly for as long as they choose.

At 11.30 I normally check my emails to see if anyone wants to discuss anything. I also make a note of who we have not heard from that week and contact to check they are all right as appropriate.

Carinne circulates Quake to the meeting.

The Friend for the Meeting comes to me and I circulate any news of interest and pass on the hard copies to Quakers nearby,

In my opinion Communication within meeting and oversight have been better since we went online. It enables us to ensure everyone has all information. At the moment we have No plans to open at the Community Centre for the foreseeable future as it is a shared building so H&S is difficult and so many of us are vulnerable we cannot see how it would be viable. Some Friends join other meetings by Zoom from time to time.'

- **Iminster**  
Meeting for Worship had been resumed at Sweet Surprise. However this has now stopped again because of the new lock down. The working group continues to research potential properties for purchase as a Meeting House.
- **Minehead**  
Meeting for Worship had been taking place at the Meeting House, but has now been discontinued. As several members cannot access either email or zoom, phone and post are used to keep them informed and supported. There is a group of 7 Friends who take overall responsibility for keeping the Meeting.
- **Spiceland**  
The Meeting House is currently closed. Meetings for Worship continue to be held using zoom. 5 or 6 circles of support groups are now up and running to support the membership. They encompass some 40-50 members and attenders. The Central Group meets each week. These meetings have increased to maintain both individual support as well as business. Once a month a virtual MfW is held for Kentisbeare and Tiverton, where Friends sit quietly for 30 minutes at a designated time. John Bell is awaiting confirmation of his appointment as Trustee for Spiceland. Area Meeting co-clerks have been notified.
- **Taunton**  
Meeting for Worship had been taking place in person, using zoom, or individually at home. A Meeting for Learning was held using zoom and further such meetings are planned. Meanwhile, given the current national situation, the Meeting House is currently closed. Unlike other Meetings, Taunton has experienced a decrease in numbers while using zoom as a medium, many preferring to use the same time frame to sit quietly and share from home. New Home Groups (Taunton's system of oversight which includes all members and attenders) were established at the beginning of 2020. Some have functioned well, but some have not even managed to meet using zoom technology. Email has helped some groups, but not all have benefitted.
- **Wellington**  
Meeting for Worship had been continuing in person with no zoom meetings. More recently, following cases of Covid-19 among hirers, the Meeting House has been closed to all.

21.08 AWAY-DAY 15<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021 AT 13:30

a) Peter Morris (our link Friend on Quaker Stewardship Committee) and Chris Lawson (former Clerk to this AM's Trustees) have been invited to join us and both have accepted. We now plan to invite Pip Harris as well, as she is our local development worker.

b) The proposed items of focus are currently:

- Preparation of the TARA
- The Ilminster fund
- The nature of reportable incidents

We ask the clerk to prepare a timetable for the day and to share this with Trustees in February, so that we can share this with our guests well in advance. It is still probable that we will need to meet using zoom. This will depend on the circumstances surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic and the progress nationally with vaccination.

We agree to re-convene to share plans on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> February at 10:00 and again, to finalise plans, on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February at 10:00.

#### 21.09 TRUSTEES' WAYS OF WORKING

Following some consideration of the challenges and benefits of working mostly as two sub-groups with occasional full meetings, we now decide, for the time being, to meet regularly as a full group. Smaller groups may need to meet on occasion to deal with specific issues. They will then report back to a meeting of the full Trustee body.

#### 21.10 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRUSTEES, BOTH INITIAL AND REFRESHER

We note that while some of us have previously been able to access residential training courses at Woodbrooke, not everyone has had that opportunity. This suggests that, given the problems surrounding such events during 2020, that we should all try to join some form of training – probably on line - during the coming year, either as initial training or as a refresher course.

#### 21.11 REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES AND TREASURERS CONFERENCE HELD DECEMBER 2020

This report, published in The Friend of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, has been circulated. It will form part of the business for the Away-Day on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

#### 21.12 TAUNTON MEETING HOUSE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

There was not enough time at this meeting to consider the relationship and current situation vis-à-vis TMHMC.

We agree to meet again for this purpose later this week, using zoom.

#### 21.13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 10:00, using zoom.

**Circulation list for Trustees' Minutes:** Trustees, WSAQM Business Team, LM Clerks, TMHMC, AM Website