



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON ZOOM
FRIDAY 15th JANUARY 2021 AT 10.00am**

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

PREVENTED:

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

WELCOME AND OPENING WORSHIP

21.14 READING

The last two paragraphs of the introduction to Advices and Queries have been read during our introductory worship.

21.15 ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

The Agenda has been accepted.

21.16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FOR THIS AGENDA

There were no declarations of conflicts of interest.

21.17 TAUNTON MEETING HOUSE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (TMHMC)

The Terms of Reference for TMHMC have been circulated for reference in advance of this meeting.

We have considered several points in respect of TMHMC and they are minuted individually.

a) Terms of Reference (ToR)

The Committee's ToR were revised in 2019 following some procedural and membership complications which emerged from the use of those first drafted at the inception of the Committee. In particular the Warden is not a member of the Committee but attends as required by the Committee. The Warden is supported by a designated person. At present this person also fulfils the role of Health and Safety Officer to the Local Meeting (LM).

- We have heard something of the history and founding of TMHMC and its original ToR.
- We note that Trustees must approve any changes in the conditions of employment of the MH Warden. This seems to be missing in the more recent update of the ToR. We wonder therefore, if a codicil to that effect should be added.
- Trustees regard the Terms and Conditions as important.

In the light of the issues that have been raised, we decide to ask the Committee to review its 2019 version of its ToR and, having considered prior observations (such as the employment of the Warden and Tenancy

Agreements) submitted by Trustees, to send any suggested amendments back to Trustees by 22nd February 2021. This is in anticipation of Trustees' planning for their Away Day in March 2021.

b) Membership

On checking the requirements of the ToR, we have considered the present membership of the Committee, which has members from across the AM, in respect of the terms of its composition.

We note that it currently satisfies the requirements stated in 3.1 of its ToR.

c) Covid Group

- The full Committee has not met either in person or using zoom since May 2020. Communication has been by email.
- The Covid group was convened to look at changes in the running of the MH resulting from the pandemic. The membership of this group is as follows:
Martin Wall, Peter Burgoine, Kathy Gollin, Fran Hicks, Sigurd Reimers and the Warden.

Meetings continued until October 2020 but the group has not been laid down. Its decisions have been communicated to all committee members and monthly accounts have been circulated.

More recently a prospective hirer objected to the revised hiring agreement, which insisted on face coverings even when they would be in session. The group made slight alterations to the effect that if a hirer could not meet this requirement, it should be part of their own group's risk assessment and this should be lodged with the Warden. The Trustees' minute ultimately discerned in respect of this decision (and noting that one Trustee was not in unity with the discernment) is attached to these minutes.

d) Relationship to Trustees

There has been tension between individuals on both TMHMC and Trustees – which can form a gulf between us.

It is suggested that there might be a Preamble to the ToR for TMHMC, which notes that the Committee needs to report to both WSAQM and Trustees.

Originally TMHMC was considered to be a sub-committee of Trustees. However, while it is responsible to Trustees and needs to report to Trustees, it is largely autonomous.

e) Reports to Trustees

We note that we need to receive more regular reports than the stated 'at least annually'. We ask the co-clerks of TMHMC for a draft of a possible preamble to the ToR which covers these matters.

f) Insurance issues

TMHMC needs to take note of the requirements in respect of the building, its contents and its liabilities.

We note that a start has been made on an inventory of equipment contained in the MH.

We ask TMHMC co-clerks to add a reference to insurance at section 2.8 of its ToR.

We also ask Phil Parratt (AM Treasurer) to check on the status of the revision of the Memorandum of Understanding and to inform Trustees of its progress.

We ask our clerk to communicate all suggestions noted above to the co-clerks of TMHMC.

21.18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 8th February 2021 at 10:00, using zoom.

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

Minute 20.56

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, 8th December 2020