



2023 BYM Treasurers Survey

Background

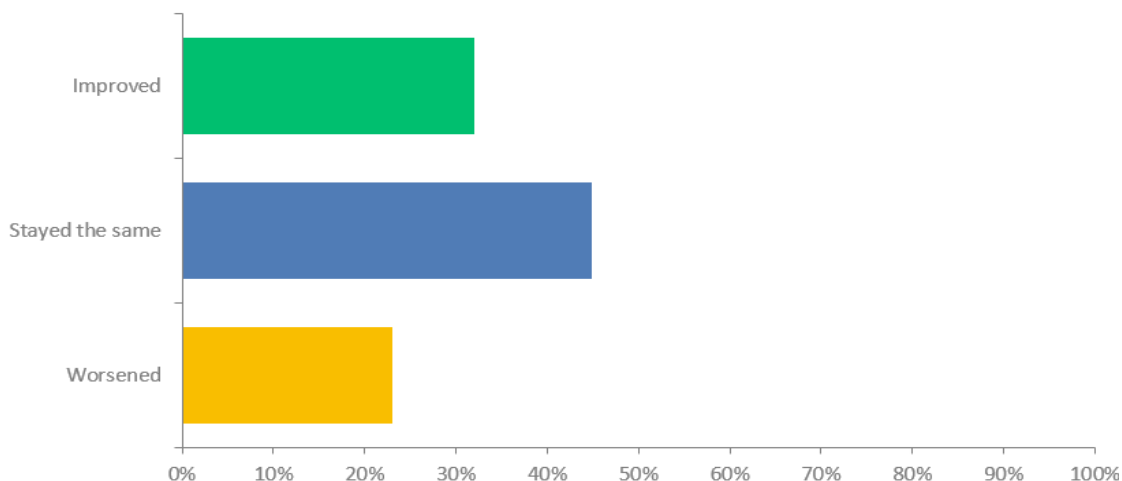
This year's survey was sent out in June 2023 to all 476 treasurers. The response rate for this survey was approximately 33% with 157 out of 476 treasurers responding.

We appreciate everyone's input in helping us understand their meeting circumstances and the challenges they are facing ahead. Your input also helps us improve how we communicate with Treasurers and Friends across Britain. The findings are presented below.

Q1: Compared with this time last year, have your meeting finances?

Improved? Stayed the same? Worsened?

Answered: 156 Skipped: 1



45% of meetings reported their finances stayed the same, compared to 53% last year.

Just under half of the meetings reported their meeting finances would stay the same. Although speculative, this might imply a sense of financial stability, but it's important to note that this group didn't experience growth and it's possible that some of the respondents hadn't factored in rising costs of inflation.

32% of meetings reported their finances improved, compared to 24% in 2022.

A significant portion (32%) of respondents said that their meeting finances improved compared to the previous year. This could indicate that many of the treasurers experienced financial growth in their meetings this might be due to increased donations collected from Friends, or increased revenue from room hire.

Some comments from meetings who reported their finances stayed the same or improved:

- *Income from lettings was very depleted after the lockdown and is gradually improving again.*
- *Our income from lettings has increased this year because the bunk barn was closed from 2020 to 2022. However, the lettings are not meeting the income expectations we had at the beginning of this year and our meeting is currently reviewing where we go from here.*
- *Certainly, income from lettings has gone up as we return to pre-Covid levels (not yet there). Energy costs have certainly gone up, but some treasurers are seeking other deals which may mitigate against any rises.*

Around 23% of meetings reported that their meetings' finances worsened compared to last year's 22%.

A decrease in finances might be attributed to various factors like declining attendance, declining membership, and increased cost of living and expenses.

Some comments from meetings who reported their meeting finances worsened:

"Lettings income still well below pre-pandemic levels. Membership numbers declining average age increasing. Enough reserves for maybe 4 or 5 years of this year's predicted deficit."

"The economic situation and change of letting business market requirements have made our letting business unviable."

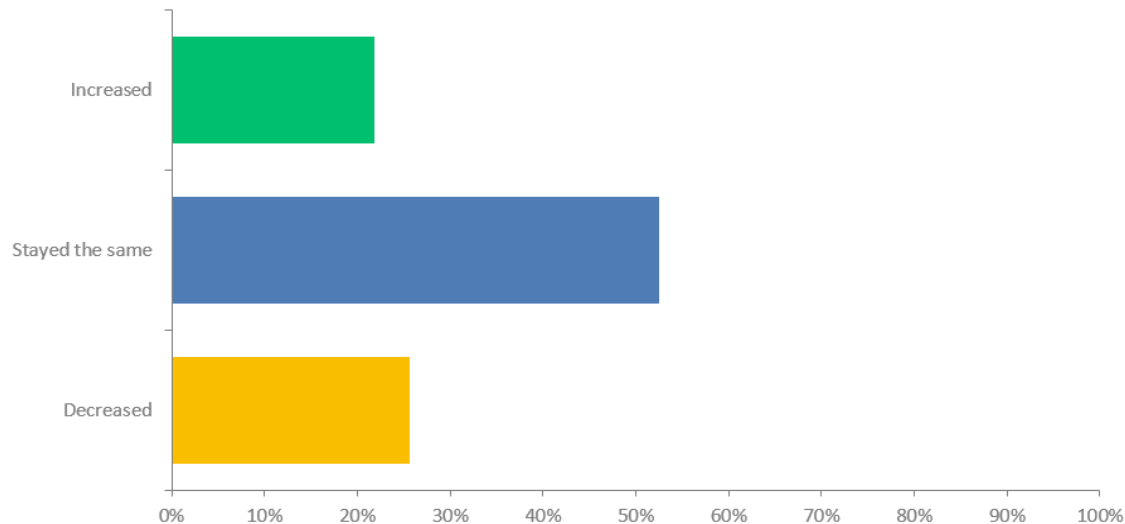
"Situation still changing post-Covid, long term trend is for lower individual giving."

"Our investments have seen a drop in value and therefore the income has reduced."

Q2: Have total contributions from members in your meetings so far?

Increased? Stayed the same? Decreased?

Answered: 156 Skipped: 1



22% answered that contributions from members increased.

This suggests that a portion of meetings experienced growth in contribution from their members, and this could be due to factors such as improved engagement, or more substantial donations from individuals.

Some comments related to why contributions from members increased.

- *“More people are coming to Meetings and wanting to stay longer as they are more relaxed about Covid. More Friends coming in person has slightly increased our donations income to enable this.”*

Whilst 53% answered that contributions from members stayed the same.

This group has a larger response rate, which could indicate a sense of stability in the contributions provided by members. While not experiencing growth, this group maintains a consistent level of support which can be considered a positive outcome.

Some comments related to why contributions from members remained the same.

- *“We are fortunate we have a few very supportive members who give generously to the meeting, our donation to BYM of £11,000. I do not anticipate being able to give as much this year.”*
- *“Most Friends who pay by monthly standing orders do not increase them.”*

And 26% answered that contributions from members decreased.

A decline in contributions could be attributed to factors such as decreased member participation, economic hardships, or a declining membership.

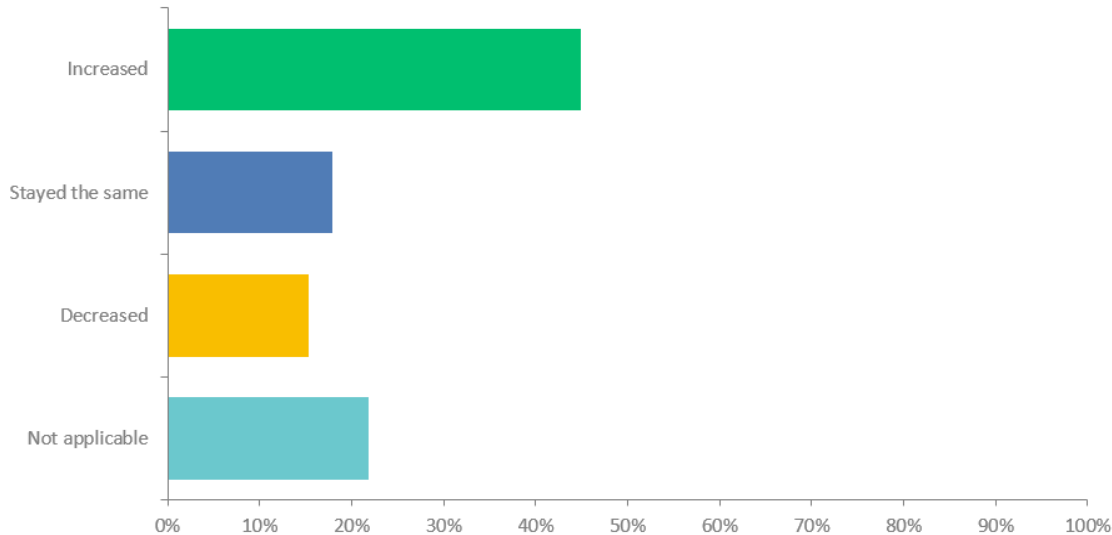
Some comments related to why contributions from members decreased.

- *“We are still seeing a drop in regular donations. Many Friends have moved out of London or sadly died. Newer members and attenders are not making regular contributions by Standing order, or if they are, it is at a low level.”*
- *“Contributions from members have increased slightly but we have major repairs to the Meeting House which will use up all our reserves and more.”*

Q3: Has income from lettings?

Increased? Stayed the same? Decreased? Not applicable?

Answered: 156 Skipped: 1



45% reported an increase in their income from lettings, compared to last year's 30%

This is the largest response group, indicating a positive trend in this section. The reasons for this increase could be due to various factors such as an increased demand for rental spaces, higher rental rates, or good property management.

Some comments related to why income from lettings increased:

- *"We are cushioned from building maintenance cost by the W&S Quaker Trust which is responsible for MH and own several letting properties which bring an income."*
- *"Certainly, income from lettings has gone up as we return to pre-Covid levels (not yet there)"*
- *"Our finances much improved as lettings income has recovered".*

18% stated their income from lettings remained the same, last year was 11%

This group showed some stability. This suggests respondents may have experienced stability in their lettings income and it might be because businesses are fully open, and the conference market is in full operation post covid, resulting in an uptick in some meeting houses lettings.

Some comments related to why income from lettings remained the same:

- *"Lettings incomes are not meeting the income expectations we had at the beginning of this year and our meeting is currently reviewing where we go from here."*
- *"Lettings income still well below pre-pandemic levels."*

15% responded income from lettings decreased, compared to last year's 26%

A decline in rental income could be due to factors like reduced demand, economic downturns, or increased competition. However, it is positive that fewer meetings reported a decrease in lettings income.

Some comments related to why income from lettings decreased:

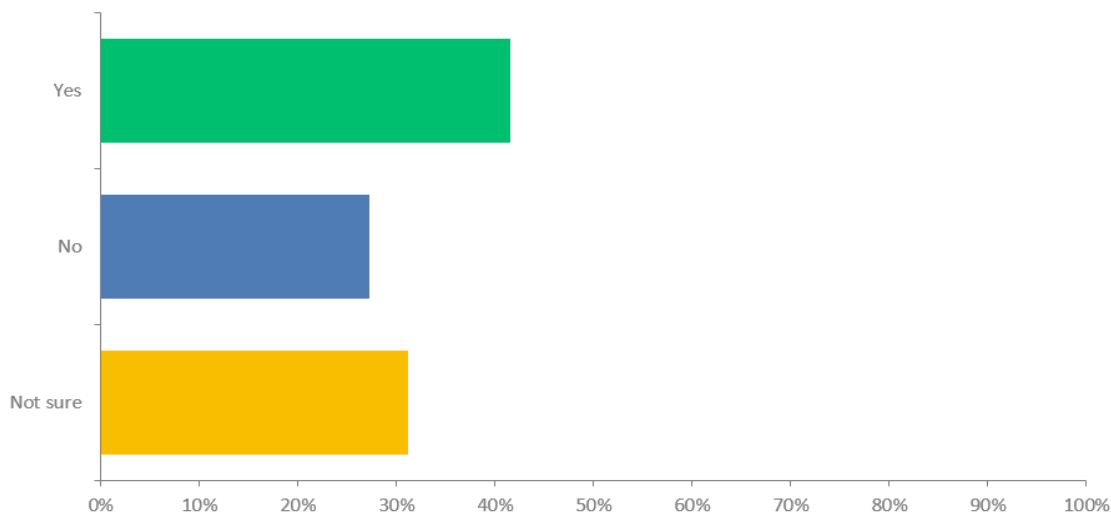
- *"The economic situation and change in letting business market requirements have made our letting business unviable".*
- *"Income from lettings is likely to continue to reduce. We have asked members and attenders to increase their contributions, but it will be next year before we can see if there is a positive response to this."*

22% responded this question was not applicable.

Q4: Do you expect the current economic situation to have an impact on the contributions you receive from members and attenders?

Yes? No? Not sure?

Answered: 154 Skipped: 3



46% of respondents said they expect the current economic situation will impact contributions they receive from members and attenders.

This group suggests that a significant number of treasurers anticipate changes in contributions they receive from the membership due to the economic climate.

Some comments explaining why:

- *“We are still seeing a drop in regular donations. Many Friends have moved out of London or sadly died. Newer members and attenders are not making regular contributions by Standing order, or if they are, it is at a low level.”*
- *We have a decrease as older Friends die or reduce their contributions due to the increase in the cost of living and younger Friends do not increase their contributions for the same reason.*

While 27% of respondents said no

This group appears to have a more optimistic or stable outlook, suggesting they believe contributions will remain consistent despite the economic challenges.

Some comments explaining why:

- *“Although we have a surplus now, I am expecting this to be drawn upon in the next 6 months to meet increasing utility costs, and income from lettings is likely to continue to reduce.”*

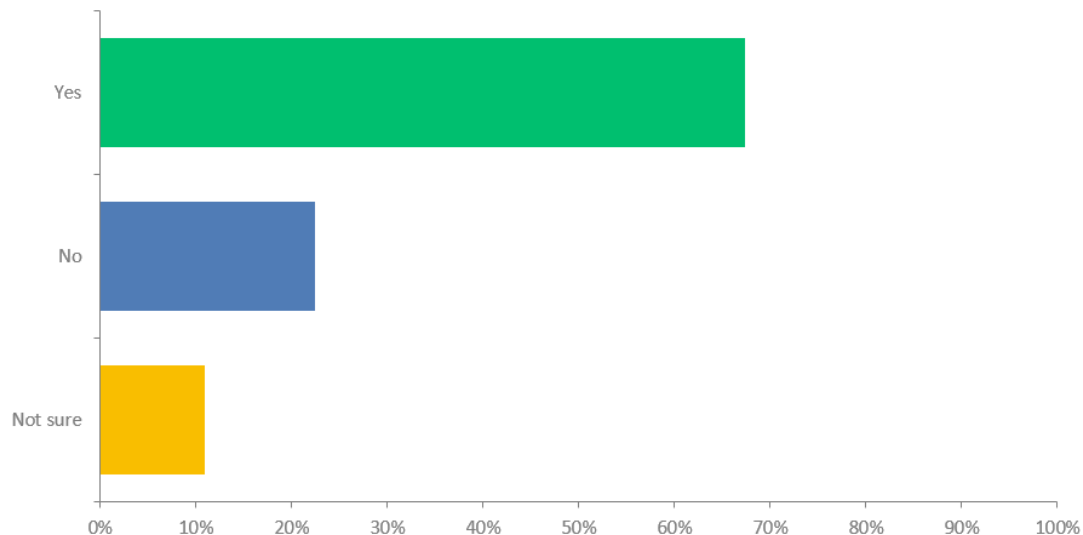
31% of respondents answered not sure.

This indicates uncertainty about the potential economic impact. This group may lack confidence in predicting the exact influence of the economic situation on contributions.

Q5: Have you seen a significant rise in costs (e.g. energy bills, room hire)?

Yes? No? Not sure?

Answered: 156 Skipped: 1



67% of respondents answered they have seen a significant rise in costs for their meetings.

This suggests that many treasurers are facing increased expenses in areas like energy bills, employing wardens and other staff, and room hire for meetings that do not have a meeting house.

Here are some comments highlighting this:

- *“The main problems arise with a large increase in costs of Wardens and maintenance of property as well as employing a bookkeeper because no one wants to take on the role of Treasurer.”*
- *Energy costs have certainly gone up, but some treasurers are seeking other deals which may mitigate against any rises.*
- *“Costs are dominated by electricity prices and difficulty heated old grade 2 listed building”*

22% of respondents said they have not seen a significant rise in costs for their meetings. While 11% of respondents answered not sure

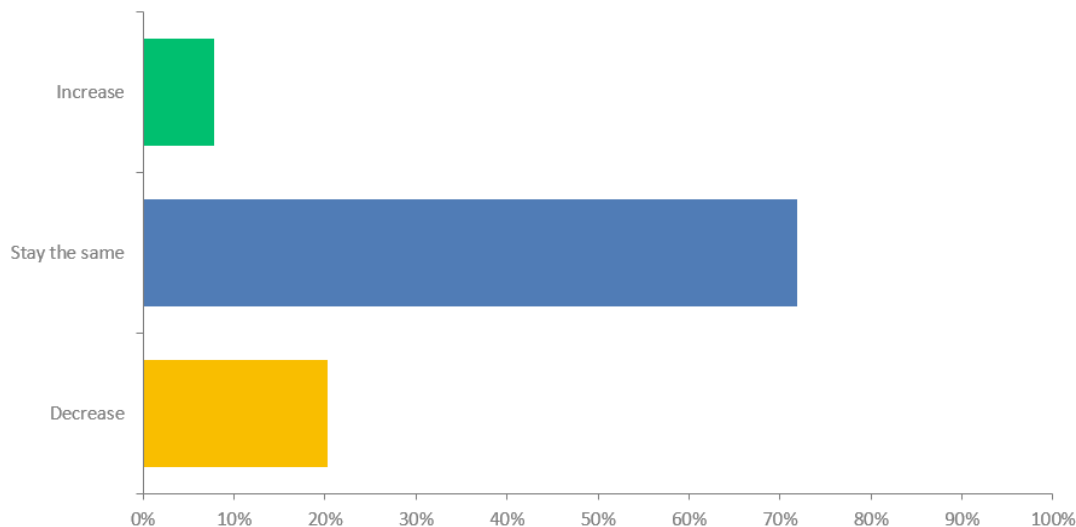
In this group, the respondents appear to have a relatively stable or controlled cost for their meetings.

Some comments explaining why:

- *“Our energy costs have not yet increased but our fixed-term contract runs out in September”.*
- *“Our current energy costs are unclear at the moment following a change of supplier last autumn.”*
- *“We are cushioned from building maintenance cost by the W&S Quaker Trust which is responsible for MH and own several letting properties which bring an income.”*

Q6: Compared to last year, do you expect your meeting's contribution to BYM this year to? Increase? Stay the same? Decrease?

Answered: 153 Skipped: 4



8% of respondents said their contribution to BYM will increase.

Some implication to this is that perhaps Treasurers who expect an increase in their meeting's contribution to BYM may have more efficient financial management or have achieved financial growth within their meetings.

Some comments explaining why:

- *“Collections are up (more of us in the Meeting House) but schedule contributions (apart from one major contributor) are down.”*
- *“We abandoned Schedules because we couldn't find anyone to run them but hope that the Meeting as a whole will be able to give from Meeting funds towards the end of the year, in addition to giving from individuals.”*

72% of respondents said their contribution to BYM will stay the same.

This indicates that most treasurers anticipate maintaining the level of support they provided in the previous year.

Some comments explaining why:

- *“Unclear about giving to Yearly Meeting as our meeting abolished Schedules and I don't yet know what we'll be able to give collectively at the end of the year.”*
- *We do not donate directly to BYM but are encouraging Friends to divert their donations in that direction.*

20% of respondents said their contribution to BYM will decrease.

This group foresees a reduction in their financial support to BYM compared to the previous year.

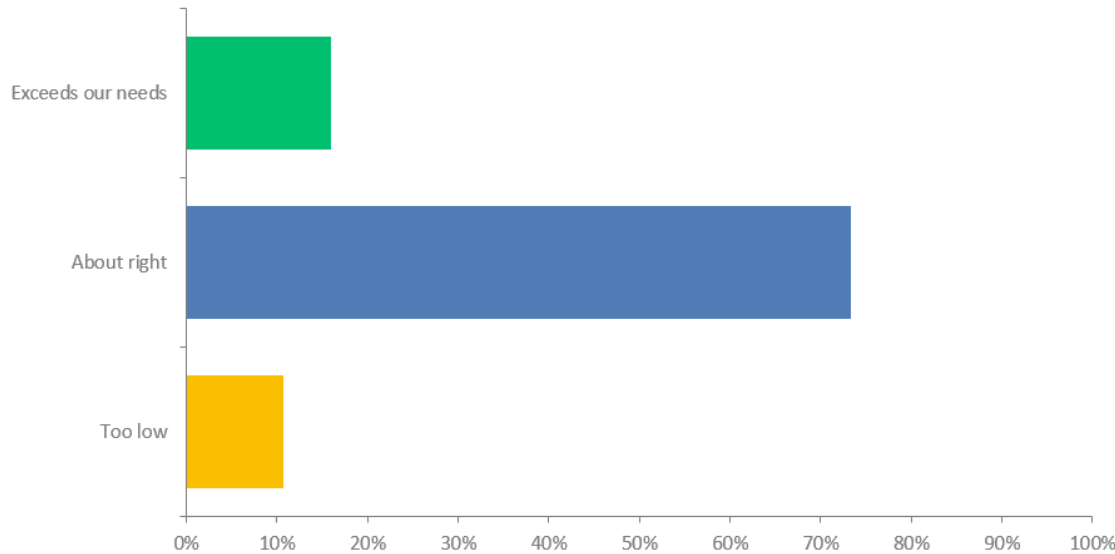
Some comments explaining why:

- *“Our contribution to BYM is likely to be quite small this year. However, we now have some newer members and attenders. In due course, we are hopeful that they will feel able and willing to contribute significantly to the meeting's finances.”*
- *“Contributions slightly down due to the deaths of older friends.”*
- *“This Meeting is not currently contributing to BYM. I have raised the matter several times but got nowhere. I recently stepped back from being treasurer. We don't have a new one but two members are dealing with payments and I think they will shortly be using a bookkeeper provided by Area.”*

Q7: How do you view the level of reserves in your Area Meeting?

Exceeds our needs? About right? Too low?

Answered: 150 Skipped: 7



It's important to note that the actual adequacy of reserves may vary depending on the specific financial circumstances of each Area Meeting.

16% of respondents indicated that the level of reserves in their Area Meeting exceeds their meetings' needs.

This suggests that a good number of treasurers believe that there is an excess of reserves in their Area Meeting. It suggests that treasurers could consider strategies for allocating these excess funds effectively, such as investing or supporting projects within the Area Meeting or towards the centrally managed funds.

Some relevant comments explaining why:

- *"We have excess reserves and sometimes experience some confusion on what these can and cannot be used for, e.g. onward donations to local charities - our current understanding is that this is acceptable if we can provide a minute showing consideration of how their work furthers our testimonies. Clear central guidance on this would be welcome."*
- *"We are starting to use our reserves for outreach and CYP bursaries."*

73% of respondents, expressed that the level of reserves is "about right."

This indicates that most treasurers believe that the reserves in their Area Meeting are appropriately balanced in terms of meeting their financial requirements.

Some relevant comments explaining why:

- *"At the beginning of the year we decided to reduce our level of reserves, to enable us to sustain our support for local beneficiaries at a time of great need. The above answer, that reserves are "about right", describes the current situation (ie post reduction)."*
- *"Our reserves are more than adequate".*
- *"Our reserves look fine but would quickly be exhausted if we did everything we need to do."*
- *We have good reserves but are running at around £4,000 per annum loss currently*

11% of respondents felt that the level of reserves in their Area Meeting is "too low."

Respondents in this category felt their meeting holds insufficient financial cushion to meet potential needs or contingencies.

Some relevant comments explaining why:

- *“We are living in reserves. We have not raised sufficient cash to cover the expenses of maintaining our Meeting House for several years now.”*
- *“Enough reserves for maybe 4 or 5 years of this year's predicted deficit.”*
- *“We did not add to our reserves last year instead gave an index-linked donation to BYM of £11,000. I do not anticipate being able to give as much this year but feel we must add an amount to our reserves.”*

Other miscellaneous comments:

- *“The proposed radical reorganisation of our Area Meeting is creating a number of issues relating to the relationship between LM and AM treasurers and the trustees of the CIO. There are questions about the decision-making process and the discernment process of the reorganisation. This is important going forward as it feels from an LM perspective that some Quaker business and decision-making processes are being ignored.”*
- *“I wish we were more prescriptive and straightforward in asking for say at least 5% of every Friends's net income, unless there is hardship. The current advice is too vague and complicated for most.”*
- *“We have increased the length of time for which we hire our venue to enable more time for chatting etc after Meeting as more people are coming and wanting to stay longer as they are more relaxed about Covid. More Friends coming in person has slightly increased our donations income to enable this.”*
- *“Our Area meeting is wrestling with the issue of what to do with old rental property. Keep, Sell or what? Healthy investment balance, but declined 18% in 2022 due to world markets (invested in Rathbones as us FTL.) Taking part in Leeds property event, just founding a sub committee to look at property.”*
- *“We've fallen behind with contributing to Area and Yearly, so I'm raising this at today's MfB and will need to ask for higher contributions from Members.”*