

Quaker governance update

Quaker Life Network newsletter

Issue 1: Summer 2022



1. Welcome to Quaker governance update

Welcome to this first edition of this new communication channel for Quaker trustees, treasurers and other Friends involved in Quaker governance. It will replace *Trustees' and Treasurers' News* which was previously produced by Quaker Stewardship Committee.

The email will be delivered three times per year. Each edition will be broken into themes to give a familiar shape and feel. The themes will be as follows:

- Quaker governance support and guidance
- Events and training opportunities
- Grants and financial help

2. Quaker Governance support and guidance

2.1 Update on the transfer of responsibilities from Quaker Stewardship Committee to Quaker Life Central Committee

Hopefully you will know by now that Quaker Stewardship Committee was laid down at Yearly Meeting 2022 following the decision to lay it down taken at Yearly Meeting 2021. QSC was laid down with little fanfare but with huge thanks to members of the committee who have served Quaker communities so diligently for the last 20 years or so.

The responsibility for supporting Quaker treasurers and trustees has now transferred to Quaker Life Central Committee (QLCC). There were some sessions for trustees and treasurers offered to Friends in the lead up to and at Yearly Meeting giving information and inviting Friends to ask questions about the transfer of responsibilities. You can see a film which was recorded at these sessions online by visiting, <https://vimeo.com/733937917/000e9563a4>.

Quaker Life has also produced a brief document which sets out the support that is available for trustees and treasurers and what they are asked to report to BYM each year. See, www.quaker.org.uk/documents/quaker-charities-reporting-to-bym-07-2022.

2.2 Revenue and Customs Brief 10 (2022): VAT — business and non-business activities (HMRC 1 June)

For information and possibly for action

HMRC has published a briefing on VAT – business and non-business activities. This explains how HMRC now approaches determining if an activity is a business activity for VAT purposes.

Abbreviations: CC – Charity Commission; BYM – Britain Yearly Meeting; LM – local meeting; AM – area meeting; ACAT – Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers; OSCR – The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator; QSC – Quaker Stewardship Committee; YMG – Yearly Meeting Gathering; QLCC – Quaker Life Central Committee

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2.3 Charities Act 2022: information about the changes being introduced (Charity Commission 4 August)

For information and possibly for action

The Charity Commission has released guidance for charities on changes to expect as a result of the staged entry into force of the Charities Act 2022 that will amend the Charities Act 2011. The changes will come into force this autumn and throughout 2023, and the Charity Commission will publish updated guidance when the changes take effect.

The guidance covers:

- **paying trustees for providing goods to the charity;**
- **making moral or ‘ex gratia’ payments from charity funds;**
- **fundraising appeals that do not raise enough or raise too much;**
- **power to amend Royal Charters;** and
- **other provisions.**

2.4 Charity registration for excepted congregations? (England and Wales) (Cytûn August / September 2022)

For information and possibly for action

A lot of smaller places of worship in England and Wales are not registered with the Charity Commission because their income does not exceed the £100,000 registration threshold. It can be difficult for exempt charities to apply for local authority grants or bank accounts because they cannot provide a charity registration number as “proof” that they are charities.

The view of the Commission has been that nothing can be done: a charity is either registered or it is not, but that position appears to be changing. In an exchange with Gethin Rhys, Policy Officer of Cytûn, the Commission’s Senior Case and Performance Manager, Registration, Mike James, has said this:

‘If an excepted church with an income of less than £100,000 has issues attracting fund, or even attracting a preferential bank deal, because they are not registered, we are happy to register them if they advise us of this.

Hopefully we will also shortly be starting a voluntary registration programme for excepted charities also; but in the meantime, if they just let us know that they are having issues without a registered number, we are happy to consider a registration application.’

Charity Commission contact: registrationapplications@charitycommission.gov.uk.

If an excepted Quaker area meeting is having difficulty acquiring a preferential or ethical bank deal, such as opening a new account, get in touch with Oliver Waterhouse, oliverw@quaker.org.uk. There may be an acceptable solution that does not involve the need for immediate charity registration.

2.5 Living Wage Foundation and the Accommodation Offset

It became apparent recently that the Living Wage Foundation (LWF) has changed its policy on the accommodation offset and changed the information on its website. This was picked up earlier this year and the text in the Quaker employers' resources was amended to reflect the change. Quaker Life got in touch with the LWF to find out more about the change, why it has been introduced and whether there is any way around it.

The LWF decided to make the change for 2 reasons:

- That they could not be certain that across all of the employment sectors they work alongside the living conditions of all employees who are residential is of a suitable standard that would essentially give them the Real Living Wage (RLW) remuneration.
- That they have chosen not to include non-cash goods or benefits as remuneration.

While this is a blanket change that affects all, the LWF is open to conversations on a case-by-case basis. They are willing to agree an arrangement with the employer and the employee that is suitable for their situation. This would still mean that the employer can be accredited by the LWF.

Because the LWF works on a regional basis they have suggested that these conversations take place with the relevant person in their team who deals with the region in which the meeting/employee is based. They have asked Quaker Life to gather a list of meetings that are affected so they can pass to the relevant colleague in their team.

Please email oliverw@quaker.org.uk with the following details if your area meeting is:

- LWF accredited,
- has employee(s) who are residential, and
- your AM included the accommodation offset as part of the employee's remuneration.

Let us know:

- the number of employees who are affected,
- where their work location is, and
- a contact at AM/LM level for each employee that can be shared with the LWF.

2.6 BYM Vulnerable supporters policy

BYM trustees have approved a [Vulnerable Supporters Policy](#), developed by the Fundraising Team. BYM recognises that inevitably a few of the many people we engage with through our fundraising activities may be classed as temporarily or permanently vulnerable and that we should be especially compassionate and respectful when engaging with them. The Policy outlines how we define a vulnerable supporter, ways we might identify when a supporter is vulnerable and suggestions of how to manage challenging situations. Treasurers and trustees are encouraged to read and use the guidance within the policy when asking Friends for donations and contributions towards local/area meeting and BYM.

2.7 Fire safety (England only) (Home Office 18 May)

The Home Office has published a [policy paper on the Fire Safety Act 2021](#). The paper provides information about the commencement of the [Fire Safety Act](#) and how it affects Responsible Persons and others. The Fire Safety Act clarifies the scope of the Fire Safety Order to make clear that it applies to the structure, external walls (including cladding and balconies) and individual flat entrance doors between domestic premises and the common parts of a multi-occupied residential building.

If you are a Responsible Person, you must consider these parts when conducting fire risk assessments, if you have not done so already.

To support the commencement of the Fire Safety Act, the Home Office has also published the [Fire Risk Assessment Prioritisation Tool](#). This is an online tool for Responsible Persons to prioritise how soon your fire risk assessments should be updated. It has also published guidance on the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, which introduce new duties under the Fire Safety Order for building owners or managers (“Responsible persons”).

This may not be relevant to most Quaker meetings. If your meeting has any lettings or tenancy agreements for residential clients, AM trustees will need to familiarise themselves with these guidelines.

3. Events and training opportunities

3.1 Trustees and treasurers conference

Trustees’ and treasurers’ responsibilities to local and area meetings can be complicated, time consuming and often challenging. This conference will bring together role-holders serving our communities on matters of compliance where the complexities of the work and role can feel all-encompassing.

There will be presentations on the work of Quaker Life and its responsibility to support governance at local and area meeting level. This will include how local development work can be part of the delivery of this and what expectations can and can’t be made of Local Development Workers. There will also be plenary time given to the Charities Act 2022 and the changes this brings, along with the schedule for implementation.

Time will be made available to explore in small groups topics such as:

- simplifying our charity and governance structures;
- becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (from excepted or registered charity status);
- safeguarding and being safe communities;
- data safety; and
- update on progress of the BYM and AM trustees memorandum of understanding work.

This will be a one day event held online on Saturday, 15 October.

See [Woodbrooke website](#) for further information.

3.2 Online treasurers information and support sessions

This year, the treasurer zoom meetings will be hosted by Paul Parker (BYM Recording Clerk), Linda Batten (BYM Treasurer) and staff from the BYM fundraising team.

At the meeting we will:

- take you through the results of the treasurers' survey;
- launch the new contributions material for 2023;
- have an opportunity in breakout rooms to discuss issues with other treasurers and BYM staff; and
- Q&A sessions will allow you to ask us questions and share concerns.

To ensure that as many treasurers and collectors as possible have the chance to participate, we are going to run the meeting three times on the dates below – each meeting will cover the same topics.

- Thursday 6 October – 19.00 to 20.30
- Wednesday 12 October – 12.00 to 13.30
- Thursday 13 October – 19.00 to 20.30

You are invited to sign up for one of these. There is room for 50 participants at each session. Places will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis. You can use this link to register: <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/treasurersautumnupdate>

4. Grants and financial help

4.1 Energy Bills Support Scheme (taken from CLAS 1 June)

The Government announced the Energy Bills Support Scheme for England, Scotland and Wales in May 2022. The announcement says that:

'Households will not need to apply for the Scheme, and in most cases we expect electricity suppliers to apply the reduction automatically to bills from October 2022.'

However, because relief is targeted at electricity bills rather than at individual consumers, Churches' Legislation Advisory Service (CLAS) foresees a problem for religious communities whose energy bills for property or properties that their members or employees occupy are paid centrally from community funds. CLAS's understanding of the scheme is that a single rebate will be applied to the bill, even if twenty individuals are living in the communal premises. This may be relevant to some Quakers communities that run or manage community housing projects.

CLAS has asked for its members to give updates on their experience of this, which won't happen until the rebate starts to be applied to customers' bills. We will put an update in this mailing when there is anything further to report. If you have experience that you would like to feedback please send to supportmeetings@quaker.org.uk.

Britain Yearly Meeting

Update for Trustees and Treasurers

Summer 2022



Giving Advocates

If there is anyone in your meeting who you think would support the work of your treasurer or collector in helping to bring in much needed contributions to local/area meeting and for the central work, we've started a new group of Giving Advocates who are supported by the fundraising team. These are Friends from across Britain who are interested in encouraging giving to Quaker Work. The group will meet three or four times throughout the year on Zoom. The purpose of the group is to provide support, discuss challenges and share ideas and tools. Everyone who is interested in talking about money and encouraging giving is welcome. Our next meeting is at 7pm on Thursday 22 September.

For more information, contact Beth at bethf@quaker.org.uk

Annual Treasurer Survey

You may have already seen the fundraising team have sent out their annual survey to treasurers. If you can take 10 minutes to fill in the survey here, that would be very helpful.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/YMR3PHT>

Meeting for Learning about Giving

Maisa and Beth have been facilitating Meeting for Learning about Giving at area meetings. These meetings which generally last two hours are a chance to help Friends consider how questions around giving for Quaker work including:

- How can I work out how much I should be giving?
- How does the contribution process work in our area?
- What works well? What could work even better?
- What does equal generosity mean?
- How can we encourage a culture of giving in our area?

If you are interested in learning more, please email Maisa at maisam@quaker.org.uk

