

Memorandum of Understanding
between
Worcestershire & Shropshire Area Quaker Meeting
A.M. Appointed Trustees
and
A.M. Constituent Local Meetings

Preamble

Worcestershire and Shropshire Area Quaker Meeting is registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (“The CIO”) Number 1175399.

Being a charity imposes on us the obligation to ensure all our actions have public benefit and serve our charitable purpose.

All members of the Area Meeting are Trustees and therefore, responsible to the Charity Commission for the proper stewardship of Area Meeting (AM) assets, and for ensuring the public benefit and AM charitable purposes are met. Area Meeting has appointed named Trustees (referred to as the Trustees) to oversee the undertaking of these responsibilities. AM and Local Meetings (LMs) shall provide any such information as the Trustees may from time to time request.

In general, operational duties are delegated to LMs. In this regard, each LM shall consider the list of its responsibilities as set out in QF&P 4:33 and decide how best these can be undertaken. Likewise, AM shall consider and act upon its responsibilities as set out in QF&P 4:10. It should be noted that what is involved is not a delegation of authority but the carrying out of functions for which all Trustees have legal responsibility.

Trustees responsibilities are set out in QF&P 15:05 and in the AM Governing Document.

Worcestershire and Shropshire AM own three Meeting Houses, Bewdley, Malvern and Shrewsbury. Worcester Meeting House is currently owned by Worcester Friends Trust.

Some specific procedures and delegations now follow. It is hoped that the local meetings within the area of Worcestershire and Shropshire AM will undertake their responsibilities as stated.

1.0 **Finance**

1.1 **Guidance**

Treasurers shall be guided on good practice by resources for Treasurers on the BYM (Britain Yearly Meeting) website; they also have access to the ACAT (Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers) handbook both available via

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/quaker-roles/treasurers>

The website also gives access to copies of Trustees' and Treasurers' News, spreadsheets and software, technical support for the spreadsheets, a contributions support pack, and contact details for the Treasurers' and Clerks' support Officer.

Training is also available through courses run by Woodbrooke and ACAT, and there is an annual Quaker Treasurers' Conference.

1.2 **Holding and Use of Funds**

LM Treasurers will be responsible for setting out, and agreeing with the trustees, the bank accounts that may be required.

Treasurers shall be mindful that all funds (other than collections made on behalf of a third party) are the property of AM, the charity, albeit some funds have restricted use as documented in the Annual Report.

AM and each LM shall operate a bank account, or accounts, of their choice in which to deposit all respective income. Each may also hold a small amount of parallel petty cash. **There should be three or four signatories to the accounts, with any two of the signatories authorised to sign cheques. (The persons signing the cheque should be recorded on the voucher authorising the payment.)**

LMs are expected to use their own locally-generated income for routine running cost of the Meeting, including contributions to AM. However, LMs may ask AM for financial assistance or advice if needed. **No commitments should be entered into unless funds are available.**

All Meeting Treasurers shall be mindful of the AM Policy for Reserves.

Investments shall be handled only by AM.

1.3 **Financial Reporting**

LM Treasurers shall prepare annually a financial statement to the requirements of the AM Treasurer. The reporting shall include information on reserves held plus a schedule showing the distribution of total funds between the different accounts operated by the LM. Year end is 31st December. All finances are subject to scrutiny by the AM auditor.

The Trustees shall ensure an audited statement of account is prepared as part of the AM Annual Report, copied to the Charity Commission.

2.0 Meeting Houses

2.1 Buildings and Grounds (The Premises)

LMs with a Meeting House owned by Worcestershire and Shropshire Area Meeting have responsibility for:

- i. The day to day management and maintenance of their premises (including the repair and renewal of fabric, fittings and furnishings).
- ii. The hire of the rooms and/or car park under appropriate terms.
- iii. Working towards Britain Yearly Meeting goal of becoming a low carbon community. Each LM will commission condition surveys every five years (the quinquennial report) to assist with this work.

The LM shall appoint a person or committee to be responsible for overseeing their property matters.

LMs whose premises are Listed as of historic interest or are in a Conservation Area shall be mindful of respective regulations when considering repairs or alterations.

LMs shall advise AM of any proposed major works to their property and seek the AM Treasurer's consent to use of funds for those works. The LM may seek advice from the AM Treasurer on use of funds. Friends are reminded that external financial grants are available in some circumstances.

2.2 Health and Safety

All LMs are responsible for implementing health and safety good practice. This extends to the hiring of rooms, where LMs shall ensure hirers are aware of, and adhere to, the Meeting House safety practices. LMs with residential tenancies shall ensure the terms of tenancy adequately cover good health and safety practice.

Hazardous substances shall be stored in line with the COSHH Regulations. Fixed electrical installations and wiring shall be checked every five years. Gas appliances and all portable electrical appliances shall be checked annually. A Risk Assessment shall be compiled, then reviewed annually in line with the AM Health and Safety Policy.

LMs to appoint a named Friend or Premises Committee to be responsible for health and safety requirements in their meeting notifying the trustees of the appointments made.

2.3 Fire Safety

Firefighting equipment and fire detection and alarm systems shall be checked at least once each year. In all rooms in which people assemble, Fire Safety instructions shall be displayed and users shall be made aware of them. Provision shall be made for escape from fire, including escape from upper floors, for persons with limited mobility.

A Fire Risk Assessment shall be drawn up and reviewed from time to time. Advice may be available from Worcestershire and Shropshire local Fire and Rescue Services.

LM Friends should experience a fire practice at least annually.

2.4 Insurance

The Trustees negotiate a single insurance policy for our four meeting houses and adjacent grounds, with cover for buildings, contents, accident and third party liability. Third party liability cover extends to our Meetings without premises.

The Trustees consult LM treasurers annually over the terms offered for renewal and negotiate these with our insurance broker who also advises. The total premium is paid for by AM treasurer. Payment is made to the brokers.

LMs to inform the trustees of any insurance claims, should there be any damage or loss which justifies a claim.

2.5 Room Hire and Lettings.

Charity law requires that room lettings benefit the society either by contributing to our finances or to work that corresponds to our charitable objectives.

In accordance with our testimonies to equality and honesty all users should normally be charged at the same rate. If a meeting wishes to support the work of a particular user whose objectives accord with our charitable objectives, they can discount room hire. This should be recorded in the LMs financial records as a donation in support of the work of the beneficiary (perhaps by issuing a credit note against a portion of the invoice).

The terms and rates for room hire in our Meeting Houses can be set by the respective LM, who can also decide who to let rooms to. However, rooms should not be let to individuals or groups whose objects conflict with Quaker testimony.

Where a residential part of the premises is let, the LM shall seek professional advice on the terms of the tenancy.

3.0 Procedures

3.1 Data Protection

LMs have the task of ensuring that all personal data held either digitally or in paper files is treated in accordance with the Data Protection laws and the AM Data Protection Policy.

3.2. Safeguarding the protection of children and vulnerable adults

LMs shall implement the AM Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Practice Guidelines. Each LM Clerk shall be the verifier for Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, or may delegate this task to another LM member if such delegation is recorded in a business meeting minute. It is helpful to have an individual in each LM who will receive and distribute updated information, such as material prepared by Britain Yearly Meeting.

3.3 Employment of Staff

Staff are employed by the Trustees, with wage rates being determined by AM. LMs shall ensure that they are complying with the AM Policy on the Employment of Staff.

LMs employ such staff as may be necessary, whether as resident Friends/Wardens, cleaners or gardeners. The contract of employment should be in a form agreed by the trustees who will need to ensure that legal requirements are met, for example, minimum wage legislation, holiday arrangements, and pension provision. The LM should arrange to deduct tax, national insurance, etc.

3.4 Accessibility

All LMs shall be mindful of regulations relating to accessibility. LMs shall comply with the AM Disability Equality Policy in ensuring accessibility needs are considered and met. LMs may seek assistance from the Trustees if desired.

3.5 Equal Opportunities

All LMs shall be mindful of, and implement, the AM Equal Opportunities Policy.

3.6 Risk Management

AM shall appoint an assessor to oversee implementation of the AM Risk Management Policy, reviewed by the Trustees periodically. The assessor shall report to AM at least annually.

3.7 Preservation of Records

AM Custodian of Records can advise on the necessary and appropriate scope of record keeping (what to keep, for how long, in what format). This advice can also be found on the Quaker website: from the main page choose Our Organisation/Quaker roles/Records custodians and librarians/Records retention/Guide No. 2 – Meeting records and their retention and disposal.

3.8 Area Meeting Policies

The Trustees shall keep AM Policies up to date, with each Policy being reviewed, and recorded as such, at least annually. The Clerk to the Trustees will distribute AM Policies to LM Clerks, who then have responsibility for disseminating Policy requirements locally and for overseeing their implementation.

4.0 Quaker Meetings

4.1 Meetings for Worship

Each LM is expected to make its own respective arrangements regarding Meeting for Worship.

4.2 Elders and Overseers

AM has the responsibility for all appointments of Elders and Overseers. LMs should encourage attendance at AM Elders and Overseers meetings.

4.3 Children and Newcomers

Making suitable arrangements for children in Meeting shall be the responsibility of each LM. LMs shall also make suitable arrangements for welcoming newcomers to Meeting.

4.4 Local Meeting meetings for business (meetings of church affairs)

LMs should hold a Meeting for Church Affairs (MCA) whenever there is enough business to merit it. LM Members shall be advised of the proposed meeting agenda at least three days before the meeting date so Friends with a particular interest in any of the items will be aware in advance that it is for discussion. The minutes of the MCA shall be sent to the AM Clerk and be made available for all LM Members to see, including those without email.

4.5 Area Meeting meetings

AM is expected to convene several times per year. The AM Clerk shall advise LM Clerks of the proposed meeting agenda at least one week before the meeting date. LM Clerks shall in turn advise respective Members of the items to be considered. LMs shall appoint representatives to attend the AM meeting. The AM Clerk shall send the minutes of the meeting to LM Clerks, Clerk to the Trustees and others as appropriate.

4.6 The Trustees meetings

The Trustees are expected to convene every three months approximately. At least one week in advance of the meeting date, the Clerk to the Trustees shall advise Trustees and others as appropriate to the matters in hand, of the proposed agenda. The Clerk to the Trustees shall send the minutes of the meeting to the Trustees, the AM Clerks, the AM Treasurer and to all LM Clerks.

4.7 Britain Yearly Meeting

LM Clerks shall disseminate to Members information about the activities of, and advice from Britain Yearly Meeting and encourage Friends to attend.

5.0 Reporting to the Area Meeting Trustees and reporting by the Trustees

5.1 General management

To enable the Trustees to carry out their statutory duties. LMs shall provide reports on those functions which they carry out, but for which Trustees retain legal responsibility. LMs shall therefore respond to information requests made by the Trustees, including response to questionnaires sent annually.

In addition, the minutes of Local Meetings for Church Affairs as well as those from Premises, Employment and Finance Committees shall be sent to the Clerk to the Trustees and to the AM Clerk.

5.2 Religious and Charitable Purposes

Meetings are reminded that the object of Worcestershire and Shropshire Area Quaker Meeting, of which all our Meetings are a part, is the furtherance of the general and religious purposes of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain in the area of the Area Meeting and beyond.

LMs are also reminded that our assets are to be used for the functions set out in QF&P 14.04.

LMs shall keep a record of their activities undertaken for our religious and charitable purposes and include these in an annual Life and Work report. This report shall be submitted to AM and to the Clerk to the Trustees no later than two months after year end. The reports may be placed on the AM website for public view as demonstration that we are meeting our objectives.

In accordance with our Governing Document, the Trustees shall submit their Annual Report and Accounts to AM no later than eight months after the respective year end.

Worcestershire & Shropshire Memorandum of Understanding

Charity No. 1175399

1st December, 2018