**Hertford and Hitchin Area Meeting Trustees Report 2021**

**Trustees’ Report to**

**Hertford and Hitchin Area Meeting for**

**2019 - 2021.**

**1 – Introduction: The Trustees’ Report**

This Trustees’ report to Area Meeting follows the format of reports made to Area Meeting in previous years. For various reasons, no report was made by Trustees in 2020. The report covers the Trustees work and activities in the period November 2019 to November 2021. Trustees met twice in 2020, and 5 times in 2021.

Trustees information (passworded) is available on the Area Meeting website at [www.HertfordAndHitchinQuakers.org.uk/trustees](http://www.HertfordAndHitchinQuakers.org.uk/trustees) or [www.hhq.org.uk/trustees](http://www.hhq.org.uk/trustees) (contact your meeting’s Clerk or a Trustee for access information).

**2 - The Trustees’ Activities**

**2.1 Coronavirus**

During much of this period, the work of Trustees has been dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Through the first lockdown in March 2020, our Meeting Houses were compelled to close. Once re-opening became possible, there were many new regulations to consider and provide advice to local meetings. Very helpful guidance was provided by Britain Yearly Meeting to assist with the task, but it caused significant strain for Local Meetings to feel assured that they were acting in a safe and compliant way. Helping Meetings with this was the primary task in 2020.

A further linked matter was overseeing and monitoring progress with Business Interruption insurance claims. This work is ongoing.

While the Covid-19 pandemic remains with us, the government now provide less stringent guidelines. While this can be helpful in providing greater latitude, it is still our duty to ensure all our Meeting Houses are safe places for worship and community life. Trustees will continue to be mindful of Covid-related issues in the coming year, and to encourage all Friends to do the same.

**2.2 Our Priorities**

The disruption caused by the pandemic meant that most other Trustee activity ceased for some time. In 2021 it has been possible to resume working on other matters. We have given thought in our meetings to our current priorities, in order to focus our efforts when there are concerns we might deal with. We have agreed our main priorities to be:

* Safeguarding
* Safety and risk management
* Employment related matters.

A number of other matters continue to be monitored closely, and Trustees give attention to them as is needed. The future of Hoddesdon Meeting House and related properties is the most important of these.

**2.2.1 Safeguarding**

Work to progress the new safeguarding policy has been led by Clare Cooper. Ensuring we have strong safeguarding practice is essential, as Quakers corporately seek to learn from the experiences of other churches. Trustees are keen to ensure all Friends in our AM appreciate safeguarding is the responsibility of all of us, and we must guard against complacency.

**2.2.2 Employment**

In relation to employment matters, Trustees intend to formalise adoption of the BYM model policies, which are already commonly used as needed.

**2.2.3 Property matters**

Trustees have continued to monitor the progress of the Hoddesdon Options Group and receive regular reports on progress. We have worked to put the Hoddesdon Peace Cottage Steering Group on a formal basis as a duly constituted committee with powers delegated by the trustees.

Trustees have been working to ensure the AM Property Committee continues to function. The priority has been to respond to insurers requests for basic safety documentation, which will assist with getting new insurance valuations of our properties. In turn we hope fairer, more realistic property valuations will reduce our insurance costs.

**2.2.4 Area Meeting**

Trustees have looked to ensure that at least one Trustee is present at every Area Meeting, and asked that this be minuted in the same way as Local Meeting representatives.

**2.2.5 Finance**

We received the examined Area Meeting amalgamated financial accounts for 2020, and submitted the relevant information in our annual report to the Charity Commission for 2020. Trustees remain aware of the possible implications of Area Meeting decisions, and ensure that consideration is given at Trustee Meetings to minutes relevant to Trustees including financial items.

**2.2.6 Other policy work**

Trustees have completed work on a new Equalities Policy in 2021.

Trustees are preparing a new Data Protection policy for the Area Meeting, based on the model policy provided by BYM.

**2.3 How the Trustees work**

**2.3.1 Trustees’ Meetings**

In the unusual circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic, we had only 2 meetings in 2020, but consulted each other by email and phone on giving guidance to LMs on the implementation of lockdown and social distancing. In 2021 Trustees have been meeting regularly, and have met 5 times during 2021. Trustees meetings are held on the first Monday alternate months.

Since November 2020, all our Meetings have been held on Zoom. Trustees have reflected on whether resuming face to face meetings would be desirable in due course – weighing the convenience of Zoom against the warmth that comes meeting in person. This remains an open question. During this period all meetings were quorate.

We seek to follow Quaker business methods, and continue to read extracts from Quaker Faith and Practice during each meeting.

**2.3.2 Trustees’ Minutes**

We continue to minute the decisions we have taken. These minutes are circulated to “contact” Clerks in the Local Meetings, and to the Area Meeting Clerk, and are available on the Area Meeting website via. [www.hhq.org.uk/trustees](http://www.hhq.org.uk/trustees). This section of the website also contains where possible, the working papers of the Trustees meetings ,as well as some other documents such as the Governing Document and the Trustees Terms of Reference.

**2.3.3 Trustees’ links**

Trustees continue to consider more closely how to build trust and relationships within our Area Meeting. We are conscious that the work of Trustees may not be widely understood by Friends. We continue to seek to be more visible and to understand more closely the needs of Local Meetings, Area Meetings and Friends, although the pandemic means this is not always easy. A good deal of effort went into to the report to the Charity Commission, and we have taken care to circulate the report to all Meetings.

Trustees continue to play a prominent role in other AM bodies including Property Committee and Finance Committee.

The Clerk of Trustees is part of a network of Clerk of Trustees that is facilitated by British Yearly Meeting. This is a useful resource for hearing how Trustees nationally are working through similar issues and concerns.

**2.3.4 Trustees development**

Trustees continue to take up opportunities for learning, including attending Woodbrooke courses specifically for Trustees. Learning is then shared with other Trustees.

Andrew Meek

Clerk of Area Meeting Trustees

10th January 2022