**Quakers in Yorkshire**

**Group to Reinvigorate and Simplify Structures and Processes (GRASP)**

**Minutes of meeting held on 30 November 2019 at Carlton Hill Meeting House, Leeds**

**Present:** David Bunney (CY), Alison Clarke (York), Jim Ledwidge (BWY), David Olver (C&K & Convenor), Rosie Roberts (S&B), Barbara Windle (QiY Trustees)

**Prevented:** Steve Hallett (P&H), Richard Hawkes (Leeds Alternate), Tracey Martin (Leeds)

**We began our meeting with worship.**

**1. Agenda**

We agree the agenda for today.

**2. Membership**

We welcome David Bunney, representing Central Yorkshire until the end of the year.

**3. Minutes**

The minutes of our meeting held on 30 October 2019 have been circulated.

**4. Members update on relevant matters which have happened since our last meeting.**

We heard from each of us on developments since we last met. Most members have reported on our work to their most recent Area Meeting. There is interest in the opportunities for simplification, particularly when the statistical information on the large number roles was shared.

We had updates on responses to the BYM Call for Experiments in Faith asking for expressions of interest in hosting Local Development Workers. A number of our AMs have welcomed the initiative of Leeds AM in coordinating responses.

We received with interest the note circulated by Alison on the survey done by John Guest of York AM on paid administrative assistants around the Yearly Meeting. This shows that he use of paid assistance is becoming more common for a wide range of tasks including helping trustees, helping clerks, finance and property.

**5. Reservations on simplification**

Arising from a note which Rosie circulated, indicating a different perspective on centralising tasks in Yorkshire, we have discussed how we might deal with differing views. We are agreed that we need to stress-test whatever ideas we come up with. This will be intended to ensure that we are sensitive to the wide range of views around Yorkshire Friends.

We also need to provide Friends with information about the many tasks undertaken by QiY.

**6. Contact with Simpler Meetings project**

We receive a note from Tracey on her meeting with Jonathan Carmichael, Simpler Meetings Project Officer for BYM at Friends House. He is available and willing to help. He endorses the approach we are taking of separating the re-invigoration of Quakerism in Yorkshire and the simplification of our processes and practices.

He has put a lot of useful information, ideas and videos on the BYM website at:

<https://www.quaker.org.uk/our-organisation/support-for-meetings/simpler-meetings>

**7. Simplification of processes and practice**

We have had a general discussion on ways to simplify processes at all levels of Yorkshire Quakerism.

There are administrative roles which are burdensome for Friends. These can be tackled by sharing roles between meetings, or by an area meeting taking responsibilities currently done by local meetings, or by buying in professional services.

We have discussed subjects where professional services are feasible. Examples are safeguarding and property.

We agree that our consideration of the simplification of roles should be assessed without being constrained by existing structures of either area meetings or QiY. Remote working provides additional options.

Engagement of Friends at the local level will be crucial to achieving useful simplification.

The next stage is for us to put these ideas down onto a draft paper. David agrees to prepare a paper for our next meeting.

**8. Preparation for QiY in January**

We have discussed preparation for the QiY meeting in January (Saturday 18 January at St.Aidans Church, Leeds). There is a session scheduled for the afternoon (14.20-15.10) on Simpler Meetings with Jonathan Carmichael invited to speak, together with a contribution from us.

We suggest that a presentation on ways area meetings can work together might be a good start.

We agree that the GRASP contribution will be based on a summary of the progress we will have achieved by then (and discussed at our next meeting).

We suggest to the QiY clerks that Friends in the north east be invited (Northumbria AM, Teesdale & Cleveland AM, Wensleydale & Swaledale AM).

**9. How to re-invigorate Yorkshire Quakerism**

We thank Rosie for circulating a paper from South East Scotland AM titled “Encouraging Attenders to become Members”. We feel that it is a useful document, although probably daunting for many Attenders. We agree that Rose will produce a simplified version which we will discuss and then possibly circulate more widely to local and area meetings for comment.

**10. Schedule for our work**

We note that the Guidelines for GRASP state that we should produce a progress report within 4 months (i.e. end of December 2019) and a paper for discussion within 6 months (i.e. by end February 2020).

**9. Dates of future meetings**

We agree to meet on **Monday 30 December 2019** at Carlton Hill Meeting House, 10.30 to 13.00.

David Olver

30 November 2019