**Quakers in Yorkshire**

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

**Minutes of meeting held on 21 July 2020 by Zoom**

**Present:** David Bunney (CY), Alison Clarke (York), Tim Herrick (S&B, Jim Ledwidge (BWY), Tracey Martin (Leeds), David Olver (C&K & Convenor), Rosie Roberts (Co-opted), Phyllis Wicks (P&H), Barbara Windle (QiY Trustees)

**We began our meeting with worship.**

**We agree the agenda for today.**

**1. Membership**

We welcome Tim Herrick who has been appointed by Sheffield & Balby AM and Phyllis Wicks who has been appointed by Pickering & Hull AM.

**2. Minutes**

The minutes of our meeting held on 16 March 2020 have been circulated.

**3. Summary of progress to date**

We receive a summary of progress of GRASP since we first met at the end of August last year. This includes a list of the AMs and LM that have sent in minutes dealing with their consideration of the consultation in our Interim Report which was published early in January 2020. Jim has circulated a minute from a group set up by Brighouse West Yorkshire AM which met on 13 July 2020.

The pandemic lock-down has inevitably delayed consideration by some meetings, but the minutes received to date are supportive of our proposals with many helpful comments. Some meetings have devoted considerable time and resources to considering the issues. We are grateful for all the effort so far devoted to our Interim Report.

**4. Round up from members**

We have shared experiences about what has happened in our areas in relation to both the consequences of the pandemic and the consideration of the GRASP report.

During lock-down there have been many innovative uses of virtual zoom meetings, including by young people. This has often kept local and area meetings together. But we have noticed a clear divide between the IT literate and those who do not wish to, or are not able to, use IT. This is not necessarily age related.

The consideration of the GRASP report has taken a back-seat during the lock-down and may not resume until physical meetings start again.

Some area meetings have used a local group to consider simplification and reinvigoration and this approach could be more widely used. There are new ideas being tried out which might make consideration of the recommendations easier in the future.

**5. BYM/Woodbrooke initiatives**

Since our last meeting BYM and Woodbrooke have announced that it is intended to place both a staff hub and a local development worker in Yorkshire. The intention is that the hub will be in the offices of Carlton Hill meeting house, currently occupied by Christian Aid, who are moving out. Negotiations with Leeds AM Trustees are continuing.

The schedule for recruiting the next tranche of local development workers has been delayed by the lock-down and it may not be possible to advertise before the end of the year.

We are very optimistic about the prospects for a local development worker in Yorkshire and hope that the delay will not be for long.

**6. How might the pandemic change our view of the need for reinvigoration and simplification?**

The pandemic is one of the biggest shocks to Quakerism in its 368-year history so the long-term impact on Quaker organisation could be great.

We have had a general discussion on possible implications. The reduction in the financial income of meetings and groups has been severe. This will be made worse by reduced income from lettings for some time into the future. AM Trustees are having to grapple with many issues that they did not expect.

Large gatherings and travel are likely to be reduced for some time and may not return to pre-lock-down levels.

Woodbrooke and BYM are having to consider how to operate sustainably but also how to witness to new movements such as Black Lives Matter and the wider cultural diversity agenda. It is pleasing to hear that Woodbrooke and BYM have started a range of successful online courses.

The pandemic has made us change the way we do things and some of these changes may be permanent. Young people are often able to point us in new directions.

We have a lot of meeting houses which need resources to maintain. The implications for the financial and human resources might need to be reconsidered.

The goals for simplification may become more important driven partly by financial imperatives.

**7. Actions for next stage of GRASP**

We have considered our actions for the second half of 2020.

We agree to collate the ways that meetings are responding to both the pandemic and the simplification agenda across all seven area meetings. We will send our inputs to David Olver by 15 August.

In the autumn we will consider how we can help area meetings collaborate and how they might consider sharing responsibilities.

We may be able to organise QiY wide virtual meetings designed to encourage conversations and consideration of GRASP issues. We will consider this further at our next meeting.

We need to be aware of the different needs of small meetings and large meetings.

**8. Date of next meeting**

We agree to meet next by Zoom on Monday 24 August 2020 from 6.00pm to 8.00pm

David Olver

21 July 2020