**Quakers in Yorkshire**

**Simplifying Charitable Functions Group**

**Notes on meeting held on 29 May 2023 by zoom**

**Present:** David Bower (Central Yorkshire AM), Erica Cadbury (Craven & Keighley AM), Ann Hindley (Sheffield & Balby AM), David Olver (QiY Trustees - Convenor), Helen Rowlands (Pickering & Hull AM), Martina Weitsch (York AM).

**Prevented:** Deryck Hillas (Brighouse West Yorkshire AM).

We opened with a period of worship.

**1. Membership**

Noted the membership of the Group. Leeds AM are still trying to find a Friend to join the Group. We need a member from Leeds AM to fully consider all parts of QiY (David O to contact).

**2. Introductions**

We introduced ourselves including our current roles and the factors leading us to consider simplifying our structures.

**3. Purpose of the group**

Noted the group has been set up “to produce practical proposals as to how to simplify charitable functions through mergers or close collaboration”. However, the group is free to bring forward any recommendations we discern is best for Yorkshire, including maintaining the status quo.

**4. Discussion of issues**

We had a general discussion of the issues. These are some of the points made in the discussion:

* There are difficulties in finding Friends to fill key roles, particularly for the smaller AMs.
* We have a lot of trustees across Yorkshire.
* Some Friends find trusteeship to be fulfilling and rewarding. Charity governance has many benefits and does not need to be onerous.
* The incentive to consider merging functions comes particularly from smaller AMs.
* Travel distances are significant factors in how easy it is to collaborate.
* There are examples of collaboration already happening (e.g. sharing registering officers, holding joint meetings for worship of groups of local meetings).
* In Yorkshire we have a lot of meeting houses, all of which need care and maintenances. We ought to consider whether the current model of using mostly volunteers to organise premises is sustainable, or whether collaboration and use of professionals might free up effort for Quaker worship and witness.
* We should consider two models for merging – one charity covering all QiY region; dividing up QiY into three AMs.
* There is a tension between local meetings wishing to be ‘independent’ and the value of cooperation and the need to fulfil legal requirements in a sustainable manner.
* The volunteer model which Quakerism has used for centuries has satisfied us well so do we need to change?
* Our declining and ageing membership makes the current way we organise ourselves potentially unsustainable.
* Do we need to consider radical solutions such as disposing of property? Such solutions would have to be supported by Friends in local meetings.

**5. First steps and allocation of tasks**

We agree to map out different models and options. This should include the negatives and positives in the context of Quakerism in Yorkshire. We will do this by allocating the models and options to each of us as follows:

Martina: Go through the trustee functions and see what is done best locally or wider.

Helen: Look at what is happening elsewhere in the yearly meeting with a view to understanding why proposals/decisions have been made.

Erica: Look at a model of 3 AMs covering the QiY area, including the advantages and disadvantages.

Ann & David B:

 Look at a model of a single charitable unit covering the QiY area, including the advantages and disadvantages.

David O: Look at the potential for collaborating on upkeep of property, including how the London Quaker Property Trust works.

We agree to aim to send reviews and comments to David O by **Wednesday 21 June** so that they can be circulated to everyone.

**6. Method of working and timescale**

Timescale and frequency of meeting

We agree to plan on the basis of 2-3 meetings between now and end of the summer.

Convening the Group

David O agrees to convene the next meeting. After that another member might be willing to convene a meeting.

**7. Date of next meeting**

Monday 26 June, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm by Zoom

David Olver

29 May 2023