

Area Meeting Trustees Report 2018

Trustees have met 4 times so far during 2018, with a further meeting planned for December.

Although Trustees have formal responsibilities for some key Area Meeting matters, our practice in Sheffield and Balby has been to delegate much of the day to day work (such as managing the meeting house buildings) to our Local Meetings. Similarly for detailed work on things such as Safe-guarding and Data Protection, Friends are appointed by Area Meeting to manage these responsibilities rather than Trustees doing this directly.

What this means is that Trustees primarily undertake a checking/oversight role and during the year receive reports and comment as needed on for example our Data Protection proposals because of the large policy changes that have been required.

Trustees are also minded of the need to bring back to Area Meeting any major decisions that need discernment. Whilst ultimately in UK law Trustees have the formal accountability, our Governing Document is clear that we are acting on behalf of the Area Meeting.

During the year, these are the main things we've covered:

Data Protection – Friends will be aware from Area and Local Meetings that we have had to respond to some major regulatory changes affecting the way data we collect on Members/Attendees is managed as well as on our bookings. Our Data Protection Officer did a huge piece of work on getting this reviewed and organised, and the proposed changes were discussed in detail at Trustees and formally approved at Area Meeting.

Safeguarding – we met with the Area Meeting's Safeguarding Officers, and were confident that the procedures set out in our agreed policies are working well and that careful attention has been given to these policies meeting the formal guidance given to us by Friends House.

Trading Company Review – We started looking again at the question as to whether there would be benefits to establishing a 'trading company' to handle the financial accounting of the lettings carried out at Sheffield Central and Doncaster Meeting Houses. Many other large Meetings have done this, as have places such as Glenthorne and we felt we should review whether this might be sensible for us too.

This is at an early stage, where we are reviewing the benefits and any disadvantages. We are hoping at the Quaker Centres Gathering (an event for larger Meeting Houses that Sheffield is hosting in early 2019) to have a workshop on this.

An early reason for this review is because this change may take away some significant costs we would otherwise have in paying for formal valuations of our two Meeting Houses every 5 years or so.

However, we don't yet have a recommended approach, but when we are clearer (hopefully during 2019) we will bring our thoughts to both the local meetings for consideration and following this to Area Meeting who would have to make formal decisions on any changes.

2017 Accounts/Trustee Report to the Charity Commission – During the year, we have started some work under the guidance of our Treasurer to simplify and put in a common format the different parts of our finances that are 'consolidated' at the end of the year. This is still 'work in progress' and at the same time we have been trying to reduce the Treasurer's workload by having our accountant undertake this consolidation. This is being done alongside the examination he does of our accounts to ensure they are in good order.

At the time of Area Meeting we are running a little late in completing these accounts and expect to be 2-3 weeks overdue in lodging these with the Charity Commission as well as sending them to Friends House/Stewardship Committee.

As agreed at Area Meeting, the main text that forms the Trustee's report on the year's activities comes from the reports that each Local Meeting produces for the Area Meeting

Robert Almond

Current Clerk to Trustees