

## **Area Meeting Trustees Report 2019**

Trustees have met 4 times so far during 2019, 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 and support role. An example of this was the need to work with Hope Valley over arrangements for managing their finances. Along with other changes to Clerking etc, new arrangements for organising their accounts were agreed and put into the revised Memorandum of Understanding that came to Area Meeting.

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 in addition to standard items:

**Woodhouse Graveyard** – Although the Woodhouse Meeting House was sold many years ago, part of the land at the back of the building that was previously used as a Quaker graveyard is owned by Area Meeting, and has a stone wall containing gravestones and a number of trees. Periodic maintenance is carried out, but sadly during the year a large silver birch came down. Trustees organised for the damage to be repaired and for the tree to be cut into logs that have been used by Friends who have log burners

**Meeting House valuations** – To comply with Charity Commission accounting rules we were required to either change our accounts to a much simpler format (which we felt weren't sufficient for our needs) or to include financial valuations of our two Meeting Houses within the accounts. A further option was to establish a 'Trading Company' for our commercial activities however, Trustees feel we don't yet have enough of a compelling reason to pursue this so have put this option on hold.

The valuations were carried out by an surveyor experienced in similar buildings to ours and will not be required again for 5-10 years. The valuations (inc land) were:

Sheffield Central - £750,000

Doncaster – £130,000

**Review of our ethical investment policy** – The Area Meetings reserves and balances have for many years been held in 3 ethical funds (Triodos, Ecology Building Society and F and C Stewardship Growth Fund – an ethical unit trust fund). However, Trustees have been increasingly aware that along with other issues the shares held in the unit trust

include shares in companies that aren't compatible with our climate change concerns and a desire for disinvestment from fossil fuels. We have therefore started a review of both our investment policy which may need to be expanded, and whether we should move our investments in shares to another Fund.

**2018 Accounts/Trustee Report to the Charity Commission** – At the time of Area Meeting we are running a little late in completing these accounts and in lodging these with the Charity Commission as well as sending them to Friends House/Stewardship Committee.

As agreed at a previous 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 so as to simplify this process.

Robert Almond

Current Clerk to Trustees