

Meeting House Matters

14 November Westminster



Topics that were identified in the opening session

- Insulating grade II listed buildings appropriately
- What is a sanctuary meeting and who here is from one?
- Having a good mix of hirers in the building
- Charges for hire and offering discounts
- Is there a basis for supporting the wider local community?
- Outreach events (Opengate) and welcoming newcomers
- Use of our property by other organisations
- Warm spaces and homelessness, how can we use our buildings to support these issues?
- After school clubs as outreach
- Managing projects and sharing knowledge – making connections with other partner organisations
- Putting together proposals for maintenance or other expensive works

Living Quaker values through use of our premises: session 1

Examples that were brought by people in the session

Plymouth LM

Local Drama Group

- A peace play about a protest that took place on the Taymar Bridge
- LM provided a room for the company to rehearse at no cost when the building was in use by other hirers and so there was no additional cost to the LM.
- The Quaker meeting was mentioned by the company in the play.

Winchester LM

Heritage Open Day

- Opengate (there actually is a gate) is a chance for people from the locality to visit the meeting house and find out about Quakers and the history of the property.
- Instead of talks on Quakerism they got Friends to talk about Quakerism and their personal experience. They also did one film with hirers talking about what they like about the meeting house.
- Teas were served in the garden for visitors.
- Watch the films of Youtube:
 - Room Hirers – Winchester Quaker Meeting House, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=op5v7uigbl0>
 - Our Meeting – Winchester Quaker Meeting, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7L0S-74-dc>
 - The Hiroshima Vigil – Winchester Quaker Meeting, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnYWbRGK0e4>
 - The Housing Project – Winchester Quaker Meeting House, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vIqUs9O4H0k>
 - Karl's Story – Winchester Quaker Meeting, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEQwnCCo5kk>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/@hampshire.islands.quakers>

Bedminster LM

Warm Spaces

- The LM wanted to offer this and works with a partner organisation. LM pays 50% of the costs.
- Brings lots of people into the building who would not otherwise be there.
- Friends support the initiative.
- As a result of the partnership the meeting was invited to apply for a grant which has been used to improve facilities in the building, such as the heating system.
- The building is used much more now.

Hammersmith LM

Sanctuary Meeting

- Was already a Sanctuary Meeting through the previous BYM Sanctuary Programme.
- Wanted to be able to offer something when the war in Ukraine broke out.
- Works with the local Council as a partner organisation and became a Welcome Centre. All organisation was done by the Council.
- Hammersmith LM had just moved to a new purpose built building following a longterm CPO (Compulsory Purchase Order) over the course of 15 years. There were few building users and this was an opportunity for the building to be used well.
- The initiative has provided a new purpose for the building and has been a benefit to the Quaker community as a source of outreach and shared purpose for Quakers and the wider community.
- The Council now uses the building for other purposes and is bringing in other income to the building.

Watford LM

Meeting House Garden

- Used by anyone and is open to the public.
- Is known locally as a peaceful space.
- People visit to have lunch in a quiet place or to just sit for a while.

Letchworth LM

12 Steps Groups

- Community use of the building.
- These groups benefit from a community use charge for the hire which is below that for people hiring for professional use.
- There is also a space available for Quaker use.

Wanstead LM

Energy Efficiency

- Climate crisis group meets weekly.
- Building is a 1960s(?) building which is not easy to make more efficient so using the building as a hub for events and activities that support efficiency and environmental activities.
- Eco-Church, making connections with other churches locally and working together.
- Big garden which gets used. E.g. a moth hunt in the early hours before a shared breakfast and then worship.
- Events such as a book event that are advertised to people outside of the Quaker community and bring newcomers in.

Esher LM

Posters about Quakers

- Have a series of Quaker posters that show the breadth of Quaker work and values. These have been put on display as a permanent exhibition in a prominent place for building users and other visitors to see and learn about Quakerism.

Walthamstow LM

Food Bank

- Has a permanent space for a food bank.
- Has been running for 8-10 years(?).
- Started providing the space for free but when more space was required there was a charge put in place.

Other things that were mentioned but not to a specific LM

Quaker Funerals

- For many people a funeral (or wedding) is the first experience of Quaker worship.
- Helpful to have very plain information about what to expect in worship. QL provides a leaflet, www.quaker.org.uk/documents/quakerfuneralweb.

Quaker Business

- Transparency in business that people often associate with Quakers.
- Paying people on time.
- Reminding tradespeople to send invoices if you have had work done and are expecting to pay.
- Equality / equity to staff and tradespeople.

Living Quaker values through use of our premises: session 2

The three groups for this session were on:

- [Outreach and sanctuary meetings](#)
- [Room hire charges and discounting](#)
- [Property and building sustainability](#)

Becoming a sanctuary meeting has made the most difference to Hammersmith

For a while the community felt unconnected to the new building

Our Meeting House is an island, an oasis of calm in the city area

Homelessness project:
Residents stay for 2 years per person

The project has given a lot more to the LM than it has cost to run

Younger people who are newer to Quakers and now coming to worship

Income has increased as a result of diversifying the hirers

The project's structure was informal until 2010 when it became formalised.

The LM has worked very closely with a partner organisation

The sanctuary and Ukraine hub projects have given the community a new purpose

Outreach and sanctuary meetings

Winchester LM is the landlord of all tenants.

Due to the time taken to agree and build the new MH it has felt like a new start and use

The Quaker community has grown in confidence since the initiatives

Managing lettings: Could a warden from another LM in the AM manage lettings?

Now have paid staff running the building

Local Meeting Concern should be the primary mover for our buildings

Didn't come to Quakers to be on a bin rota!

Maintenance of building and income belongs to AM

Bristol

- Market rate for similar spaces
- Not the responsibility of wardens to set rates or discounts
 - Decision sits with LM / AM / trustees

Walthamstow

- Standard rate
- 10% discount for 10 weeks or more or full year paid for regularly (weekly / monthly)
- 2 weeks notice to further booking
- Can e.g. donate the space as a charitable donation on a temporary basis with an end date and an agreed way to move forward
- There is a concessionary rate for hirers who have the same values as Quakers
- Caught between London Quaker Property Trust (LQPT) in needs of hirers / Concerns of the meeting
 - Look at policy so that each decision does not need to get to MfWfB
 - Helpful if LQPT made it clear about what concession each group might qualify for. If group could not afford they could appeal to the LM to make up the cost.

Winchester

- No discounts ever. 4 types of booking
 - Invoiced monthly in advance, 3 months notice to quit
 - Regular term-time bookings
 - Book for the following month (month by month)
 - Occasional one-off bookings
 - All linked to the postponement / cancellation policy

Turning non-payers into paying hirers

- 3 months notice of increasing rates
- Be clear and consistent in messaging
- MH is a community building to be shared

Refer back to the Management Committee

- Remind Friends of the cost of running the meeting
- Could continue not to pay if the building is being used by other hirers
- Give e.g. 3 years stepped increase to gradually catch up to standard charges. Allows hirers to budget and plan
- Be transparent, make it evident what everyone is charged

Room hire charges and discounting

- Potentially harming the hiring group because they can't move somewhere else, can't have a group split off, aren't sustainable or responsible
 - Give notice of known increase in costs, e.g. heating costs
 - Build relationships with the hire groups
- Help groups to feel part of the building and its running

Have to change and raise charges of the building is going to be maintained well

Consider whether Quakers pay for the space for non-Quaker activities

Link policies to testimonies

AMs need to be consistent so that hirers can't play the meeting houses off against each other.

**Malton,
Yorkshire
fundraising
leaflet**

**Share with
hirers what is
being done**

**Positive and
negative
changes**

**Replace gas
boilers to use
more
sustainable fuel
sources**

**Share good
practice**

**Property and
sustainable
buildings**

**Prioritise
change on
sustainability of
buildings**

**Letchworth
Glazing,
insulation.
Extension in
1959, flat roof
0% insulated**

**1970's nearly
sold.**

**HISTORY
HERITAGE**

**Vision
Strategy
Plan**

**Warden driving
change, what is
the role of the
premises
committee?**

**Change of
building use**

**Listed building
needs a lot of
care. Needs a
costing plan for
maintenance**