

Meeting House Matters notes (ongoing)

An ongoing record of the notes taken at online Meeting House Matters meetings.



Date	Page
18 April 2023 – Health & Safety AND Living our Quaker values with our premises	2
28 March 2023 – Hallmaster	7
21 February 2023 – Marketing	9
25 January 2023	12

Archive of notes

- [Notes from discussions in 2020](#)
- [Notes from discussions in 2021](#)
- [Notes from discussions in 2022](#)

Contact details

Oliver Waterhouse

oliverw@quaker.org.uk | www.quaker.org.uk/employers | [020 7663 1007](tel:02076631007)

18 April 2023 – Health & Safety AND Living our Quaker values through our premises

This was the first of three in-person sessions that we are running for Meeting House Matters in 2023. It was held at Bristol Central Quaker Meeting. The over all theme for the day was around the use of premises to live out Quaker values. There was a 'blended' part of the meeting between 2pm and 3.30pm with a topic of health and safety.

The next online session will be on Friday, 19 May at 2pm. The joining details are below and will also be shared again by email nearer the time.

- Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://quaker.zoom.us/j/81586087624?pwd=VHk3MW9sTHJUVFdDsMFIUMUN3WEpmUT09>
- Meeting ID: 815 8608 7624
- Passcode: WT-online

The next in-person session is going to be on Tuesday, 18 July and will be in Leeds at Carlton Hill Meeting House. You can register your interest to attend using this online form, <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/mhm-23/>.

How do we use our premises to live out Quaker values?

Session 1 Introductions and topics for discussion.

QF&P 13.33, <https://qfp.quaker.org.uk/passage/13-33/>

Support:

- (QL) Quaker Life, Local Development workers –
- Wardens Talking and e-group.
- AM relationship and AM property and health and safety committee. Good and not so good
- QLCC
- Variety of confidence and experience
- Links to role holders
- Wardenship of virtual space
- Dynamics of supporting users-chaotic and wonderful challenges – community partnerships

Wardens

- No Paid help. A second person in the mix is great. Friends covering to support.
- Pair the real living wage
- Resident/non- resident
- Quaker/non- Quaker – what difference does it make?
- Hiring officer and managers
- Informing our own faith
- Communities in decline – unsustainable
- Property – powered-stewardship – decision making- process.

Simpler

- Meeting House as a community space- Mental Health- dispossessed-ex-offenders
- Simpler meetings
- Finding the joy
- Reengaging the community
- How to make the best use of our resources

The Vision – the challenges of decision making.

- The 'We'
- Community partnerships
- Visioning exercises
- Threshing
- Factions
- Sell
- Use to the full- stewardship and inheritance.
- Grants
- Being Radical
- Challenges of decision making

Using space to the full

- H&S
- Helping hirers to tolerate each other.
- Using for outreach and promotion
- Base money hirers good

Maintenance

- Investment needed.
- Limited resources
- Decorating
- Health and Safety

Pandemic

- Legacy
- Zoom and online here to stay.
- Blended tech – setting it up well- getting it working well- available for hirers?
- Use of grounds inc. burial grounds

Session 2

Expressing Quaker Values through our meeting houses

Is there a tension? – Real estate management – demographic time bomb Supporting worship and community

- **Relationships** – with traders and staff show our truth and integrity – pay on time, this is critical and has implications for willingness to return to work for us- be good with the tea and biscuits.

- **Hospitality and welcome**- make it as comfortable as possible – Love- Loving inclusive all age. Being present in your community. Use our skills, approaches and methods.
- Use the building to show what Quakers are about.
- **Meeting Houses and their communities**- Do it together – not just on Sunday – wardens are not wardens or managers of the meeting
- How the quaker community inhabits the space.
- How the wider community inhabits/uses the space- interfaith and chaplaincy.
- **Active**- Sustainability and net Zero – supporting community groups- Fairtrade, wildlife management. Beware of partnerships but they can work Collaborative working and cooperative models of ownership
- **Well known and widely understood.** - outreach – spirituality – offering our space

Break out groups.

Using property to the full – relationships, hirers, meeting etc.

- Have an awareness of which meetings are breaking even.
- Primarily a place of worship- e.g., no parties in worship space. Cancel hirers if necessary.
- Having a balance between serving the community and generating income while having respect for the nature of the building. The building has impact even on passers by
- Have different rates.
- Keypads are an advantage.
- How do you fill your spiritual bucket?

Using technology

- If we even have the equipment, are we really using our earths precious resources.
- Confidence in using tech – in zoom itself – not many friends have the confidence to use- those that are tech savvy are thin on the ground.
- What works well – discrete smaller screens for small meeting houses. dedicated laptop. £150 for a basic or second hand
- Wide angle camera
- Instruction and training
- A sound bar.
- Speakers, remotes wall mounted.
- A microcosm of meeting house use?
- Are we sharing our toys- damage risk, security, easily stealable. How do we get locking a way working well.
- AM and LM tensions – possessive friends v being available at all times. over specified tech, tech not being used.
- And how do we do our Q process adapt to online elements.
- Not recognizing diversity and importance in a changing world and help for disabled people.

- Not accepting virtual MfW as a spiritual experience – not respecting discernment

Visioning

- Developing a vision – energy – Tools – support all needed- revisioning- a continual process.
- Listening is v. important.
- Holding difference – a middle way
- Listening Space (Restoring Relations [Quaker Listening Space - Restoring Relations](#) Dragon dreaming [Dragon Dreaming International – Everything is a temporary node in a process of flow](#)- external facilitation
- Balance between exploring possibilities and consensus around a way forward- a shared purpose brings energy.
- Recognizing limitations in the group
- How do we feel in AM/LM? What are the things that separate us?
- I try and remember we are all human.
- Communicate and be welcoming – give to others and share values.
- Conflict can be peaceful but Anger/rage (not directed at a person) can also be energy.
- Recognize what individuals have to offer gifts skills energy.
- Process can include mistakes (Eggs, Omelets, Apples, Carts)

Session 3: Health and Safety Management

Brian Suttle joined us from his company called Veilig to give us a presentation and answer questions on health and safety management.

The presentation that Brian gave was share with follow-up notes after the session. If you would like a copy of the presentation email oliverw@quaker.org.uk to be sent a copy.

A film of the presentation was made and is available to be viewed on YouTube at the following link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TySTb4ZsJk>. The film is roughly edited from the recording made on Zoom which may affect the quality for some viewers.

If you have questions that Brian wasn't able to answer during the session you can contact him by email at,

Questions

The following

Does storage of hazardous substances need to be documented? How?

- What is the risk?
- If there is a fire is it in a contained space?
- What quantity is there and is there a place to keep it safely?
- Make sure to disposal of redundant materials.
- Record to demonstrate that you have been acting with care.

Meeting House is near to the hospital where people are often ejected at all times of the day and night. Should there be something in our policy about how to keep employees and Friends safe.

- Yes, should be reflected in the policy and there should be a risk assessment.
- Frequency likelihood of times that people are released when the MH is in use.
- What is the severity or danger?
- Can you get some training on dealing with the situations?
- Additional security onsite?
- Key thing is to have a balance of what is reasonable to protect people and what is affordable for the organisation.

Often H&S comes down to good housekeeping and having people who are familiar with how the meeting house works.

- Yes, all good and housekeeping is the right way forward.

Comments on children's activities especially when the venue is not their usual meeting house?

- Have to assess with children and other vulnerable groups in mind.
- Supervision may be part of the mitigation.
- Need to think about how to limit the access to things that might cause harm.
- Need to pay attention to whether there are specific the rules are for a vulnerable group.

Does including common sense in policies makes it all a bit fluffy?

- Every organisation is formed of different individuals and we can't know what would seem like common sense to others. That's why the Health & Safety Executive says there's no such thing as common sense – but when estimating the likelihood of harm, you have to take common sense into account.

Should we apply our lone worker policy to our self-employed / contracted cleaner?

- You could ask the agency to take responsibility and insert something into their contract that says they need to have lone worker policy / support.
- If the worker is self-employed you need to treat them as an employee in terms of lone working – which needn't be too onerous e.g.
 - ensure you know when they are going to be in the building.
 - ask them to text someone when they leave.
 - carry out a lone-worker risk assessment to see if there are other things that need to be covered.
- If you are relying on mobile phone signal check that there are not weak-signal parts of the premises.
- Lone working procedures need regular testing e.g. ask the cleaner to deliberately not text you when they leave sometimes. This will make sure you are aware and you have to put into practice your planned response.
- Managers need to consider the mental health impact on themselves of having sole responsibility for monitoring lone working.

28 March 2023 – Hallmaster

This time the session was on [Hallmaster](#) with a demonstration of the software and the opportunity to ask questions.

Meeting House Matters in-person events in 2023

If you would like to attend the first in-person event in 2023 hurry now to register before **registration closes on 11 April**. Please use the booking form linked below to register for any of the events in 2023, <https://forms.quaker.org.uk/mhm-23/>

Please ensure that you register in advance so we know how many people to expect in person!

Next online (blended) session

The online session will take place as part of the in-person event and will be a blended session with a topic of health and safety.

- Tuesday, 18 April 2.00pm
- Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://quaker.zoom.us/j/81586087624?pwd=VHk3MW9sTHJUVFdDsMFIjTUMUN3WEpmUT09>
- Meeting ID: 815 8608 7624
- Passcode: WT-online

Hallmaster

Hallmaster is an online platform for managing bookings and invoicing. It is used by some Quaker venues. For a quick look at what the software does look at the [Hallmaster promotional film on Youtube](#). At this stage I should say that Hallmaster isn't the only bookings and invoicing solution that Quaker meetings can use.

Gemma, the representative from Hallmaster came and talked through the parts of the software in the order below:

- Dashboard and contacting for support
- Scheduler and calendar
- The bookings database
- Managing bookings
- Invoicing
- Invoicing database
- Bulk invoicing
- Billing
- Customer database
- Reports
- Administration
- Template emails and website integration

The presentation was recorded and I am not sure yet whether I can share it widely or not. I will let you know if I am able to let you have access to the recording.

Questions and answers from the session

Q) How does storing the customer information sit with GDPR data law?

A) Hallmaster is data processor, they do not do anything with the data other than what the data controller tells them to do.

Q) What about the right to be forgotten?

A) Hallmaster is going to look into this and clarify how right to be forgotten works in this instance.

Q) Can you leave time for carrying out due diligence on new customers?

A) There are presets for the time before a booking is accepted but these can be overridden on a booking by booking basis.

Q) Hallmaster thinks that money is owed because a booking that has been paid for has been cancelled

A) A credit note can be added to the account so that any discrepancies can be amended

Q) Can Hallmaster be linked to a heating system or door lock system?

A) Yes, testing Inspire Heating and Remote Locks systems now and introducing it with a few providers to test.

Q) A barrier to using Hallmaster is setting it up with a complex building and a lot of hirers. Can you offer any reassurance in supporting this to be set up?

A) We are very happy to work with a customer and set up the charges together. When in license we can send template spreadsheets that can be sent to customers. There is no additional charge for support.

Best to take setup a few steps at a time, Quaker stuff first as this gets premises committees excited.

Q) Can you add photos into line items?

A) Not at the moment but would be good feedback. Check they have booked the right room by a visual clue.

Q) Does the iCal feed work with other calendars such as Google?

A) Yes, and google is particularly good as people are often linked into Google

Q) Can you duplicate an email address

A) You can leave the first character/line blank to avoid this issue

Q) Can you put a different person on the invoice?

A) Not at the moment, but you can override the group name for the customer

Q) How does reconcile work with Quickbooks for recording payments.

A) Reconciliation is still a manual process

21 February 2023 – Marketing

Thanks to everyone who joined the session this week. We had a good discussion on marketing with lots of great ideas fed in. Deb Arrowsmith joined and shared some of the thinking about how they have been marketing the space at Oxford Meeting.

Meeting House Matters in-person events in 2023

We are going to offer 3 in-person events in 2023 to bring Friends together to look at topics of shared interest and for peer learning and support. Please use the booking form linked below to register for any of the events in 2023.

<https://forms.quaker.org.uk/mhm-23/>

Most of the day will be in-person with one session online blended. At the event in Bristol on 18 April the blended session will be on health and safety.

Next online session

- Tuesday, 21 March 10.30am
- Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://quaker.zoom.us/j/81586087624?pwd=VHk3MW9sTHJUVDdsMFI0MUZ3WEpmUT09>
- Meeting ID: 815 8608 7624
- Passcode: WT-online

Marketing

General notes

What is the purpose of marketing your meeting house?

- Is it because there is a lot of space in a good location which can generate income for the Quaker community?
- Is it because you want people to know that there is a certain ethos to the premises attracts people into the space?
- Is the main reason for the building for Quakerism to flourish but there are a few rooms available that people might like to use for a small fee?

Think carefully about what the purpose of the building is and what you want to tell the audience and ultimately what you want to sell to the audience.

These examples of purpose show a range of the purposes of marketing. If your meeting is wants to offer a professional conferencing opportunity, the rooms will need to match the offer. If you are trying to reach an audience that wants the space for birthday parties on a Saturday afternoon, you will choose a different way to talk about what you have available.

It was helpful to hear about the link between marketing and Quaker outreach. Done well they will both bring us as Quakers or as businesses into contact with new people. What do we do to support their activity? Is there an annual budget for outreach which includes marketing as a specific activity?

We are reminded that marketing is a profession and that we should not assume that it can be done by anyone. Who in your meeting community is skilled in this work?

Would they be willing to lend their expertise to the meeting? How can they work with other role-holders, such as wardens or other workers?

Tips

When you know the audience that you are marketing your meeting house to think about the following.

Signage

- Make sure that there is good external signage to help people find the meeting house.
- Is it clear how to get into the building once you have found it?
- What does the internal signage say about the building and its community and other users?
- Does it look how you hope it might? Professional? Welcoming? Caring? Simple?
- Is it cluttered?
- Does the tone sound positive or negative?
- How would you feel if you walked into a different premises with signage similar to those in your meeting house?

Advertising

- Can you help people see what you have to offer?
- Could you put a picture of each room on the external notice-board so that people passing or arriving can see what the space looks like?
- Is there a locality magazine that you can put an advert, or write an article for? (Articles might be free and mean you can talk about a Quaker event)
- Online (see more below about social media).

Tools

Leaflets

- With clear information on it
- include the date and valid until if printing with prices
- Images that show the spaces and what hirers can expect
- Testimonies from other hirers

Website

- Information (as leaflets)
- Timetable of updating to ensure that it remains current.
- Hire related information able to be updated by the person who manages the lettings so it is always in date.
- Change the images annually so the client always sees what is currently on offer.

Social media platforms

- Nextdoor
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Halls for Hire
- Google Maps: verify your building / address.

- Eventbrite: verify your address so that Google finds it.
- Meet-up: use their spiritual events category.
- Other platforms and websites are also available.

Social media tips

- Choose one or more but don't overwhelm yourself.
- Stick with what works for you and your premises.
- Post regularly and try to rotate content.
- If you have events add them early.
- Give a bit of time for scheduling routine posts so that you are not doing it as it happens.

Involving Friends

- Created a set of leaflets for Quakers to hand to other groups they attend to see if they would like to use the meeting house instead.
- Use Quaker communication channels such as the newsletters to talk about the space.
- Involve a group of Friends to open and close the meeting house when the warden is not working or on annual leave.
- Internal notice boards for information about what the building is used for:
 - One for the Quaker community
 - One for building specific things
 - One for the hirers.
- Hold an open day for the Quaker community and invite hirers to come along.
- Ask members of the meeting to give tours of the building to encourage hirers to see what is now on offer.

Possible hirers or ways to get business

- Office space once a week for small charities.
- NHS, healthcare and other large public organisations. Try to get your meeting house onto their approved supplier list.
- If you have a day that is not popular keep it as free as possible for organisations that require a training space and are not fussy about the day.

25 January 2023

It was great to see everyone who was able to join the first session of Meeting House Matters, the newly re-branded Wardens Talking online discussion network.

As a reminder there is a slightly revised format for the discussions as well as a name change. There will be a topic each week which will be led by one of us or by someone joining us to share their experience.

In 2023 we are planning to hold three events in person. We have done this in the past and are keen to see if we can get people together again to spend a day together. The in-person sessions will be held in locations across Britain and we hope there will be one near enough for everyone to be able to come to one. We are working on the following dates and locations.

- Tuesday, 18 April, Bristol
- Tuesday, 18 July, Leeds
- Tuesday, 14 November, London

Please save the date of the nearest to you, and others if you would like to join more than one. More information will come soon about the in-person events and will be sent by email and other comms channels.

Next online session

- Tuesday, 21 February 2.30pm
- Join Zoom Meeting:
<https://quaker.zoom.us/j/81586087624?pwd=VHk3MW9sTHJUVFdDsMFIjTUUN3WEpmUT09>
- Meeting ID: 815 8608 7624
- Passcode: WT-online

What is considered a success

This week our theme was *What is considered a success?* We were thinking about success being:

- That our meeting house is finding a good balance between generating an income that covers the cost of keeping the building open.
- And that the building is being used by Quakers and a variety of groups in the community and providing community benefit as per our area meeting charitable objects.

We spent some time in breakout groups with the following question to help us think about success from a variety of perspectives:

- What do you as a warden or manager consider a success from their position?
- What might hirers think of as a success?
- What would your finance and premises committee see as a success?
- What would Friends see as a success?

Combined feedback from the breakout rooms

General points – some may already happen, others we might like to bring in

- Our witness in the works is to run the premises as sustainably as we possibly can.
- How we treat employees, Friends, hirers. We must get that right first!
- Inclusive to the community – welcoming and open.
- Vibrant use of the building.
- Range of groups within similar fields (e.g. support groups, political, arts) signpost to other hirers services – positive cross pollination groups supporting each other creating a community within the meeting house.
- A meeting house for the community IS the ministry.
- Balance and range of hirers, income from hirers regular, one off, training week secure base financial income and security from a few significant hirers plus ample room for a broad range of hirers throughout the year across the MH.

Hirers

- Wifi / internet, we provide a space for them where they don't have to think about the practicalities – can just walk in do what they came to do and go back out.
- A place to hire a room that is affordable offers reliable invoicing and booking arrangements and offers good value for money.
- Calm atmosphere
- Would like to have the best experience that they can with the least effort or work for them
- Don't need to think about it as there is reliability.
- Reliable Wi-Fi.
- Has all the health and safety in place to avoid major issues that could occur (a robust system to deal with incidents).

Finance and premises (Quaker committees)

- To be able to have the worshipping community able to meet in a suitable space, and to have the resources to do what the worshipping community want to do as a Quaker community.
- Be able to support the building so it isn't a cost to the Quaker community.
- That enough income is generated to run the premises and make a surplus.
- London Quaker Property Trust is the mechanism that supports property across London. Income is pooled from the whole area meaning there are funds to maintain the premises and support the worship and witness across the whole region. Area meetings operate in a similar way but on a smaller scale.
- Higher proportion of charities and organisations that use the buildings than profit-making organisations.
- Variety of hirers (social and culturally) have a broad range for a healthier mix of £ and diversity rather than x 2 big hirers (good financially but also a risk if one leaves, plus not enabling a space for a broader amount of groups to benefit from venue facilities).

Quakers / Friends

- To see the building animated – full of other groups and people. An asset and connection to the wider community.
- A building they don't have to think about or give input to?
- SO many want people to come to the building and then and come to Quakers.
- That there is a place for worship and the activities of local Quakers.
- Now a small number of meeting house in relation to the meeting community so the meeting house is used for AM activities more than it was before.
- Not just what happens in worship but are able to carry out activities in the premises that bring the community together. People have come to join in with this who have not been around for a long time.
- Greater membership to contribute to the presence and energy of the venue.

Workers

- A welcoming safe environment for people to meet - Qs and hirers. A space that works for the different groups that we have coming in - meeting their needs.
- We are not just random employees, we are employees of a Quaker meeting house, many of whom are Quakers. It is a vocation as well as work.
- Where there is clarity over the tasks that are required and who does them in the community.
- In answering the first question it is important to answer the other three. If hirers, committees and Friends feel it is a success then the warden should be able to consider their job done.
- Outreach activities.
- All within a framework of ethical behaviour.
- Fellowship with anyone and everyone who works through the door (hirers and Friends).
- Provide a safe, very clean, uncluttered space for hirer so that they feel it is their space (taking ownership).
- Respect – respecting the community we sit in the middle of and sharing upmarket space at a reasonable cost.
- Supporting hirers to generate an atmosphere of respect.
- Best experience when hirers are all in place and it all works with finance too.

What brings you joy

- The people who use the building.
- Adults with learning difficulties spontaneously dancing with a children's group in the corridor.
- Seeing marginalised people comfortable in the meeting house.
- People.
- Foodbank being run from the meeting house.
- Photo of foodbank with shopping bags all in all the rooms of the meeting house in Walthamstow (boxes of support).

- Garden an oasis gives peace to a community especially if that is the only bit of green space within the urban area.
- People who are loyal and enjoy the atmosphere and want to come back in spite of the short comings of the building – they feel at home and therefore take ownership.
- Opportunity to do stuff together in person, to work and working with a purpose that's a benefit to more than just us.
- Connection (can't always tell what is happening) when you see the connection in community (it's like watching theatre / music before your eyes) nothing to do with you directly, even though you have enabled it by being there as a venue.
- Celebration and connection.
- Spring in the MH peace garden under the stars.