



Minutes

Edinburgh Meeting House Management Committee

Henry S. Thompson, Convenor
Tuesday 6 June 2 p.m., in 7 Victoria Terrace
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Present: Miranda Girdlestone (MG), Jackie Noltingk (JN), John Phillips (JP), Laragh Quinney (LQ, via Zoom), Henry Thompson (HT)

Prevented: Sue Sierra (SS)

Copies to: Marilyn Higgins (MH), Neil Turner (NT)

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10 Time without staff
A. Action items

0 New convenor's welcome

0.1 How HT will aim to handle our business

For routine business we'll proceed informally, and HT will take notes. Suitably cleaned up and filled out, these will appear in the circulated minutes.

For important matters, or for any matter by request, we'll move into Meeting for Worship for Church Affairs mode, HT acting as Clerk. The results will be highlighted as **Minutes** in the circulated minutes.

Henceforth HT will use Word or PDF, not plain text, for agendas, minutes, etc.

Action items will be signalled as **Action: [someone]** and gathered at the end of the circulated minutes.

0.2 A reminder of our remit

- First part of [The role of the Quaker Meeting House](#)
- [Terms of Reference](#)
- [Area Meeting MoU with Central Edinburgh Local Meeting](#)

We are a Trustee short, Neil and Marilyn are _not_ members, but are welcome to the meeting. Expensive work?

1 Date and time of next meeting

Action HT: Email membership for available weeks in July, then poll for date/time.

2 Matters arising

2.1 [MHM_2023-04-20](#) 8a: IT - Private and public networks

see [item 8.1](#) below.

2.2 [MHM_2023-04-20](#) 8b: IT - Email issues / Google Workspace

See [item 8.2](#) below.

2.3 [MHM_2023-04-20](#) 6a bullet 3: Staffing

Action MG: Lone worker lanyard alarms. Carried forward.

2.4 [MHM_2023-04-20](#) 9b bullet 4: Fabric and maintenance - secondary glazing in the kitchen of 4F

Overtaken, see [item 6.2](#) below

2.4 [MHM_2023-04-20](#) 9c: Fabric and maintenance

Action MG: Installing LED lighting. Carried forward.

3 Manager's update

3.1 Quaker Centres Gathering

HT and MG attended this. Hearing from other Quaker management teams about their situation, their difficulties and their strategies was very helpful.

We heard particular details relevant to us of how others manage the booking process, incoming email and staffing. Integrating these is an urgent project for us: MG and Majk Stokes (MS) will tackle planning for this during August. We hope to get help from Hallmaster (the suppliers of our room booking software).

3.2 PAT testing

PAT testing is not required to be yearly. Visual checks, plus a 3-year cycle of testing should be fine. JN checked the insurance and confirmed there is nothing about PAT therein. We **AGREED** to take this forward.

Action MG: Draft a proposal and send it, noting our agreement, to the Safety Officer of AM Trustees.

3.3 Risk Management Strategy

We have a Risk Assessment, but what about a mitigation strategy?

Action JN: forward MG anything we have along these lines.

4 Fringe update

[from David Sterratt (DS)]

We finalised the contract with the Fringe Society and both parties have signed it. Regarding the issues raised in the last minutes: (1) We agreed that the Fringe Society will have use of the meeting room from 1pm on a Sunday and that meeting house staff will be using the kitchen up until 1.30pm. Friends will need to start departing at 12.45pm. (2) The Fringe Society were content with the liberalised media clause we proposed. (3) The Fringe Society did not, after all, want to use our AV system.

We have liaised with the Fringe about operational details including moving the furniture and internet/Wifi connectivity. The conversation with the Fringe networking staff has led to us contacting User2 computing and learning how to administer the Wifi access points, which has allowed us to set up a private network for the office and foyer computers. However, the admin interface is set up on David Sterratt's computer, and it may be desirable to install it on a meeting house computer.

David Sterratt and Miranda have agreed with David Clarke (Elder) and other Friends attending 9.30 meeting that it will not be held in the meeting house during the Fringe, but it can still be held on Zoom.

[From MG] The Fringe Society visited 7 Victoria Terrace to look at office space planning. They have been invoiced, but no money has been received as yet. They will visit again next week to look at accessibility issues.

5 Victoria Terrace affordability group update

[Notes from meeting 2023-05-30](#)

See the above for details. Some topics of interest to us:

- Quotes from various rental agents for the Upper Bow flat, with our without upgrading
- Some details on the suggested use of some of the foyer as a café.

If the cafe idea goes ahead, we would need to look at possible impact on our relief from Council Tax.

6 Staffing

6.1 Moving to operation with one resident manager

[Background paper](#) from MG

See above for details. Key points:

- Permanent part-time MH Assistant post not refilled, needs to be
- Shift in MS's role and hours
- Two new casual staff

Taken together this will free MG to do BizDev.

Minute MHMC_2023-06-06_1 We ask Trustees to agree to the creation of a new permanent part-time MH Assistant job starting in September, to be advertised widely.

6.2 Ongoing staffing issues

Issue for decision: Resident Assistant Warden post renewal

Minute MHMC_2023-06-06_2 We agree to move to operation with one resident manager. We will not ask Trustees to agree for Richard and Lauren to remain in the flat after 31 July.

Action HT: Tell R&L that they have to vacate.

Action HT: Ask DS for time at the next Affordability Group meeting (26 June 1200) for an informal chat with members of the MHC to discuss the flat(s).

7 Room hire & marketing

7.1 Controversial bookings: Common Knowledge

HT reported that following the cancellation of the Common Knowledge 13 April booking on the subject of vaccination, we received concerned queries from several Friends about their meeting scheduled for 11 May, entitled "Censoring Debate—Marie Mamulova & Lisa Randall", about their struggle to have a meeting last year, in Portobello, about their concerns regarding teaching about trans-gender issues in schools.

After extensive consultation within this Committee, also involving AM Clerk and the Clerk of AM Trustees, agreement was reached in two stages:

1. Because there had been security problems with the original (Portobello) meeting, MG contacted the Community Policing unit and on 28 April HT and MG met with two police, who were reassuring both about the fact that they did keep an eye on potential sources of trouble in such cases, and that they would make sure local patrols were aware of the 11 May meeting if it went ahead.
2. We asked for and received reassurance that the meeting would be focussed on freedom of speech and that a statement setting out our expectations could be made by the AM Clerk at the beginning of the meeting.

We then agreed to allow the meeting to go ahead, with the two Clerks in attendance.

HT emailed the Friends who had expressed concern explaining our decision.

In the event there was no disturbance from protesters, but the Clerks did not feel that the agreement to avoid anti-transgender topics and rhetoric had been respected.

[Extracts from an email from AM Clerk]

I don't think we should offer further bookings to this group when gender issues are on the agenda (and possibly not at all). While the chair made a point of saying all are welcome in their meetings, I didn't feel particularly welcome and as discussion went on I felt anyone who was trans would have felt very uneasy indeed.

I opened the meeting by reading the 2021 BYM minute to explain where Quakers are coming from and said that while we don't expect to agree with everything that is said in meetings on our premises, we do ask that those present understand and respect where Quakers are coming from.

Particularly in discussion there was no evidence that this had made any impact. While there was no abuse of trans people, they were continually seen as 'other', pushing forward an ideology which had taken over corporate decision making in government and education. The speaker said LGBT 'is all about the T' these days; 'it's a belief system'; an audience member said it's a vicious ideology.

Further email discussion concluded with clear agreement that although we try to be a *broad* church in terms of making our facilities available for hire to a wide range of groups, we are a church, this is our home, and we don't have to allow people to say whatever they like. The amount of time and emotional strain it was taking from all of us was out of all proportion to the benefit.

Accordingly HT drafted a short note to Richard Ennos for MG to send, cancelling the remaining (three) bookings. MG refunded the amount already paid for those.

Ennos replied to the Office asking for an explanation, and AM Clerk provided the following:

One audience member spoke of gender identity ideology as a 'vicious' ideology. This was unchallenged by anyone, and was in line with a general sense of antagonism towards the fact of trans identity. There was no moderation of the discussion, and no attempt to question things that were stated as fact.

Our clerk, who had introduced the meeting by explaining where Quakers are coming from, felt that his contribution was ignored by those contributing to the discussion. Although it had been stated that anyone was welcome to the meeting, he felt that any trans person would have felt unwelcome and excluded by the tone of the discussion, which throughout showed that participants regarded trans identity as something alien. On this basis, he felt that the group had not respected the terms on which the letting had been made. We recognise that some disagree with how trans issues are addressed within the education system, and that you have the right to air this; but we don't feel that the approach taken by Common Knowledge shares our values of pluralism and kindness.

All mention of 7 Victoria Terrace has now been removed from Common Knowledge online publicity for future events, and we hope the matter is closed.

7.2 Quaker weddings: Griffiths/Lawrence

Wedding planning going well. They've quite likely over-catered, but fridge issue sorted. Photographer will come early. IT for overflow in the Hall is an issue but we can work with what we have: Emma and Andy were aware of what the MH provided when they booked. Additional

purchase of AV equipment is *not* required, MG does not recommend it for AM just for this event. With respect to numbers, looks like 80-90 from outside invitees, not much feedback from local Friends, but usual suspects would be 20-30, so probably 100+.

With respect to AV, note that AM's plan to purchase an OWL microphone/camera/speaker unit is fine on the understanding it's for general AM use.

8 IT

8.1 Private and public networks

Done, thanks to DS. Now two SSIDs: quaker (old pw) and quaker-office (new, staff-only). Relevant instructions are in the 'WiFi' folder in the office filing cabinet, and on HT's personal machine at home.

8.2 Email issues

There's too much email on too many diverse topics coming in to office@equaker.org.uk. Things get lost.

Action HT, MG: Meet with MS to explore options, e.g. multiple folders, multiple email addresses

9 Fabric and maintenance

In the past responsibility for keeping track of this topic has been delegated to a member of the committee.

Action HT: Put this on the agenda for next time.

9.1 Large projects on hold

Heat pump, courtyard, waiting on finance (see [MHMC minutes for 2023-04-20, item 9a](#))

9.2 Ongoing issues

9.2.1 Meeting room wifi

Still broken

Action HT: Meet with DS to discuss state of networking in 7VT, possible remedial actions

9.2.2 Glazing in flats

Status unclear, issues with both 3F2 and 4F

Action MG: Prepare brief report for next meeting

9.2.3 Emergency phone in lift

Engineer has said that it is *not* at risk from end of voice connectivity.

9.2.4 Intruder alarm

A GSM dialler has been fitted to the intruder alarm and it no longer sounds on the stair when the building is opened or closed.

There is an issue with the (re)direction for calls from this phone. If the alarm rings for longer than 30 seconds then it calls MG, then MS, then SS. It *should* not call the other two if MG answers the phone. Currently it has returned to default settings and calls all of us. Since our meeting IMMS have agreed to come in and reset the alarm this week. which currently is set up to dial MG, then SS. For obvious reasons, MG's work phone is set up to go to voicemail, but if that means the call is taken to have gone through, that's a problem.

Action MG: Experiment further to determine what the facts are, contact engineer for advice if necessary

9.3 Carpets

No decision yet on carpets. The impact of building changes / cafe could change decision to be made. No action until after the Fringe at the earliest.

Action MG: Send quotes to JN

9.4 Signage

MG invited quotes from two firms, both visited but no response from either. We suppose they are either too busy or the job is too small. MG will develop alternatives for us to review.

Action MG: Bring a proposal to MHMC in due course

10 Time without staff

HT and DS held an interim Employment Review with MG on 2023-06-05. It was felt to have been valuable by all concerned.

Appendix A. Action items

Action HT: Email membership for available weeks in July, then poll for date/time.

Action HT: Tell R&L that they have to vacate.

Action HT: Ask DS for time at the next Affordability Group meeting (26 June 1200) for an informal chat with members of the MHC to discuss the flat(s).

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Action HT: Meet with DS to discuss state of networking in 7VT, possible remedial actions

Action HT, MG: Meet with MS to explore options, e.g. multiple folders, multiple email addresses

Action JN: forward MG anything we have along these lines.

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Action MG: Installing LED lighting. Carried forward.

Action MG: Draft a proposal and send it, noting our agreement, to the Safety Officer of AM Trustees.

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