Meeting House Management Committee Notes
Tuesday 1 April, 5:15 p.m., in 7 Victoria Terrace

Actions noted in bold

1 ATTENDANCE

In person – Henry Thompson (HST), Rachel Fitzgerald (RF), Duncan Wallace (DW), Sammi Searle (SS), Andy Tucker (AT)

Online – Katrina McCrea (KM), JP Ascher (JPA)

Apologies – Laragh Quinney (LQ), Jackie Noltingk (JN)

2 CONVENOR'S REPORT

2.1 WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER

Special welcome was made to Duncan, at his first meeting as a new member of the committee.

2.2 LIFT OUTAGE

The lift was out of order for almost 3 weeks due to a fault caused by an accident with a hoover. The cost of the repair was almost £3000 but it is now fixed and in use again. Thanks to staff for their quick work in sorting it.

2.3 TRUSTEES MEETINGS 14 JANUARY, 18 MARCH

Not dealt with at this meeting

2.4 INTERIM REVIEW WITH MH MANAGERS

HST met with SS and AT for an interim review during their probation period. The meeting was very congenial and while some issues were raised and discussed, the only thing to note at this stage is that a regular fortnightly Friday afternoon meeting between HST and the managers is now in place.

2.5 BETWEEN MEETINGS DECISION 13 FEBRUARY

We note that on the 13th February we took a between meetings decision to offer a Fringe let to the Eating House during July/August 2025. This decision was then overtaken by events.

2.6 QUINQUENNIAL REVIEW

John Renshaw undertook this review in the autumn of 2024 and we await his report. DW and RF are happy to help in reviewing and taking the findings forward as appropriate once the report is received.

We note that this will be John Renshaw's last quinquennial review for us and that we will need to ask his advice for a recommended replacement, as well as recording as much of his experience and knowledge of our building as possible.

3 MANAGERS' REPORT

3.1 C VENUES SUMMER 2025

Further to the Eating House withdrawing their interest in a Fringe let, C Venues were happy to be back in the running! The relationship with Hartley is going well so far and SS and AT have a sense that Hartley and they are on a similar page. There is a renewed focus on better communication on both sides, including an agreement that SS and AT will be the single point of contact with weekly check ins throughout the let. SS & AT took the committee through the key changes to the lease (appended) and **we agreed that HST would send the amended lease by email to the full committee with a deadline asking for any questions or requests for further discussion.** Once agreement is reached by MHMC, the lease will be sent to Trustees with a recommendation that SS and AT are empowered to sign on their behalf.

In addition to the noted lease changes, SS and AT passed on a request from Hartley that the café be permitted to sell non-alcoholic beers, wines and ciders during the let. MHMC agreed they were content for Hartley to be given the go ahead for this.

3.2 UPDATE ON THE INTRUDER ALARM

AT and SS updated us on the situation with the IMMS intruder alarm and dialler. The numbers have been updated moving Ellie (as Asst Mgr) to 2nd on the list and maintaining everyone else 'as was'. It has been discovered that the dialler should have been upgraded last year to include hardware that would enable IMMS to be able to remotely update numbers and control which doors are covered. This didn't take place in 2024 due to a miscommunication.

Upgrading to the new hardware this year will cost £504 and will make future amendments to the system much cheaper and administratively easier.

We agreed to upgrade the system as soon as possible.

3.3 POSSIBILITY OF A NEW CLEANING CONTRACT

SS and AT wanted to make us aware that they are starting to source quotes from cleaning companies with a view to possibly changing our contract. They are looking for more flexibility as well as competitiveness on price, while maintaining a real living wage for the individuals employed and an ethical approach to business.

They will bring a proposal to a future meeting.

3.4 POSSIBILITY OF A FILMING LET

The Managers have been approached by Warner Bros. who are filming in the area during June of this year, including directly outside the meeting house on Victoria Terrace and Upper Bow. It is likely that the outside of the building will be complete . The details of the request are still to be confirmed but it is likely that overnight use of the meeting house on one occasion will be required and possibly up to two weeks of green room/welfare space as well. There are two non-disclosure agreements to be signed – one by the managers and one by HST on behalf of our committee.

We discussed hire costs and DW & HST suggested that our starting point should be to ask Warner Bros. for an offer in the first instance as they will have a much better idea of the value of the space(s). AT and SS will work up a baseline cost that we wouldn't want to go under but the committee were happy to entrust our Managers to continue these negotiations as things become clearer in the coming weeks.

SS had a question about whether we need to ensure that the film doesn't go against our Quaker values and DW suggested that this could be done by way of discussion with the location managers but that the meeting house would not be identifiable in the film.

HST raised the suggestion that we may need to make it clear to the company that we are an alcohol free venue – if we were to be hired for green room space.

3.5 CONTRACT STAFF

An additional item added during the meeting by AT and SS.

Ellie has signed her new contract but had a question about annual leave and how it is calculated with the increase to her hours part way through a leave year. AT is confident he knows what calculations need to be done but will check with JN before confirming with Ellie.

Majk hasn't yet signed his new contract and also has a query about annual leave. He took a lot of leave in December (when he was aware that his new contract would start in February with fewer hours) and now finds he has very little left. He has suggested 're-starting' his leave year from the start of his new role but both the Managers and committee felt this would give him additional leave in comparison to other staff and wouldn't be equitable.

We are very content for him to take unpaid leave but his paid leave should be calculated in the same way as it is for all staff.

Majk has also requested that the uplift to his salary be extended by a month. This seems to stem from a suggestion by Beth following the Central Edinburgh ceilidh where SS and AT were in attendance but not working and asked some questions about where instruments were stored. We were all in agreement that extending the uplift isn't justified and wouldn't be fair to the other staff. Answering questions and supporting colleagues is part of everyone's job description.

SS and AT undertook to speak to Majk about both these issues and pass on the committee's decisions but HST is happy to speak to him if he wants any further clarification.

4 3F2 REPORT

Nothing reported during the meeting. **JPA will send an** email confirming current progress.

5 POLICE ACTION IN LONDON ON 27 MARCH

Meeting house staff are naturally concerned about recent events in London where Met Police officers forcibly entered Westminster Meeting House and arrested 6 young people who were attending a meeting in the building.

DW spoke to this item and assured the group that there is ongoing discussion amongst inter-faith and inter-denominational groups that Quakers in Britain are a key part of. There will be more information and guidance in the coming days and weeks.

In the meantime, DW felt this incident shouldn't change our policy of letting to groups who may be involved in direct action or protest and that those groups should be made aware that we have their welfare in mind. We were also clear that staff need to feel supported to deal with situations like this if they were to arise. **DW, SS and AT will look into possible training that could be given to staff**. The idea of sharing this across other venues was seen to be an excellent way forward.

DW also reassured staff and committee members by relaying a private conversation between himself and a senior contact within Police Scotland that the approach taken by Police Scotland in a similar situation would be very different. Before an action like this were considered in Scotland, an equality impact assessment and a human rights impact assessment would be carried out – either one of which would have vetoed the actions taken in Westminster.

HST shared that Trustees have been looking at reviewing the meeting house lettings policy and we all agreed this should be brought back to the top of their agenda.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ellie overheard a concerning conversation between local Friends in the meeting house foyer. Ellie felt that the remarks made were both disrespectful to young Friends and transphobic – and the fact they were made within her earshot added to the discomfort. Having spoken to the Managers, Ellie has also now spoken to Marilyn Higgins as a representative of Elders and a session is planned for Local Meeting, incorporating Quaker Rainbow.

In a separate incident, an after-worship meeting ran over by half an hour one Sunday when Ken was working which meant that he worked for 6.5 hours without a break. Friends involved in the meeting didn't seem to understand the ramifications of this.

Both of these incidents tie in with issues in the local meeting around relationships with staff, but also more widely with issues of how local Friends welcome newcomers who are not familiar with

Quaker ways of doing things and with the inclusive nature of our welcome, including to those of different gender identities.

We know that these issues are complex and we will need a much wider discussion to be able to take things forward. We will continue the discussion at a future meeting.

JPA wanted to make it very clear to Ellie in particularly that discrimination or disrespect towards people on the grounds of age or gender identity is absolutely not acceptable and we thanked SS and AT for supporting Ellie in this issue.

7 TIME WITHOUT STAFF

Not used at this meeting

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tues 13th May, 5.15pm at 7 Victoria Terrace

We also added a tentative 'last week of June' for the meeting following this – either the Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday

Appended document

C Venues Draft Changes to Lease

1.4 - Hartley has agreed to give us a space for Midweek Meeting for Worship, from 12:15 to 13:30 each Wednesday. The exact room might vary according to their schedule. We'll be responsible for getting people in and out on time.

3 - We have pushed the rent up to £12,000.

6.10 - We'll get someone from C Venues added to the Intruder Alarm phone dialler list for the rented period.

7.4 - We've added a clause to agree that both parties will notify the other promptly if there are any issues, damages, etc.

7.5 - We've specified that they need our *written* permission to get anything in the building altered. (We want to make sure we always have a paper trail)

12.1 - We've agreed that they can run a cafe and keep any profit they make. (There was a bit before saying "Alternatively we might make a separate joint arrangement").

13.3 - We added a clause saying that both parties will share contact details for the relevant managers with each other.

18 - We've added a final clause that basically says any changes/extra discussion has to go through us. It's part of the drive (including 7.5 and 13.3) to ensure we have clear lines of communication and written records of everything.