

## **Southern East Anglia Quaker Meeting at Colchester, 22.11.2015**

### **Representatives**

**Clacton-on-Sea** - Hazel Jones

**Colchester** – Charles Bather, Robert Parkes, Phyl Reid, Les Wood (prevented) and Carol Holding

**Sudbury** – Betty Scrivener, Jane Carter, Sheelagh Ruse

Present were 29 Friends, including 4 Attenders and all but 1 of our representatives.

**2015/56** Friends being met in the presence of God, an extract from the introduction to Chapter 18 of Quaker faith and practice was read.

### **2015/57 Death of a Friend**

Alison Bush, a long-time member of Colchester Meeting, died on Wednesday, November 18, 2015. Friends have described Alison as "an extraordinary and utterly memorable person". Notification of the funeral arrangements will be made available as soon as possible. We ask Colchester Friends to prepare a testimony to the grace of God in her life for the AM Book of Memorials.

### **2015/58 Membership matters**

#### **2015/59 Appointments**

##### **a) Triennial Appointments**

##### **Trustees**

Hazel Jones has come to the end of her 2nd triennium as a Trustee, during which time she has served as Clerk of Trustees. We thank Hazel for the often challenging, time-consuming and painstaking work involved in the guidance she has given AM during this time.

Nominations Committee brings forward the name of Jenny Kay to serve as an AM trustee. This name being acceptable to the meeting, we appoint Jenny to serve from January 2016 - end December 2018.

Henry Ruse will come to the end of his triennium as a Trustee at the end of February. In view of Henry's ill health, he is unable to continue serving in this capacity and we release him from this role. We ask AM Nominations Committee to bring forward the name of another Friend to serve as trustee.

##### **Elders**

We reappoint Reg Webb to serve as an Elder from January 2016 to end December 2018.

Margaret Gunton has come to the end of her triennium as an Elder for Colchester Meeting. We thank Margaret and appoint Jacky Hall to serve as an Elder from January 2016 to end December 2018.

##### **Overseers**

We reappoint Carol Holding to serve as an Overseer from January 2016 to end December 2018.

### **Glebe House Nominations Committee**

We reappoint Ecky Prolingheuer as our representative on the Glebe House Nominations Committee from January 2016 to end December 2018.

### **2015/60 Sudbury Meeting**

We have received a minute from Sudbury Meeting that it is no longer able to hold regular Meetings for Worship for Business. On Sunday, November 1, 2015, Betty Scrivener, clerk of Sudbury Meeting, convened what is likely to be the last LM for the foreseeable future. Sudbury Meeting has survived over three centuries and in some ways it is painful to have reached acceptance of the current situation. However it is also a time of relief for long-serving Friends, who have struggled to keep the Meeting going in spite of dwindling numbers. We thank Betty Scrivener for serving as Clerk and Henry Ruse for serving as Treasurer and other Sudbury Friends for their service to the meeting over many years.

We hold Sudbury Friends in our thoughts and prayers as the Meeting makes this transition. We hope they will continue to participate fully in Area Meeting and bring their skills, gifts, needs and wisdom to AM discernment.

### **2015/61 Sudbury Meeting Memorandum of Understanding**

We have heard how Sudbury Meeting is unable to hold regular Meetings for Worship for Business, which in effect means that it needs considerable support in order to fulfil the responsibilities of a Local Meeting. Quaker faith and practice 4.33 states that the responsibilities of a LM need to be considered by every LM "although some of them may best be fulfilled in conjunction with another local meeting, or through the area meeting."

We agree that a Memorandum of Understanding between AM and Sudbury Meeting should be drafted, which will set out the ways in which AM and Sudbury Meeting might fulfil Sudbury LM responsibilities, as given in Qfp 4.33. Sudbury Friends Betty Scrivener, Robin Hart and Sheelagh Ruse are available to help with this. We ask Trustees to work together with these Sudbury Friends to draft the MoU and bring it before AM at the earliest opportunity.

### **2015/62 Sudbury Meeting House hirings and finances**

Further to Minute 2015/49, Alison Parkes (AM Clerk), Tom Tebbutt (AM Treasurer) and Peter Whiteley (Trustee) have explored with Sudbury Meeting the ways in which Meeting House hirings and money matters of the meeting might be managed. The appointment of a Lettings Agent to manage room hirings and the appointment of a professional bookkeeper to manage the finances of the meeting will enable the Meeting House to continue to be a central town venue for small businesses, community groups and charities, while helping to defray the costs of running the Meeting House.

We agree to the appointment of Harcourt Powell Chartered Surveyors & Residential Letting and Management Agents to manage Sudbury Meeting House room hirings. We also approve the appointment of Sue Dowden as Treasurer for Sudbury Meeting, as a paid service, with responsibility as bookkeeper but without the responsibility for making payments. Trustees are preparing a job description for the role.

We see the urgent need for procedures to be put in place to manage Sudbury Meeting's affairs. We agree in principle to take on Sudbury responsibilities through our Trustees, and for Trustees to manage the day-to-day running of Sudbury affairs, while developing an MoU to clarify how LM responsibilities will be fulfilled.

### **2015/63 Sudbury Meeting funds**

We received the following minute from Sudbury Meeting:

*Sudbury Minute 27/15: Sudbury Meeting funds - Sudbury Friends agree that the money currently identified within AM accounts as restricted for Sudbury Meeting discernment be changed to designated funds in accordance with Charity Commission guidelines. Sudbury Friends also agree that these fund will be managed by Area Meeting and will be used for Quaker purposes as discerned by Area Meeting. We seek clarification about the legality of this proposal and ask that this be given at Area Meeting at the earliest opportunity. It is important that the wishes of those who left substantial legacies to Sudbury Meeting be honoured.*

Hazel Jones, Clerk of Trustees, responded to the question about the legality of the proposal to identify money currently identified within AM accounts as restricted for Sudbury Meeting discernment to be changed to designated funds for discernment with Sudbury Friends. Hazel explained that this is not an AM proposal but an instruction received from Friends House and confirmed by Charity Commission guidelines. No specific use is identified for the money in the wills concerned. It was left without restriction to Sudbury Quaker Meeting. This change can only be made by reference to the Charity Commission.

We are satisfied that we are acting legally.

### **2015/64 Area Meeting Lettings Policy**

Colchester LM has asked for clarification about whether it is permissible to accept lettings from political parties, following a request from the Green Party to book the Meeting House.

Colchester LM forwarded the following minute:

*15.62 Nationally Friends Meeting Houses do not accept lettings to political parties, but many now allow the Green Party to use their facilities as they are thought not to conflict with our beliefs. We thank Robert Parkes for his research into the lettings policies of 13 Meetings. We refer this matter to Area Meeting to look further into our lettings policy and that of our other Local Meetings especially in the light of our charitable status, and the perception that outsiders might draw from our actions.*

We were reminded of our reputation for impartiality in the wider world. Friends have been able to act as mediator and facilitator for communication between people of conflicting views. We discussed the option for having a general AM policy in keeping with Quaker testimonies to peace, equality, simplicity, truth and the environment, but which excludes political parties. We heard from Qfp 15.16 that "Meetings and committees involved in the letting of Quaker premises should always bear in mind the need to minimise hurt to individual Friends, division among the membership and erosion of our distinctive Quaker identity."

We agree to adopt an Area Meeting Lettings Policy that specifies our belief in the equality of all people and reserves the right to refuse bookings from any group whose words or actions diminish the dignity of any person or group of people. We seek to learn from the experience of the Sudbury Conditions of Letting and use that to draft an AM Lettings Policy.

In answer to the question raised by Colchester Meeting, we agree to exclude political parties as hirers of our Meeting Houses.

### **2015/65 Quaker Life Representative Council - Report**

Quaker Life Rep Council is a gathering of AM representatives to discuss, explore and share information about Quaker Life areas of work in support of Meetings. Lucien De Leon attended the QL Rep Council at Woodbrooke on October 9-11.

Lucien emphasized the need for meetings to become more high-tech and to be aware of using alternative technologies to reach out to more people. Lucien referred to the theme of nurturing the foundations of our meeting. He reminded us that we are Friends of the Truth and of the value of getting back in touch with our Quaker roots.

We thank Lucien for his report, which is attached to these minutes and will appear in the newsletter.

### **2015/66 The Refugee Crisis**

Further to minute 2015/52, Robert Parkes reported from the AM Refugee working group on local efforts to support refugees.

We heard of various efforts of Friends to support individual refugees and to raise money through donations for individual refugees and to support the local charity, Fresh Beginnings. We are now participating in the group "Welcome Refugees Colchester", which includes representatives from many faith and community groups and also Borough Councillors. Colchester Borough Council has offered to accommodate up to six refugee families. In addition, Colchester Friends took part in a march of 300 people through the town to demonstrate their wish to welcome refugees to Colchester. Simply by doing Quaker work, we are working with the interfaith community and also raising awareness of Quakers amongst the wider community, thus fulfilling two important areas identified during our AM process of discerning our purposes.

There is a continued need to debunk the myths around refugees, to reinforce positive messages about them, and the need to surround refugees with love.

Colchester Meeting has agreed to donate £200 a month to "Fresh Beginnings", subject to review in four months' time, and also to donate the meeting's recent collection of around £260 to them for their general funds. This will be used to fund such things as emergency rail fares to enable refugees to attend essential interviews.

We agree to set aside £200 per month to be used to support refugees at the discretion of the working group.

We thank the working group and also Robert for his report, which is attached to these minutes and will appear in the newsletter.

### **2015/67 AM Gathering at High Leigh 2016**

Peter Whiteley, Jenny Kay and Phyl Reid have made enquiries about holding an AM Weekend at High Leigh in 2016. A preliminary discussion was held at the AM Elders and Overseers joint meeting in October. Jenny and Phyl reported that a provisional booking has been made for the weekend 18 - 20 November, 2016, based on 40 adults. The cost will be £144 per person.

Phyl expressed the wish of the committee to meet together in the spirit. She read an extract from Qfp 29.02 which concluded: "We must look to our meetings, to our love for each other, and our corporate discipline...When we know what we have to do, how to do it will come."

We agree to underwrite a booking for this gathering, and ask Tom Tebbutt, AM Treasurer, to liaise with Peter Whiteley to make the necessary arrangements, to pay the deposit of £1152 and to underwrite the balance. We thank the committee for their work and look forward to hearing more about the arrangements.

### **2015/68 Area Meetings in 2016**

We agree the following dates and locations for Area Meetings for Church Affairs:

#### Sundays:

10 January - Colchester, 13 March - Clacton, 8 May - Sudbury, 10 July - Earls Colne,  
11 September - Colchester, 27 November - Colchester

### **2015/69 Regional Gatherings in 2016**

Colchester Meeting has offered to host Regional Gathering on Saturday June 25, 2016.

Carol Holding is willing for her name to go forward for the Regional Gathering Nominations and Agenda committee, which began in January this year. Carol will therefore serve from now until end December 2018.

Signed,

*Alison Parkes*

Alison Parkes  
Clerk