



**The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) In Britain  
West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Quaker Meeting**

**Governing Document**

Original adopted on the ninth day of November 2008 by Minute 9/08  
**This version adopted on the fifth day of June 2011 by Minute 11/15  
of West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Quaker Meeting**

The amendments take account of the creation of North Somerset AM and the change of name for North Somerset & Wiltshire Area Meeting following assent by Meeting for Sufferings on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2011.

**Definitions**

- i) The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain refers to the church in Britain, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, in its entirety, including all its local Meetings for worship and its constituent Meetings for church affairs, as well as all their work. It is referred to below as 'the Society'.
- ii) Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) refers to the centrally held and managed policy, property, employment and work of the Society. It is referred to below as Britain Yearly Meeting.
- iii) Meeting for Sufferings is the standing representative body entrusted with the general care of matters affecting the Society.
- iv) Area Quaker Meetings are the main local Meetings for church affairs. They are the level of the Society at which individual Membership is held. Each Area Quaker Meeting is a separate charitable entity and may be registered as such with the Charity Commission.
- v) The charity constituted by the original Governing Document was the **North Somerset & Wiltshire Area Quaker Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain** formerly and also known as North Somerset & Wiltshire Monthly Meeting. Following discussion and agreement in the constituent Local Meetings, a special Area Meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2011 and a minute of Meeting for Sufferings on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2011, the former North Somerset & Wiltshire Area Meeting changed its name to West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Meeting as three of its constituent Local Meetings left to form North Somerset Area Meeting.
- vi) The current edition of the Book of Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain is *Quaker Faith & Practice* (referred to below as the Book of Christian Discipline).
- vii) The term Friend refers to a Member of the Society.

viii) The term Attender refers to a person who is not a Member of the Society but who regularly attends its Meetings for worship.

## **1. Governing Document**

The Area meeting and its property shall be administered and managed in accordance with the provisions in this governing document. Further guidance is contained in the Book of Christian Discipline of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain.

## **2. Name**

The name of the charitable body constituted by this document is the West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Quaker Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain ('the Area Meeting').

## **3. Object**

The object of the Area Meeting is the furtherance of the general religious and charitable purposes of the Society in the region of West Wiltshire and East Somerset Area Meeting and beyond.

## **4. Administration**

Subject to the matters set out below, the property of the Area Meeting shall be administered in accordance with this governing document by the Trustees constituted by Clause 13.

## **5. Application of the Income and Property**

Within the Area Meeting, income and property are used to further the Area Meeting's object by work such as:

- i) strengthening the life and witness of Quaker Meetings both in the region of the Area Meeting and beyond;
- ii) spreading the message of Quakers and interpreting and developing the thought and practice of the Society;
- iii) undertaking Quaker service for the relief of suffering at home and abroad;
- iv) funding the concerns that Quaker meetings within the Area Meeting or beyond have adopted or agreed to support;
- v) providing for the pastoral care of individual Members and Attenders including assistance to those in need and for education;
- vi) maintaining and developing Quaker Meeting Houses as places for public worship and from which to carry our witness into the world;
- vii) administering and maintaining the organisation of the Area Meeting and contributing to the support of Britain Yearly Meeting.

## **6. Dissolution**

If at a meeting of the Area Meeting, the Members decide that it is necessary or advisable to dissolve the Area Meeting, or to amalgamate with another Area Meeting and this is agreed by Meeting for Sufferings, the Trustees shall have the power to realise any assets held by or on behalf of the Area Meeting.

Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall, with the agreement of Meeting for Sufferings, be given or transferred to another Area Meeting, to Britain Yearly Meeting, or to some other charitable institution or institutions having objects similar to that of

the Area Meeting, and failing that for such other charitable purpose as Britain Yearly Meeting shall direct.

## **7. Amendments**

- i) Amendments to this governing document shall be agreed by the Area Meeting in session and recorded by minute of the Area Meeting.
- ii) No amendment may be made that affects the object of the Area Meeting (Clause 3) or the benefits to Trustees (Clause 16) without the prior written consent of the Charity Commission, nor may the charitable status of the Area Meeting be affected.

## **8. Membership**

- i) The Membership of anyone in the Area Meeting begins when a record to this effect is made in the minutes of the Area Meeting.
- ii) The Area Meeting shall maintain an official register of Members and shall appoint a suitable Member to have care of it. No alteration shall be made to the register save in accordance with decisions minuted by the Area Meeting.

## **9. Termination of Membership**

- i) The Membership of anyone shall cease when a record to this effect is made in the minutes of the Area Meeting.
- ii) If a Member is dissatisfied with a final decision of the Area Meeting affecting her or him, the Member may appeal in writing against the decision in accordance with Britain Yearly Meeting's appeals process.

## **10. Meetings for Church Affairs**

Meetings for church affairs, in which the Society conducts its business, are Meetings for worship based on silence, carrying the expectation that God's guidance can be discerned if Members are truly listening together and to each other. The unity that is sought depends on the willingness of all to seek the truth in each other's utterances. There is no voting in the Meetings, because the Society believes that this would emphasise the divisions between differing views and inhibit the process of seeking to know the right way forward, the will of God as expressed in the sense of the Meeting.

The Clerk of the Meeting bears the final responsibility for preparing the business, conducting the Meeting and drafting the minutes of the Meeting. Minutes are drafted by the Clerk during the course of the Meeting, but the final decision about whether the minute represents the sense of the Meeting is the responsibility of the Meeting itself, not of the Clerk.

- i) The Area Meeting shall meet at such frequency, times and places as the Meeting itself shall direct. The Clerk may arrange for a special Area Meeting to be held if necessary.
- ii) The sessions of Area Meeting are open to all Members of the Area Meeting.
- iii) The business and activities of the Area Meeting shall at all times be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the current edition of the Book of Christian Discipline.
- iv) It shall be the duty of the Area Meeting in session to appoint an auditor or independent examiner of the Area Meeting accounts.

## **11. Constituent Meetings**

- i) The Area Meeting includes all constituent Local Meetings contained within its area, as listed in the accompanying schedule.

- ii) Arrangements for the establishment, running or dissolution of such constituent Meetings shall be in accordance with the Book of Christian Discipline.

## **12. Appointments**

- i) The Area Meeting shall appoint a Clerk, Assistant Clerk, Treasurer, Registering Officer and may appoint a Nominations Committee whose members shall be Members of the Society.
- ii) These appointments shall be made for a fixed term, generally of not more than three years. Only in exceptional circumstances shall an appointee remain continuously in post for more than six years.

## **13. Trustees**

- i) The Area Meeting shall appoint Friends, normally from its own membership, to act as a body of Trustees ordinarily containing not fewer than five or more than fifteen persons.
- ii) The Trustee body shall, so far as practicable, include the Area Meeting Treasurer and representatives of each Meeting contained within the Area Meeting, but not the Clerk of the Area Meeting, nor any employee of the Area Meeting.
- iii) One Trustee, but not the Area Meeting Treasurer, shall be appointed by Area Meeting in session to act as Clerk to the Trustees.
- iv) Trustee appointments shall be reviewed at intervals not exceeding three years. A Trustee can be reappointed on no more than two occasions to give an unbroken term of service as a Trustee not exceeding nine years. That person cannot then be reappointed as a Trustee of that Area Meeting until three years have elapsed from the end of the last period of service in that capacity.

## **14. Eligibility, disqualification and removal of Trustees**

- i) A Member who is appointed to act as a Trustee may hold office until he or she either:-
  - a) notifies the Area Meeting Clerk that they wish to be released from service as a Trustee;
  - b) ceases to be a Member of the Area Meeting;
  - c) is determined by the Area Meeting to no longer be a fit or suitable person to carry out the duties of a Trustee;
  - d) is believed by the Area Meeting to have become incapable by reason of mental disorder, illness or injury, of managing and administering his or her own affairs;
  - e) comes to the end of his or her term of service.
- ii) Release of a Trustee from office shall be recorded in a minute of the Area Meeting.
- iii) Removal of a Trustee under the terms of c) or d) above shall require a decision of the Area Meeting. An individual Trustee may make an appeal against such a decision in accordance with Britain Yearly Meeting's appeal process.
- iv) Members of the Society who are legally ineligible to act as Trustees, or who are disqualified from acting, shall not do so.

## **15. Powers of Trustees**

The Trustees shall have the following powers, in exercise of which they shall at all times be guided by the Book of Christian Discipline:

- i) To raise funds from contributions, legacies, grants and other sources; from investments and the use of assets; and from the sale of goods or services provided in furtherance of the Area Meeting's Object.
- ii) To buy, lease or acquire property, and to sell, grant a lease or dispose of property, subject to the terms of Clause 17 (vii) below.
- iii) To borrow money and to give security for loans (but only in accordance with the restrictions imposed by the Charities Act 1993 as amended from time to time);
- iv) To set aside income as a reserve.
- v) To make investments in accordance with legal constraints and the ethical testimonies of the Society.
- vi) To co-operate with other charities or to enter into partnerships.
- vii) To establish or support trusts or institutions formed for charitable purposes which are inclusive of the Area Meeting's objectives.
- viii) To employ staff.
- ix) To pay pensions, fees and salaries.
- x) To obtain and pay for goods and services.
- xi) To reimburse reasonable expenses, including those of the Trustees, incurred when acting on behalf of the Area Meeting.
- xii) To open and operate bank and/or other deposit accounts.
- xiii) To effect insurances on behalf of the Area Meeting and its Meeting Houses.
- xiv) Where appropriate, to insure themselves against the costs of a successful defence to a criminal prosecution brought against them as Trustees or against personal liability incurred in respect of any act or omission which is, or is alleged to be, in breach of trust or breach of duty.
- xv) To delegate their powers or functions as set out in Clause 18, below.
- xvi) To establish committees or working groups for carrying out agreed programmes of work.
- xvii) To authorise any of the Area Meeting's constituent Meetings or committees to open a bank or deposit account and to appoint signatories. Such action to be recorded by minute of the constituent Meeting or committee and reported without delay to the Trustees.
- xviii) To undertake any lawful action agreed as necessary or desirable for achievement of the Object of the Area Meeting.

**16. Trustees not to be personally interested**

- i) Subject to the provisions of sub-clause (ii) of this Clause, and subject to Clause 15 (xiv), no Trustee shall acquire any interest in property belonging to the Area Meeting (otherwise than as a Trustee) or receive remuneration or be interested (otherwise than as a Trustee) in any contract entered into by the Trustees.
- ii) Any Trustee possessing specialist skills or knowledge may be paid reasonable fees for business done by her or him, or their firm, when instructed by the other Trustees, provided that at no time

shall a majority of the Trustees benefit under this provision. A Trustee shall withdraw from a meeting at which their own remuneration or instructions, or that of their firm, is under discussion.

#### **17. Meetings and proceedings of the Trustees**

- i) Trustees shall conduct their Meetings according to the Quaker business method as described in the Book of Christian Discipline.
- ii) The Trustees shall hold at least two Meetings each year. A special Meeting of the Trustees may be called at any time by the Clerk to the Trustees or by any two Trustees upon not less than four days' notice being given to the other Trustees of the matters to be discussed. This period of notice may be waived with the consent of all Trustees.
- iii) If the Clerk to the Trustees is absent from any Meeting, the Trustees present shall choose one of their number to be Clerk at that Meeting before any business is transacted.
- iv) An effective working strength of the Trustee body should be present for decisions to be reached by right ordering. This would normally be represented by at least half of the Trustees.
- v) Minutes are to be made in the Meeting and accepted and signed in accordance with Quaker business method as set out in the Book of Christian Discipline. The Trustees shall keep minutes of the proceedings at Meetings of the Trustees and of any sub-committee.
- vi) The Trustees may from time to time make and alter arrangements for the conduct of their business, the summoning and conduct of their Meetings and the custody of documents. No rule may be made which is inconsistent with this governing document.
- vii) The Trustees shall report to the Area Meeting at least once a year. They shall also refer to the Area Meeting in session any major decisions such as those involving the acquisition, disposal or major alteration of land or buildings.

#### **18. Power of Trustees to delegate**

- i) The Trustees may delegate any of their powers or functions to a committee which include two or more Trustees. The terms of any such delegation must be recorded by minute.
- ii) The Trustees may impose conditions when delegating. Unless specifically agreed beforehand:
  - a) delegated powers are to be exercised only by the committee to which they are delegated;
  - b) no expenditure may be incurred except as previously agreed with the Trustees.
- iii) The Trustees acting together may revoke or alter a delegation.
- iv) All acts and proceedings of any such committee must be fully and promptly reported to the Trustees.

#### **19. Annual Report and Accounts**

- i) The Trustees shall ensure that an annual report and statement of accounts for the Area Meeting (including the Meetings it contains) is prepared in compliance with current charities legislation.
- ii) The report and statement of accounts must be presented to Area Meeting in session for consideration and acceptance not later than eight months after the end of the financial year.
- iii) The Trustees shall submit an appropriate annual return to the Charity Commission in compliance with current legislation.

#### **20. Income and Expenditure**

- i) The money of the Area Meeting shall be safeguarded by depositing in bank or other deposit accounts. These accounts shall be held in the name of the Area Meeting or in the name of any of the Meetings or committees contained within the Area Meeting and not in the name of any individual.
- ii) The funds belonging to the Area Meeting shall be applied only in furthering the object of the Area Meeting as defined in Clause 3, above.

**21. Property and investments**

- i) Ordinarily the Trustees shall cause the title of all property and investments held by or in trust for the Area Meeting to be held in the name of Friends Trusts Limited as custodian Trustee.
- ii) If exceptionally Trustees decide to use a separate nominee to hold property or investments, they must apply to the Charity Commission for an Order discharging Friends Trusts Limited from its custodian Trusteeship and vesting all land in Friends Trusts Limited as the nominee while granting it the same level of protection as it would enjoy under the provisions of Section 4(2) of the Public Trustee Act 1906, as if it were acting as custodian Trustee.
- iii) It is the responsibility of Trustees to insure all property, including owned buildings and contents, for replacement values which shall be reviewed regularly. They also must maintain in force all appropriate liability insurances, including employer's, occupier's and public liability.

*Signed:*

***Clerk to West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting***

***Treasurer of West Wiltshire & East Somerset Area Meeting***

June 2011