

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS, THAXTED AREA MEETING ESSEX

Report for the year ending December 31st 2017.

Trustees:

Judith Effer

David Oelman

Lesley Wardill

Sheila Brignall

Mark Pivac

John Capper (Treasurer)

Angela Howard (Asst. Clerk)

Jacqueline Bartlett (Clerk)

Individual meetings may send representatives by invitation.

There is no Charity Commission Registration Number or Company Registration for this charity.

Bankers:

Co-op Bank,

1 Balloon Street Manchester M60 4EP

Independent examiner:

Glyn Goodwin of Benten & Co.

Abbey House, High Street, Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 1AF

Solicitors for Saffron Walden Property:

Adams Harrison

Church Street, Saffron Walden Essex.

Custodian Trustees:

Friends Trusts Ltd.

Friends House, 173 Euston Rd. London NW1 2BJ

TRUSTEES REPORT.

The Trustees of Thaxted Area Meeting are pleased to present a report on their proceedings for the year 2017. It has been prepared in accordance with guidelines laid down in the handbook for Trustees of Quaker Meetings as recommended by Quaker Stewardship Committee 2014.

GOVERNANCE

The Trustees are appointed for a three-year term by the Area Meeting. This period can be extended for a further term by agreement. We have met 4 times this year at 3 monthly intervals and had two matters arising between meetings which required a conference by e mail resulting in retrospective recording by Minute at our next meeting.

All Trustees have completed Eligibility to Serve declarations and also the Register of Trustees Interests form. No declarations of interest have been made at any of our meetings in this year.

Our Meetings are conducted according to the Quaker Business Method and we have used each of the four Meeting Houses in the Area meeting in succession, inviting attendance from representatives of these Meetings where appropriate. Minutes of the year 2017 and a copy of the Annual report for 2016 have been deposited in the archive held at Saffron Walden Meeting House.

The Governing Document was revisited in 2014 with no revisions since that time.

The Meeting House in High Street Saffron Walden, the property at 2 Springhill Rd. Saffron Walden, at 69 High Street (occupied by resident warden and her family) and 69a High Street Saffron Walden are under the remit of the Resources Committee who have responsibility for ensuring appropriate management is carried out. Other meetings in the Area Meeting manage their own buildings, reporting to Area Trustees any issues where help is needed.

Reports from Meeting for Sufferings are circulated by way of an internal e mail group and also read at Area Meetings.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

We are mindful of the furtherance of the religious and charitable purposes of The Religious Society of Friends. All of the Meetings in the Area Meeting offer public worship each Sunday with provision being made for children in Saffron Walden.

All Trustees are active members of their local meetings and attend Area Meetings where possible. Our funds are disbursed according to the practice of Friends and our Meetings make regular monthly contributions to charitable and humanitarian causes, responding both corporately and individually to additional International appeals for aid where appropriate. We contribute annually with money, clothing and toiletries to Quaker Homeless Action. Some of our members have served this year as Trustees of The Greenwood Trust and The Friends Therapeutic Trust at Glebe House near Cambridge.

The Area Meeting continues to give financial support to the Central Work of Britain Yearly Meeting.

Wishing to extend our Quaker witness in the world, Trustees expressed at their meeting in June the wish to support Young People in Thaxted AM with funds to attend Quaker events and also to consider the use of funds for other, educational purposes. Also, in September, Trustees considered the possible release of funds from The Margaret Stubbs Memorial Fund on request to any member of the ancillary staff from Walden (formerly Friends) School who was in financial difficulty as a result of the closure of the school.

All of our Meeting Houses continue to be deeply engaged with activities in their local communities.

To give just a few examples:

Stansted: Storage of food for the local food bank, involvement with local Churches Together. 2 Syrian refugee families living in the area are supported by members of Stansted Meeting. Jane Mitchell, a Stansted Friend attends the Bishop's Stortford Climate Group on behalf of the Society of Friends. The Meeting House is open to a variety of groups and classes. In February Stansted Friends hosted a performance of a play by our Friend Angela Howard called "An Evening with Mabel Fawcett Dodds". This attracted a large audience of Quaker and non-Quaker enthusiasts and raised approx. £200 for Christian Aid.

Dunmow: Provides space for the local playgroup.

Bardfield: Hosts a diversity of groups including a Folk group, a singing Group, rehearsal space for local theatre group, WEA classes. Friends at Bardfield have "overhauled" their outdoor space this year to encourage its use as a quiet space.

Saffron Walden: In addition to an amazing diversity of groups using the building on a weekly basis, Saffron Walden Friends have hosted a Death Café, a performance of a play called The Bundle, a poignant story of Asylum Seekers written from the viewpoint of an Asylum Seeker, have supported a hustings held at the local Baptist Church prior to the general election in June and continue support for The Womens' World Day of Prayer and, through the medium of Churches Together in Saffron Walden, are represented at other ecumenical events throughout the year.

Saffron Walden Meeting has registered as a Sanctuary Meeting and has appointed two Friends to explore how this commitment might be progressed.

A great deal of this work and outreach is facilitated by our resident Warden, Helen Gibbs and her husband Karl, who provide a warm and welcoming environment for Friends, Attenders and other users of the building. Trustees wish to express their warm thanks for this work.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

Owing to movements in and out of the Area Meeting our membership has increased by one to 76. Attenders number 55.

We are still aware of concern regarding the difficulties of appointing Friends to various roles and in particular are aware of the lack of Friends able to serve as Trustees. Despite this our committees continue to function well. We expressed our appreciation for the service given by the retiring clerk to Resources Committee at the end of December. Elders and Overseers continue to offer pastoral and spiritual support in those meetings where they are appointed. Bardfield and Dunmow Meetings do not appoint but Bardfield Friends have developed their Afterword into a very nourishing and supportive space for discussion and reflection. We are very mindful of the diminishing numbers of

Friends able to attend at Dunmow Meeting but are aware of the contribution they continue to make to the life and work of our Area Meeting.

We have continued to make progress with maintenance in areas outlined in the Quinquennial Reviews of our buildings, using local tradesmen and calling upon expert advice where necessary.

With the financial support of the Bardfield Charities and the tireless work of our Friend Mike Collins in installation, **Bardfield Friends** have replaced their old kitchen units. New wiring and plumbing was also carried out and the kitchen re decorated. A rather shabby and untidy gravelled area at the back of the building has been restored with Welsh slate paving slabs to create a seating area overlooking the grounds which have been extensively tidied up. Friends at Bardfield continue to consider the future of the Meeting House, part of which is Grade 2 listed.

Saffron Walden Friends have begun an extensive refurbishment of The Long Room at the Meeting House. This has involved new kitchen units and other storage facilities and the removal of a part of the Meeting's collection of books to a purpose built and ingeniously designed new shelving system downstairs where it is more accessible to Friends and other users. (Photograph included in report) The Long room is now on the way to being a very useable and warm space for the children and young people to meet and also for committee meetings and social activities.

Saffron Walden Friends, using modern laser technology, have managed to restore and reproduce art work by our late Friend Betty West, which had become degraded. The final result of this is a window in the lobby at the Meeting House. (Photograph included) New exterior signage has given the building a more modern look.

Dunmow Friends were required to change the name of their bank account with Nationwide Building Society to Dunmow Quaker Meeting. Trustees complied with this request.

We applied for Accreditation as a Living Wage Employer to The Living Wage Foundation and were delighted to be successful. Our Warden, cleaners and gardeners are all paid in excess of the Living Wage.

In June, Trustees asked Cheffins of Saffron Walden who manage other commercial property on our behalf, to undertake a Rent Review on the property at 2 Springhill Rd. Saffron Walden. This resulted in an increase in rent of £50pcm which was judged to be fair and in line with other similar properties in the town. We also asked Cheffins to take over management (under the direction of Trustees) of the property for a fee of 10% of rentals. This was effective from 1st November 2017.

A Health& Safety Policy was drawn up by Trustees and approved by Area Meeting. The constituent meetings have begun to review their own Health and Safety measures and as a result in Saffron Walden Meeting House there has been an upgrading of Fire Safety procedures, improvements in electrical wiring, the creation of barriers to fire by reinforcing existing doors. Window glass has been reinforced with safety film and safety netting placed between the rails of an open staircase. Portable Appliance Testing has been carried out in all Meeting Houses.

We have begun, in consultation with the constituent Meetings to consider our Reserves, agreeing that 3% of our buildings value should be set aside for any unexpected major expenses.

We have also begun a review of the contract of our Warden to ensure that it is compliant with current best practice.

We have nominated our Clerk *ex officio* as the Lead Trustee for Safeguarding.

FUTURE PLANS AND OBJECTIVES

Saffron Walden Friends will continue to explore the responsibilities of being a Sanctuary Meeting. An invitation has been issued to a speaker from Friends House to join an Area Meeting later in the year.

Bardfield Friends hope to further their plans for a quiet space in the grounds of the Meeting House by placing additional seating and planted tubs. They also will consider ways in which their building might be put to additional use by the local community.

Trustees will continue to review the Warden's Contract of Employment and the Service Occupancy Agreement.

We will review the purpose and function of the Margaret Stubbs Memorial Fund now that Walden School has closed. The fund was set up to receive the rents from 2 Springhill Rd. Saffron Walden which were used by the school as part of the bursary fund.

Mindful of our legal responsibilities for Safeguarding in our meetings we intend to embed the work of our Safeguarding Co-ordinators in the Trustee year by meeting with either or both of them annually and receiving a report.

Jacqueline Bartlett

Clerk, Thaxted Area Meeting trustees.

