

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR FRIENDS SERVING AS TRUSTEES

QHT is a special committee of Yearly Meeting. Meeting for Sufferings appoints our twelve Trustees, all of whom are members of Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain. [See Quaker Faith & Practice 8.19.]

It is also an independently registered charity [No 254704], and a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital registered in England [No 00924311] at Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Its Objects and governance are laid out in the Articles of Association, recently reviewed, updated and adopted at December 2012.

Thus QHT is part of the corporate work of Britain Yearly Meeting, but not part of the centrally funded and managed work overseen by Meeting for Sufferings or the Britain Yearly Meeting Trustees.

Legal and financial responsibility for the correct management and functioning of QHT lies solely with the director-trustee members of its governing body, which is known as Council of Management. Council of Management meetings deal with the charitable loans, grants and advisory work, and with policy matters.

The dual nature of QHT means that its members act not only as members of a Quaker committee but also as trustees of a charitable company. Together these responsibilities create the role of member of QHT Council of Management - known as Trustees - bringing together Quaker beliefs and legal responsibilities.

Meetings of Council of Management are meetings for worship for business, using Quaker business practice. General guidance to Friends serving on Quaker committees is in *Quaker Faith & Practice*, chapter 3, and *The Handbook for Members of National Committees*.

Trustees are appointed for three-year terms of service. Appointments take effect from the date of the Quaker Housing Trust Annual Retirement Meeting (not from the date of the Meeting for Sufferings which makes the appointment).

It is sometimes difficult for Friends approached to serve on committees to gauge accurately how much they should offer as a contribution. In the case of QHT there is scope for all to contribute significantly. Such contributions are what makes QHT special, what allows it to work in a unique way with its applicants, and what, in turn, can make a Friend's time as a Trustee a very rewarding experience.

This paper sets out the nature of QHT and the expectations which Friends serving on it have of themselves and their co-members.

Paula Harvey, Secretary
2013

1. The duties of Trustees are to:

i. **Maintain a commitment to answering that of God in everyone.**

"Though the materials we work with are bricks, mortar and money, our concern is for people. And, though people have pressing material needs in the world, our concern is with spirit."

ii. **Uphold the vision, purpose and values of Quaker Housing Trust.**

QHT 's founding vision is to: *work towards lifting the burden of homelessness and inadequate housing so that people have a greater opportunity to realise that of God within themselves.* The values underpinning this vision are: Love (care, responsiveness, empowerment, commitment); flexibility (non-directive, creative, open to new light, spectrum of services and projects); discernment (based on expertise, experience, network of contacts, spiritual vision).

iii. **Attend meetings of the Council of Management regularly, reading papers before the meeting, contributing to the discussions and decisions at meetings fully, and following the discipline pertaining to Quaker meetings for worship for business.**

QHT (Council of Management) normally meets five times a year, four of the meetings being on a Saturday and at Friends House, London. One of the annual meetings is residential and generally held outside London. Residential meetings currently run from Friday morning (09:30) to Saturday afternoon (16:30). Annual training and induction sessions are usually held during the residential meeting.

iv. **Use any specific skills, knowledge or experience to help the Council of Management reach sound decisions and to carry out the objectives of QHT.**

Friends are expected to contribute their personal experience and skills, their time, and their commitment to the work. It is recognised that sometimes particular expertise is needed in a particular area, but all Trustees are part of the meeting for worship for business and have their own contribution to make: a wide range of views, knowledge and experience is valuable particularly, although not exclusively, about aspects of housing provision, management and finance.

v. **Contribute actively to the work of QHT between meetings, primarily by acting as Trustee-in-Touch for one or more applicant projects, promoting the work of QHT within BYM and elsewhere, serving on short-term working groups, and other specific tasks as they are identified by the Council of Management.**

QHT can receive applications for help from anywhere in Britain and from a wide variety of projects. In order to get a better understanding of a situation there is a policy of appointing a Trustee-in-Touch to liaise with applicant organisations. This could involve contact via a single telephone call to several site visits. Trustees-in-Touch are appointed at Council of Management meetings as part of considering the application. Appointments are made on the basis of geographical closeness or because Trustees can provide a particular skill. New Trustees are offered support from more experienced Trustees in carrying out this role. [See Appendix]

Promoting the work of QHT may involve attending Quaker meetings to speak about it, participating in publicity events and activities, and generally finding opportunities to tell Friends (and others) about who we are and what we do. Help with this is provided by the Secretary and the publicity consultants who work with us.

Short-term working groups are appointed from time to time by the Council of Management to carry out specific pieces of work as part of QHT 's overall programme.

vi. Ensure QHT complies with its Memorandum and Articles of Association, charity law and company law, pursues its objects and applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objects.

QHT 's object, as set out in the Articles is: *To further the purpose of any charitable organisation having among their objects the provision of housing and any associated amenities for elderly persons or persons in necessitous circumstances.* The charity must not spend money on activities which are not included in its own objects, no matter how worthwhile or charitable those objects are. The activities of Quaker Housing Trust primarily and currently are to:

- give financial assistance via grants and/or interest-free loans to eligible projects
- jointly with Triodos Bank, make loans from the Quaker Social Housing Account
- share its knowledge and experience with other housing providers

vii. Ensure the financial stability of QHT and the proper investment of its funds.

QHT was established to: *provide a channel through which every Friend who feels able may give or lend as much as can be spared to those who are particularly vulnerable in their efforts to secure housing.* It therefore receives no money from the Yearly Meeting funds, depending entirely on donations from Friends and other supporters of its work, legacies, and the recycling of loans.

The financial liability of the members (Directors) of the company is limited and each Trustee is asked, upon appointment, to apply for membership of QHT and undertake to subscribe up to the sum of one pound in the event of it being wound up.

Financial statements are provided in advance of each quarterly meeting by a professional freelance who is contracted as a non-Trustee Assistant Treasurer, and a Treasurer is appointed by Council of Management from amongst serving Trustees.

viii. Safeguard the good name and ethos of QHT

This must include respecting confidentiality of information from applicants and adhering to the guidance set out in the Charity Commission guidance booklet for Trustees (sent by Meeting for Sufferings Nominations Committee to Friends being approached to serve on Quaker Housing Trust). Upon appointment new Trustees receive a copy of the full Memorandum and Articles of Association.

ix. Identify any potential conflict of interest which may arise from any agenda item and to declare any relevant interests in advance of the item being discussed.

From time to time a potential conflict of interest may arise where, for example, an application is being considered which involves a Trustee's own Local Meeting, Area Meeting, or another body on which they are serving (as e.g. management committee member). It is helpful if this is declared in advance of the discussion, if necessary checking with the Clerk or Secretary for advice.

When an application is made to QHT with which a member of the Council of Management is directly involved, the member should declare their interest and withdraw during consideration of that application (see minute 93/28 available via QHT or Nominations).

It is not permissible for an application to be made to QHT by a member of the Council of Management. In that instance the Friend must resign either from the applicant project or from the Council of Management.

Where personal financial gain or loss is involved a conflict of interest clearly does arise and the applicant Friend must not become or remain a member of the Council of Management.

2. Staffing

QHT does not itself employ any staff although it may from time to time retain the services of consultants on a short-term contract, or employ temporary clerical or other assistance. It also has a free-lance accountant contracted as non-trustee Assistant Treasurer.

The work of Quaker Housing Trust is serviced at 2.5 days per week by a full-time member of Britain Yearly Meeting staff based in Quaker Peace & Social Witness, who acts as Secretary and administrator, managing the day-to-day operations of the charity. The cost of this secretarial support has been paid by Britain Yearly Meeting in the year as a reflection of the Yearly Meeting's concern for housing issues in its corporate work. [The corporate witness central committee Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) has a responsibility to *"ensure on behalf of Meeting for Sufferings that the Quaker Housing Trust is appropriately serviced"*.]

3. Clerks and Trustee

Council of Management appoints a Clerk, Assistant Clerk and Trustee Treasurer from amongst serving Trustees.

4. Professional Indemnity

Some Friends may be bringing their professional skills to the service of QHT and it is recognised that the giving of advice to applicant schemes could create potential difficulties for such Friends. QHT makes clear to applicant schemes that any Trustee is offering such advice on behalf of Quaker Housing Trust, not giving it in their personal professional capacity. Where such a situation might arise, QHT can issue a Professional Indemnity Disclaimer based upon the one used by the BYM Advisory Committee on Property. In addition, QHT's membership of the National Housing Federation includes trustee insurance indemnity cover.

5. Remuneration

Trustees are not entitled to any remuneration for their services but all travel and related expenses associated with attending meetings and carrying out other tasks on behalf of Quaker Housing Trust are paid by QHT.

6. Time commitment

QHT meetings tend to have full agendas, often with a number of diverse and complex issues to decide, so it is important that everyone starts with as much information about each issue/application as possible. This means that time is required for reading agenda papers before the meetings.

QHT is dependent on a limited amount of staff time and the voluntary contribution of the Trustees. Without that contribution QHT cannot achieve its aims and so Trustees are asked to take their share of the between-meetings work, especially keeping in touch with applicant projects during the application process. It is however recognised that Trustees may have limited time to give to these tasks and Friends are not expected to do more than they can realistically achieve.

Appendix: The role of the Trustee in Touch

Few funders want to know about, and build up a relationship with, applicants: QHT does. The usual contact between funder and applicant is made by their respective paid offices: through the use of 'Trustee-in-Touch' QHT Trustees talk directly to project committee and board members. QHT values what can be learned only by visiting the project and meeting the people involved. The personal contact Trustees make with projects brings a human dimension which is a considerable part of QHT's uniqueness.

The role of Trustee-in-Touch also has a practical, pragmatic function. It helps us meet our responsibilities as trustees under charity law and as stewards of the money Friends entrust to their housing charity, ensuring that the funds are, in every sense, 'properly' spent. Collectively, Trustees' contact with applicant projects contributes to QHT's pool of knowledge and experience regarding good and bad practice, problems and solutions, learnt from projects.¹

According to the nature of the application, the Trustee-in-Touch may need to:

- aid QHT's decision-making by helping the applicant provide whatever further information Council of Management needs;
- help an applicant explore issues, financial and other, which may affect the feasibility of the proposed project;
- help QHT give full consideration to the application by offering information, comment and suggestions arising from contact with the applicant;
- suggest a more appropriate type of application request than their original approach (e.g. a Health Check Service Grant or a Feasibility Study Grant before a Capital Costs application)
- liaise with the applicant and the Triodos Bank QSHA Loan Officer in putting together a QHT-QSHA financial package

¹ From minute 2010/146

Trustees cannot make decisions or take actions on behalf of QHT unless specifically instructed or authorised by Council of Management to do so.

After a loan or grant has been made, the Trustee-in-Touch will be asked to:

- receive (usually via the Secretary) a copy of the project's annual accounts for each year of a loan for scrutiny, liaising with the Treasurer to alert Council of Management to any problems indicated by the accounts
- visit the project to see the work we have funded when it has been completed
- see how the project is progressing to find out, for example, if there is new growth and/or problems, or where further financial assistance could be helpful to the project and encouraging new applications as appropriate

And to help QHT report our work to Friends, on whose behalf QHT acts, Trustees-in-Touch stay alert to the stories (and photographs) they can collect when visiting projects: positive and negative; about the housing provide and the people being housed.

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Further information

Friends being approached to serve on QHT should be sent the Charity Commission guidance on being a trustee: *The Essential Trustee: What you need to know (CC3)*. It can be downloaded from the website at:

<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/detailed-guidance/trustees-staff-and-volunteers/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3/>

QHT's Articles of Association and most recently audited accounts are available on the Charity Commission website and from the QHT Secretary.

Also available from the Secretary are:

- leaflet describing the work of QHT
- the *Information & Guidance Notes* for the application process, describing the kind of financial help provided by QHT
- current Work Review and/or annual report to Yearly Meeting, listing the projects helped by QHT in the previous year

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Quaker Housing Trust : Sparks of vision & energy *Yearly Meeting in Britain's own housing charity, funded by donations, loans and legacies from Friends. A unique national channel for practical Quaker witness in social housing since 1967. Supporting local projects through advice, interest-free loans and grants. Registered company no. 00924311 Registered charity no. 254704*