

## **Article in February AM Quaker News**

### **Changing the structure of our Area Meeting**

Back in October Area Meeting asked Trustees to 'move towards incorporation'. What does this mean? At present Bristol Quakers are a registered charity, and the proposal is to change from that to being a registered charitable incorporated organisation (CIO). This will make no difference to the relationship between area meeting and local meetings, it will not affect the relationship between trustees and area meeting. Members and attenders will not see any practical difference. So why bother?

Well, Area Meeting set up a task group to take this forward, and the first question we asked is exactly that - why bother?

We currently ask people to serve as trustees and work with LMs do the housekeeping that enables our Local Meetings to know our buildings are safe, we are employing staff fairly and can pay our bills. This does a lot of work to help us worship in confidence about the underlying stuff. But as well as asking people to give their time, at present we also expect them to bear legal liabilities if things go wrong. Personally. That does not seem Quakerly as they are serving us. CIO status would protect them. This risk at present can inhibit Friends from serving as trustees. This CIO model is newish, and was set up precisely to help organisations.

The working group is working through the processes and requirements. Fortunately BYM has agreed a template for doing this with the charity commission, so we are able to use a tried and tested pathway. The working group has identified a timeline, with the first decision being to agree the template for the new formal structure. This is pretty much the same as our current governing document in all issues of substance, but has to be slightly differently structured to reflect the different legal requirements. We hope to bring this document to Area Meeting for approval in April, and will be asking local meetings to look at it before then. If people have questions about the process, or the documents the working group would like to hear from you, so we can arrive at Area Meeting in April with hearts and minds prepared. It is going to be a little of an administrative task doing the transfer but, having looked at it, long term it is the best and simplest way for us to ensure we can continue with the least burden of bureaucracy.

If you want to know more do get in touch with members of the task group -

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