

GENERAL MEETING FOR SCOTLAND

Trustees meeting 12.5.2014 to discuss proposal to create a parliamentary advocacy post

Present: Robin Davis (Clerk), David James, Jackie Noltingk, John Phillips. with Elizabeth Allen (convener Parliamentary Liaison Function Group) and Martin Burnell (General Meeting Clerk); Paul Parker (Recording Clerk) joined at 1.45pm.

Prevented: Pam Brunt, Margaret Morton

Preparatory session before meeting with the Recording Clerk

We unite with much of Elizabeth Allen's paper "Proposal for a Quaker Advocacy Post" and we accept that we should use the Function Group to advise General Meeting on matters on which Quakers should speak to the Scottish Parliament. There is also the need for General Meeting to advise Yearly Meeting on Scottish concerns which will also be those of Yearly Meeting as a whole. There is a constant need for information to be passed in both directions. We stress that this is a Scottish post with a Scottish focus but we need further clarity on what exactly we expect from this role.

We have discussed whether General Meeting could pay for and manage such a post while recognising that there would still be a need for liaison with the Friends House team. While we appreciate the advantages of the post being part of the YM team we remain concerned about the possibility of misunderstandings - the "two bosses' issue.

Friends in Scotland still have a rather vague idea of the costs involved in the proposal. what the work pattern would be, and the management structure. All this needs to be explained precisely to them.

We have also briefly touched on the costs that would be incurred. We feel that Area Meetings seem ready to increase the amount they give annually to General Meeting but not by more than double the amount they presently pay. The Yearly Meeting annual contribution remains essential for fulfilling the requirements of QF&P 5.03b.

Meeting with the Recording Clerk

We have reviewed the practical issues needing to be resolved -

1 The need to document the process whereby General Meeting makes public statements. For Yearly Meeting (YM) this means seeking the authorisation of the Clerk to Meeting for Sufferings, the Clerk to the relevant committee, and the Clerk to Trustees. Paul suggested that in Scotland, it would be the General Meeting Clerk, the convener of the Parliamentary Liaison Function Group (PLFG), and the Clerk to Trustees. Paul noted that the YM Advocacy team had to be constantly ready to ensure the Quaker discernment on issues of the day was put into the media. Different processes are needed for proactive as distinct from reactive work – proactive prioritization of work can be done at six- or twelve-monthly intervals through the BYM Advocacy Reference Group and the GMS Parliamentary Liaison Function Group; reactive work needs the quicker process set out above for sign-off. We noted also the need for the employee to straddle political and media work.

2 Supervision of an employee at a distance.

There is within Friends House an established routine for handling this situation. Quarterly or six-monthly face-to-face meetings, team meetings once a week - link by Skype or 'phone, and line-manager contact when needed, with formal line-management meetings held every four to six weeks.

3 Person specification?

For many purposes, it can be useful to appoint “interns”, though such people need more training and supervision than a more experienced person. We considered, however, that this would need a more experienced person, with a higher degree of independence and autonomy, at least in the first instance while the post becomes established. Paul advised us that the net starting salary of a half-time (= 17.5 hours a week) post would be between £12K and 13K before on-costs; annual leave is 27 days plus public holidays. We may wish to be flexible about the hours worked a week depending on when Parliament is sitting.

4 Duration of the post

We agreed that this should be a three-year post, reviewed after two years. Any shorter duration would not give sufficient time to gain full value from the appointment. A review would give the opportunity to lay down the post or continue it, with changes if necessary.

5 Finance

The YM budget preparation timetable means we would need to be able to give a green light to the proposal by October at the latest, with confirmation in the autumn. Paul agreed with the suggestion that GM contributed a fixed amount of £10K and YM the balance. He recognised the value we attached to the annual YM grant towards our fulfilling our obligations as spelled out in QF&P and said that we would not lose out in the situation where we had a new part-time post to support. GMS Trustees noted the need to keep the use of this grant under review, and to communicate with BYM Trustees about the continued need for it.

6 Recruitment

Paul asked to be informed what the best channels for advertising the post within Scotland would be in addition to The Friend and UK-wide media channels. The appointing panel would need to include someone from the PLFG and the trustees. The process of appointment could take up to six months.

7 Next steps

Draw up a memorandum of understanding between GM trustees and the Recording Clerk. (Paul to draft)

Review the job description and person specification. (Martin Burnell, Elizabeth Allen, Robin Davis to prepare the text for Paul Parker)

GM trustees to prepare a report for General Meeting on June 14.

Date of next meeting of GM trustees

Confirmed as 2 June at 11am in Edinburgh.