

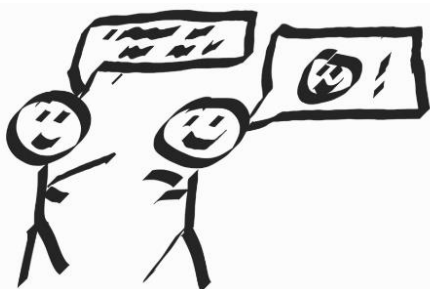
## Simpler meetings – area meetings working together, and structural change

This document is about possibilities. It shares many ideas collected from Quakers around Britain about how we can simplify the way we organise ourselves. You can find more topics here: [www.quaker.org.uk/simplermeetings](http://www.quaker.org.uk/simplermeetings). For each topic there is a document and a short video. All the topics are collected in “*Simpler Meetings – what is possible*”, which also explains ways you can approach the topics.

Some area meetings are confident their current arrangement is just what they need. Others are asking “Are we really sustainable in our current form? Is this still the best arrangement for us? How could we work with our neighbours?” There are many ways area meetings can work together. Some involve being helpful neighbours, or co-operating. Some involve one of several forms of structural change. These ideas and sketches can help you see what is possible.



It is all too easy for two area meetings to ignore one another. Especially when one seems to be having trouble.



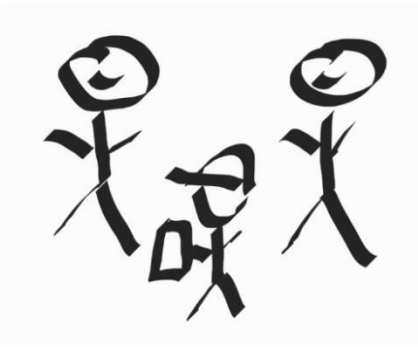
### Offering each other advice and support

This could include providing buddies for new role-holders, and getting together to share problems and solutions.



### Doing things together

This could include some shared learning events, and sharing a few role-holders like registering officers or safeguarding co-ordinators. Areas could use the same processes or solutions to common problems.



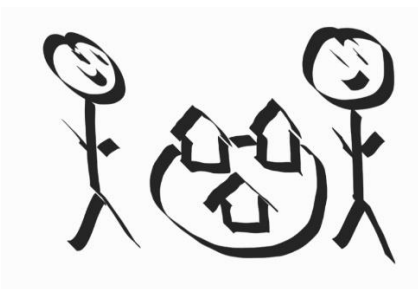
### Using the same suppliers

For example tradespeople, a bookkeeper, or a property organisation.

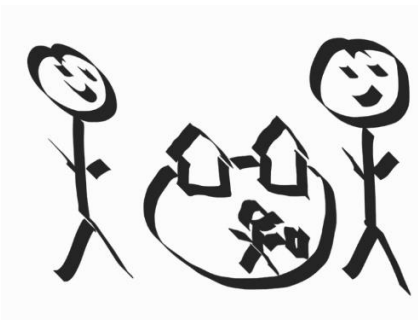


### One area meeting does something for the other

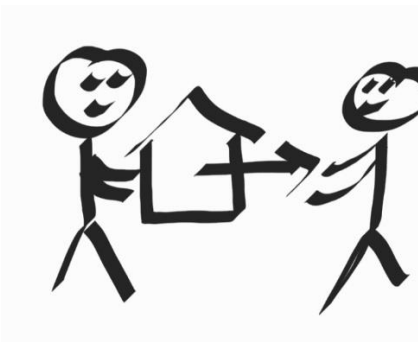
For example, one area meeting could employ staff who work for another, such as an administrator. They could cover several functions the other one needs doing too. Or it could avoid one area being an employer at all, perhaps paying a little for this reduced role.



**A common property trust takes responsibility for properties** across several area meetings, reducing duplication and enabling common solutions.

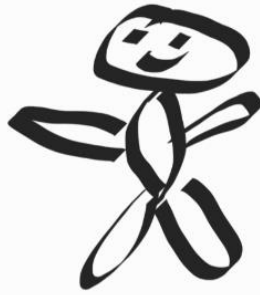


**A common property trust also provides services** like managing utilities, some maintenance aspects, lettings, bookkeeping or employing staff.



### One or two local meetings switch area

Some local meetings may not fit well within an area's geographical boundaries. It might be better if one or two local meetings move into another area. All may gain from a more useful geography.



### **Merge two area meetings**

– 1 charity, 1 AM, 1 trustees

Two area meetings could combine into a single one, and do all of their business as a single entity. There are quite a few conversations around the country gently going on about the possibility of doing this.



### **Disperse an area meeting**

– 1 less charity, AM and trustees

An area meeting could lay itself down, and disperse its local meetings into the neighbouring area meetings.



### **Trustees in common**

- 2 charities, 2 AMs, 1 trustees

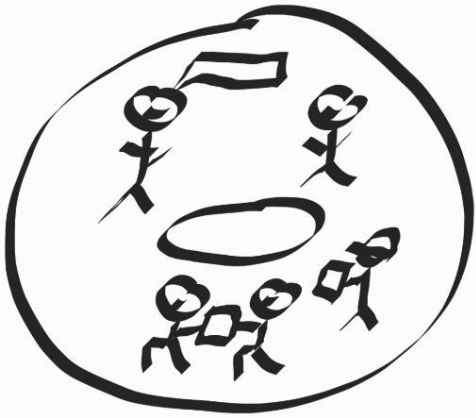
Two area meetings could have a common set of trustees, playing this role for both area meetings. They could have back-to-back meetings, or be given the powers to be responsible for both organisations in the one meeting. This could be an interim solution, while other options are being explored.



### **A single larger charity**

- 1 charity, several AMs, 1 trustees

Several area meetings could have a single charity that goes around all of them. This would have a single body of trustees, covering all of the area meetings. Each area meeting could continue much as now, holding area meetings in session and doing many of their appointments, discernment, social and learning activities in the current format. This is likely to involve area meetings trusting their trustees more, and probably holding one or more large meetings of Friends per year for big decisions and annual activities.



## Combinations

Some of these ways can be done together.

Some look different, and easier for trustees, if people are paid to provide some support as well.

The Simpler Meetings Project can help area meetings considering these kinds of changes. The project is keen to transfer learning from one area to help others.

## Questions to consider:

- Could we co-operate more with our neighbouring area meetings?
- Would it help to get to know one another first?
- Could we offer reciprocal advice and support, or do some things together?
- Are there ways of co-operating with staff, or adjusting how our property trusts work?
- Should we consider one of the possible structural changes?
- Would it help to talk this through with people outside our area(s), or the simpler meetings project manager?

## Can you help?

The Simpler Meetings project is gathering and sharing ways that Quakers find work well for them. The aim is to liberate the joy of being a Quaker. You can learn more at [www.quaker.org.uk/simplermeetings](http://www.quaker.org.uk/simplermeetings). Please send your ideas and suggestions to Jonathan Carmichael, Simpler Meetings Project Manager at [JonathanC@Quaker.org.uk](mailto:JonathanC@Quaker.org.uk).

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