

Area Meeting and Lewes LM – a matter for discussion, 05.07.2020.

At Area Meeting on June 14th, minute 55.20 said ‘*We ask Lewes Meeting to clarify the role of EORG and how it relates to Area Meeting eldership and oversight. We hope that they will be able to report back to AM in September*’.

Lewes clerks subsequently discussed with the AM clerks what would be required. The origins of the problem go back to 2016 when our meeting ceased to have elders and overseers, instead creating SPRIG, now EORG, the Eldership and Oversight Resource Group. Circle convenors became responsible for oversight in their own circles. Both groups met together regularly then and this continues.

Also in 2016, Area Meeting underwent the ‘decluttering’ process by which each local meeting became responsible for nominating and appointing its own elders and overseers. However many Friends within the AM were not happy with the outcome of decluttering. They felt the need for AM-wide appointment of elders. Also most local meetings had valued elders’ and overseers’ meetings where they could get together to discuss matters of common concern within the AM framework. The AM meeting In May 2018, in Uckfield, accepted minute 38.18, which stated “*We agree that Local Meeting nominations should bring forward names, but Area Meeting should appoint elders and overseers.*”

An important element in this process was that AM should reinstate the twice yearly meetings of elders and overseers so that local meetings that are facing difficulties have the support of the AM and the opportunity to share ideas with each other. This is important to many AM Friends. Lewes Meeting Clerks, Nominations and EORG accept the responsibility for Lewes LM to support eldership in our Area Meeting

Some Lewes EORG members and circle convenors have attended AMs, but in general they have been fairly few in number, relative to the size of our meeting. Also, importantly, AM has accepted that EORG and circle convenors are both nominated and appointed at Lewes MfWfCA. EORG members are not elders and circle convenors are not overseers. AM Friends do not see EORG members as elders because they are responsible for both eldership and oversight.

Peter Aviss, AM clerk, has asked us to put the matter on the agenda for our next MfWfCA (July 5th) and then pass the minutes on to him. Lewes LM will need a clear view of our position to bring to the next AM meeting on September 12th.

It is clear that we can continue to nominate and appoint our EORG members and circle convenors as before. A possible solution might be for Friends being nominated to serve on EORG to be asked to consider whether they are willing to be nominated as AM elders or overseers as well. This would help to provide the support that other Local Meetings within the AM are hoping for, while leaving the Lewes system as it is.

Nancy Wall and John Thurley, 26.06.2020