

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

Introduction

Dear Sangha,

We have pleasure in presenting to you the recommendations that we have formulated following the Sangha's Community Meeting on 28 January 2009.

Terms of reference of the Follow Through Group

The terms of reference were set by the Sangha during the Community Meeting and were to evaluate the matters raised during the Meeting and to bring proposals back to the Sangha for consideration and approval.

Sangha Development

Before examining the Follow Through Group's recommendations, it is helpful to summarise what a Sangha is and what building a Sangha involves. This helps put the Group's recommendations into context.

Traditionally a Buddhist Sangha was a community of monks, but many Buddhist traditions now encourage lay people to form together into groups to practice and these too are called Sanghas. A Sangha is a co-operative. Sangha members work together to sustain and nurture the Sangha. As part of this process we share our joys and our sorrows and our successes and our struggles. This is part of life and we learn to do this together knowing that we are all doing so with mindfulness. We can let go of the feeling of a separate self. We can place trust in the collective wisdom and insights of the Sangha. We can see clearly that the Sangha's collective resources are greater than that of any individual member of the Sangha.

What does this mean for our Sangha?

To date, our Sangha's practice has largely consisted of holding weekly meditation meetings and twice-yearly Mindfulness Days. Matters concerned with the running of the Sangha have either been dealt with at an annual "Business Meeting" or interjected into the final few minutes of our weekly meditation meetings. Indeed some important issues have never been actively considered at all, for example how the Sangha relates to the organizations with which it is affiliated. The meeting in January was the first in what, we hope, will be a little more frequent Community Meetings. These are meetings at which Sangha matters are discussed in a way that is completely aligned to our practice of mindfulness and which therefore become an extension of our practice. The Community Meetings are intended to encourage all Sangha members to think deeply about the meaning of the Sangha, how it is run and how it communicates with members and the public at large.

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

All of our recommendations can be seen in the light of sangha building, to make our Sangha more responsible for its development but without it becoming mired in operational detail.

Recommendations of the Follow Through Group

The Follow Through Group has the following recommendations for the Sangha to consider. Further details of each recommendation follow:

1. Endorse “Guiding Principles” for the Sangha which encapsulate what members value about it and review these annually
2. Hold Community Meetings as necessary to consider and approve key policy issues affecting the Sangha.
3. Adopt a new chart of roles and responsibilities for sustaining and nurturing the Sangha.
4. Establish a Caretaking Council responsible to the Sangha.
5. Approve a methodology for resolving conflict between members of the Sangha.
6. Agree a definition of who is a member of the Sangha

Recommendation 1: Endorse “Guiding Principles” for the Sangha which encapsulate what members value about it and review these annually.

Why is this useful? Many people at the Community Meeting said that they had overlooked some of the things that others mentioned and yet recognised how important they were. It is helpful to set them down as (brief!) “Guiding Principles”. We can then refer to them when considering aspects of how the Sangha should be run. The Guiding Principles are like a light that shows us the way. They are also a guide as to how we expect Sangha members to behave to one another. These Guiding Principles should not be set in stone and should be reviewed, annually, at a Community Meeting to make sure they are still relevant and helpful.

The Guiding Principles should be expressed in Buddhist terms and indeed we were struck by how often words and phrases like: “friend”, “friendly”, “accessible”, “open”, “there for me when I need it”, “supportive” etc came up in discussions at the Community Meeting. These concepts are all aspects of the Buddhist concept of the “Kalyana mitta”, the loyal and supportive friendly relationship based on Buddhist ethical values.

Accordingly to address this and other matters that came up during the discussions on 28 January 2008 we recommend that the initial Guiding Principles should be:

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

1. The RMMG is set up as a lay Sangha to practice Buddhist meditation and mindfulness.
2. The relationship between all Sangha members and between the Sangha and its members should be that of a kalyana mitta. Kalyana mitta describes a loyal and supportive friendly relationship based on Buddhist ethical values.
3. The Sangha welcomes members from all Buddhist traditions or no Buddhist tradition at all.
4. Sangha members commit to follow the Mindfulness Training on Mindful Speaking and Mindful Listening. *(“Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I vow to cultivate loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I vow to learn to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy and hope. I am determined not to spread news that I do not know to be certain and not to criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord; or words that can cause the family or the community to break. I will make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small”*

It might be appropriate for these Guiding Principles to be discussed at a Community Meeting before they are introduced. This will be for the Sangha to decide.

Recommendation 2: Hold Community Meetings as necessary to consider and approve key policy issues affecting the Sangha.

The format of the January Community Meeting (replacing the old-style “Business Meeting”) seemed to work very well and was helpful in establishing that a meeting to discuss aspects of sangha building can be a real opportunity for our practice.

There are a number of matters that we believe the Sangha should consider as a Group rather than delegating them to any individual or group of individuals. These include:

- Sangha guiding principles
- Sangha ethical values (including conflict resolution)
- Weekly practice content, venues and whether there might be a demand for new and additional types of meetings such as dharma discussions.
- Relationship between RMMG and the associations with which it is affiliated
- Sangha communications policy including website and newsletter.

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

- Any other issues of Sangha policy.

It will be up to the Sangha to decide how many Community Meetings to hold each year. One is probably too few but four might be too many. For the next 12 months, perhaps two or three is the right number. Each year we should review the programme of matters for the whole Sangha to consider so that the Sangha can forecast how many Community Meetings might be appropriate.

We also recommend that the Sangha should consider requiring a minimum number of people to attend a Community Meeting for any decisions taken at the meeting to be binding on the Sangha. We do not believe it is fair for decisions, particularly on important matters, to be taken by only a handful of people. It will be for the Sangha to decide how many people should be regarded as a minimum but perhaps 10 or 12 might be considered reasonable.

Recommendation 3: Adopt a new chart of roles and responsibilities for sustaining and nurturing the Sangha.

All members have a shared responsibility for the management of the Sangha. Accordingly we should encourage as many people as possible to take an active role in the running of the Sangha. Wherever possible members should be prepared to give time to the Sangha but we must recognise that some members will have commitments that make this impossible.

We need to balance having as many people involved as possible with the recognition that the more people that are involved, the more time and effort we are going to need to put into co-ordination. Our approach was to build on the analysis of Sangha tasks in the papers for the Community Meeting and to group those tasks into roles. The results of this work are set out in the table below.

Our recommended chart of roles and tasks is concerned with the ongoing tasks that are necessary to keep the Sangha running and not on the vital week to week system of calling for volunteers to handle the following week's meeting.

Role title	Principal tasks
"Membership secretary"	<i>Obtaining and keeping records of members' details for contact purposes</i>
"Pastoral care organiser"	<i>Working with a team to organise:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Contact with new members and providing support for them</i>• <i>Upholding the Sangha Guiding Principles, discerning</i>

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

Role title	Principal tasks
	<p><i>whether the Sangha is compliant and drawing this to the Sangha's attention¹</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Handling communications with members</i> • <i>Encouraging people to volunteer for Sangha tasks</i> • <i>Facilitating the Sangha conflict resolution process.</i>
Mindfulness Day organiser	<i>Determining how many mindfulness days should be held each year, the subjects to be covered, the teachers to be invited, the planning, and organising of these events. (NB: might be two roles one for Gaia House and one for Col events.)</i>
Treasurer	<i>Collecting, banking and accounting for dana, making and accounting for payments of expenses and donations, determining the appropriate level of the Sangha's financial reserves, reporting financial stewardship to the Sangha.</i>
Librarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Looking after books CDs and DVDs plus records of talks, notes, links to websites etc to help people gain knowledge of the Dharma.</i> • <i>Keeping files of sangha documents (minutes, guidance notes etc)</i>
Website editor	<i>Keeping the website up to date, enhancing the website with new material as necessary.</i>
Newsletter editor	<i>Producing and distributing the newsletter.</i>

Job descriptions for each role are set out in Appendix I.

¹ These values would include being there for each other. For example a Pastoral Care team member might note at a Sangha meeting. "We notice that X has not come for several weeks and have heard they may be ill. Is anything being done or being needed?" (We think this is a better model for the Sangha rather than the Pastoral Care Team itself becoming the Sangha carers since the role of the Pastoral Care Team is to encourage Sangha members to take responsibility for each other.)

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

The Pastoral Care role is a key role in the Sangha and it may be that a team of people should be involved. The lead person would be on the Caretaking Council with a further member of the Caretaking Council holding an additional role in assisting the lead person. It has been suggested that the Pastoral Care team should consist of four people with a further two people who are independent of the Caretaking Committee. This will allow some members of the team to have a reflective detachment to assist those who are part of a very task-focused energy in the Caretaking Council.

Some roles could be combined, for example website editor and newsletter editor.

It should be the Sangha that approves who should have primary responsibility for each area of work. Even if there is only one volunteer for a post, the Sangha should determine whether the person volunteering is suitably qualified for the task and should be appointed. It will be for the Sangha to determine how this suitability is assessed but other organisations appoint a Nominations Group to vet applicants. The Sangha's approval of an appointment could be achieved in a number of ways, for example by voting or by seeking consensus. It will be for the Sangha to determine how this approval should be obtained.

People with primary areas of responsibility should be appointed for one year at a time with the intention that they would serve for up to 3 years if they so wished. It is good and healthy for there to be regular rotation of roles, following the principle that "*fresh water comes only from flowing water*". In a small organisation like the Sangha, it might not be possible to find replacements for all posts every three years and hence an extension of the term of office should be allowed provided that this is approved by the Sangha. Extensions of office should be for a year at a time and a priority task of the holder of the role would be to try to organise a successor or successors to take over the role.

We should consider having "shadow" people assisting those holding the key roles. It might even be possible to "job share" and we should be prepared to be flexible in allowing this.

The Sangha should produce a list of the roles and of the names of the people holding them and how long they have held the post. This list should be held with the Sangha's papers and a copy could be made available on the internet for reference.

NB: There are other ongoing tasks not specifically associated with a role which will need to be assigned:

Liaison: Liaising with the Convent and the Vicarage about dates and ensuring we are sensitive in the way we use their premises. Liaising with Gaia House, London Insight Meditation, and The Community of Interbeing – the three organisations with whom we have an association.

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

Communications: Providing email and telephone contact for prospective new members.

Recommendation 4: Establish a Caretaking Council responsible to the Sangha

The list of tasks set out above omits a very important series of matters concerned with:

- co-ordinating the people responsible for each of the roles
- keeping an overview of the Sangha's activities
- organising community meetings to focus on issues facing the Sangha.
- maintaining records of Sangha policy decisions.

Accordingly we recommend that a Caretaking Council be formed that will address these matters. The Sangha will decide on matters of policy and the Caretaking Council will decide on operational matters of how the policy is to be implemented.

Members of the Caretaking Council will be the people with "primary responsibility" for Sangha tasks.

The Caretaking Council will determine how frequently it should meet. Its meetings will be quite separate from the regular Wednesday meditation group meetings. The Caretaking Council will determine where and when it will meet but with the objective that its meetings will be at no cost to the Sangha.

Minutes of the Caretaking Council will be kept and made available to any Sangha members on request and a summary of the matters dealt with at meetings will be included in the RMMG Newsletter. Oral reports will also be made to the Sangha as appropriate. Sangha members can if they wish attend a meeting of the Caretaking Council as observers. This would of course be subject to space limitations of where the meetings are to be held.

Where appropriate, the Caretaking Council will seek to publicise relevant forthcoming agenda topics in the RMMG Newsletter in order that Sangha members' views can be solicited in advance.

The Caretaking Council will not have a Chairperson but each meeting will be facilitated by a volunteer member of the Council. Similarly the Caretaking Council minutes for each meeting will be taken by a volunteer.

The concept of a "Caretaking Council" seems to be well established in lay sanghas following in the Thich Nhat Hanh tradition in North America.

One important issue is the extent to which the Caretaking Council is empowered by the Sangha to take detailed administrative decisions. All key decisions should continue to be

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

referred to the Sangha but we believe that the Council should be allowed to take detailed administrative decisions in order to avoid taking up precious time at Wednesday evening meetings. We set out in Appendix II some examples of possible decisions and whether they would be taken by the Caretaking Council or referred to the Sangha.

Recommendation 5: Approve a methodology for resolving conflict between members of the Sangha.

We should accept that it is a natural part of life that disputes may arise from time to time between members of the sangha. The resolution of such disputes can provide us with an opportunity for good to arise. As Thich Nhat Hanh has put it so memorably, “Without the mud there is no Lotus”.

Two disputants (X and Y) are encouraged by Sangha guidelines in the first instance to attempt to resolve their difficulties or misunderstandings face to face. There might be a direct issue between X and Y or it might be that one of X or Y is not directly involved in the incident but is concerned that the other’s behaviour is inconsistent with Sangha values, and so is raising the issue and thus becoming a disputant.

If X and Y are unable to reach a resolution, satisfactory to both, they could:

- Speak to a trusted friend within the Sangha
- Raise the issue with a member of the Pastoral Care Team, with or without their trusted friend present or perhaps the trusted friend raises the issue
- The Pastoral Care Team allocates two members (one a member of the Caretaking Council and one not) to work with the disputants
- The two Pastoral Care Team members then talk with X accompanied if they wish by their trusted friend, and then to Y, also accompanied if they wish by a trusted friend. The next stage could be handled in a range of ways:
 - The two Pastoral Care Team members plus X and Y meet
 - Pastoral Care Team plus X and friend meet with Y and friend
 - Or Pastoral Care Team meet with X’s friend and Y’s friend or any combination that gives the necessary support e.g. one disputant may want to be present while the other may not, but the number must be kept even e.g. not two people for X’s case with only one for Y’s.
 - A tool that could be offered at this stage is attached to this file as Appendix III (4 Questions to Solve Your Problem)
- If it cannot be resolved at this stage the following options should be considered:
 - The issue is discussed by the whole Pastoral Care Team on their own but with the approval of both X and Y. There are issues of trust and it is important that the disputants trust the process.
 - The Pastoral Care Team may suggest a way forward for the disputants to consider. However, in the event of this not leading to resolution, the matter must be taken to the whole Sangha at a Community Meeting.

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

We would suggest that this meeting would be run on Time to Think lines with Pastoral Care Team giving careful thought to the questions that need to be considered. An example is given in Appendix IV(4 Rounds of dialogue and reflection)

- Despite all our best efforts there may well be times when all our bridge-building and mindful communication may not be enough for the dispute to be resolved and it may be that one or both of the disputants still chooses to leave for their own best interests or is asked to leave by the Sangha which must consider the interests of the whole Sangha. We need to acknowledge that it might be a last resort resolution that X or Y leaves the Sangha.

If the matter can be resolved, at whatever stage of this process, a report must be made back to the whole Sangha, since issues arising within the Sangha are not considered to be the sole problem of the disputants but there will be elements to any dispute which have their roots in the whole Sangha's dynamic. The report back to the Sangha needs to be agreed by X and Y with the Pastoral Care Team members.

Recommendation 6: Agree a definition of who is a member of the Sangha

Our proposals are:

1. To become a member of the Sangha, a person should be required to attend a certain number of meetings – say 4- and be required to sign up to adhering to the Guiding Principles of the Sangha.
2. To continue to be a member of Sangha, a person should be required to recommit annually to adhere to the guiding principles of the Sangha and, perhaps, to pay a nominal fee.

The reason for the recommendation is that, at present, we do not have any mechanism for determining who is a member of the Sangha and is hence allowed to participate in decision taking as a "Sangha member". It would be inappropriate for decisions to be taken by people who attend a Sangha meeting once but have no commitment to the Sangha and might not attend any future meetings.

The intention of requiring a minimum level commitment each year is not to deter people from staying in touch with the Sangha but merely to ensure that they continue to be sufficiently interested to demonstrate that they regard themselves as members even if they are not able to attend very frequently.

There is no particular need to take people off our distribution list if they do not want to make the commitment to become "members" but they would not be invited to Community Meetings (aka Business Meetings) and would not be able to take part in decision taking.

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

At present only members attending a meeting in person are able to participate in “voting” (in what ever sense we mean this). It would be worth considering whether Sangha members should be consulted about some matters by post or email and allowed to “vote” in the same way. The advantage of this is to increase democracy in the Sangha and to ensure that possibly very key decisions are not taken at a Sangha meeting by a small and possibly unrepresentative number of people.

Conclusion

The Follow Through Group would like to thank all members of the Sangha for being so open, helpful and encouraging to them in carrying out their terms of reference.

Dedication

Through any merit generated from the production of these recommendations,
May all sentient beings be free from suffering and its causes
May all sentient beings attain happiness and its causes
May all sentient beings attain the state of happiness wherein there is no suffering
May all sentient beings attain equanimity- free from bias, anger, hatred and attachment

Abu, Andrew, Carine, Clare, Gaëtan, Helen, Kitty, Lucy, Martin, Nick, Paul

The Follow Through Group

Richmond 8 May 2009

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

Appendix I

Job descriptions

Role title	Membership Secretary
Principal function	Maintain name and address records for members
Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain name and addresses for new members • Maintain an up to date computerised record of name and address records for members
Accountability	To the whole sangha. The person holding this role will be a member of the Caretaking Council. Close liaison will be needed with the Pastoral Care Organiser
Time commitment	Less than an hour a week and one hour a week for Caretaking Council matters.
Personal qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diligence and attention to detail • Basic computer skills
Equipment needed	Computer, word processing or spreadsheet program, email
Mentoring available	Can be arranged if necessary

Role title	Pastoral Care Organiser
Principal function	Be responsible for keeping in contact with members
Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping in contact with members to ensure that we are there for them where appropriate • Handling communications with members • Encouraging people to volunteer for Sangha tasks
Accountability	To the whole sangha. The person holding this role will also be a member of the Caretaking Council. Close liaison will be needed with the Membership Secretary.
Time commitment	Hard to predict and will depend what the role holder will feel able to commit. Could be 2 or 3 hours a week and one hour a week for Caretaking Council matters.
Personal qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good interpersonal skills • Good communications skills • Tact • Some familiarity with Buddhist concepts
Equipment needed	Computer, word processing program, email, telephone
Mentoring available	Can be arranged if necessary

Role title	Mindfulness Day organiser(s)
Principal function	Organising 1 or 2 mindfulness days each year
Duties	<p>Working with a team to oversee all aspects including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing a venue • Arranging for a teacher to lead the day

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing costings and agreeing the price for the day with the treasurer • Keeping the sangha informed of the day and advertising the day internally and externally • Organising the caretaking for the day
Accountability	To the whole sangha. The person holding this role will also be a member of the Caretaking Council.
Time commitment	Will vary but should be less than an hour a week and one hour a week for Caretaking Council matters.
Personal qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good organiser • Some familiarity with previous Mindfulness Days
Equipment needed	Computer, word processing program, email, telephone
Mentoring available	Previous organisers of Mindfulness Days can be contacted for advice

Role title	Treasurer
Principal function	Collecting, banking and accounting for dana, making and accounting for payments of expenses and donations, determining the appropriate level of the Sangha's financial reserves, reporting financial stewardship to the Sangha.
Duties	The current treasurer has prepared a full description of the duties.
Accountability	To the whole sangha. The person holding this role will also be a member of the Caretaking Council.
Time commitment	Will vary but should average less than two hours a week and one hour a week for Caretaking Council matters. The role holder also needs to expect to be able to attend the majority of sangha meetings to collect the dana.
Personal qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some familiarity with simple bookkeeping • Basic computer skills including simple spreadsheets • Well organised and methodical with attention to detail • Able to satisfy the sangha's bank's client identification requirements (i.e. able to provide passport, utility bills, bank statements etc) • An established and trusted member of the sangha
Equipment needed	Computer, word processing program, spreadsheet program, email, telephone
Mentoring available	The current treasurer and another member of the sangha will be able to provide advice and assistance.

Role title	Librarian
Principal function	Look after all aspects of the sangha's collection of books and other media and to maintain a file of sangha decisions.
Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking after books CDs and DVDs plus records of talks, notes, links to websites etc to help people gain knowledge of the Dharm

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeping files of sangha documents (minutes, guidance notes etc)
Accountability	To the whole sangha. The person holding this role will also be a member of the Caretaking Council.
Time commitment	An hour or so a week and one hour a week for Caretaking Council matters. The role holder also needs to expect to be able to attend the majority of sangha meetings to supervise the library.
Personal qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic computer skills including familiarity with internet searches. Well organised and methodical An interest in and some knowledge of Buddhist doctrine
Equipment needed	Computer with internet access
Mentoring available	Guidance will be available if needed

Role title	Website Editor
Principal function	Look after all aspects of the sangha's website
Duties	Keeping the website up to date, enhancing the website with new material as necessary. Revising the design in line with trends for comparable websites.
Accountability	To the whole sangha. The person holding this role will also be a member of the Caretaking Council.
Time commitment	1 hour a week for keeping the website up to date and 1 hour a week for Caretaking Council matters
Personal qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some experience in using a website building program. Some familiarity with Buddhist concepts Commitment to keeping the site up to date Interest in keeping abreast of trends in comparable websites
Equipment needed	Computer and website building program
Mentoring available	The current website manager has agreed to offer advice as appropriate

Role title	Newsletter editor
Principal function	Produce a newsletter roughly monthly for the sangha
Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gathering information for publication and liaison with other sangha role-holders Preparing the newsletter every month to six weeks
Accountability	To the whole sangha. The person holding this role will also be a member of the Caretaking Council.
Time commitment	1 hour a week for the newsletter and 1 hour a week for Caretaking Council matters
Personal qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic computer skills Some familiarity with word processing and laying out a document Commitment to enhancing communications with the sangha Some familiarity with Buddhist concepts
Equipment needed	Computer and word processing program
Mentoring available	The current newsletter editor has agreed to offer advice as

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

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Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

Appendix II

Possible decisions and who would make them

Decision	Caretaking Council	Sangha
Guiding Principles for the Sangha		•
Roles and responsibilities		•
Candidates for roles		•
Regular meetings – changes to venues or formats		•
Mindfulness Days – frequency and concept		•
Mindfulness Days – choice of teacher	•	
Mindfulness Days – pricing to cover costs	•	
Mindfulness Days – detailed organisation	•	
Banking arrangements	•	
Allocation and spending of Sangha financial reserves		•
Library – decisions on which books to purchase (Note 1)	•	•
Website content	•	
Newsletter content	•	
Changes in email and telephone contact people for new members		•
Liaising with venues and with Gaia House, London Insight, Community of Interbeing	•	
Determining dates and frequency of Community Meetings (Note 1)	•	•

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

Note 1: Both bodies might initiate these.

Appendix III

Four Questions to Solve Your Problem

This is a very powerful tool when used with strict timing and calm, neutral facilitation, although disputants may well find it useful to do on their own if there is enough trust and objectivity available to them.

20 minutes in total:

3 minutes to reach consensus between disputants:

Question 1: What is the problem?

To reach consensus on this you have to go further than 'The problem is the other person!' and arrive at something like 'The problem is lack of communication and infrequency of meeting.' It is very important to arrive at an agreed definition and this can do a lot to take the heat out of the situation and offer hope that together a way can be found to address the underlying problem rather than staying stuck in personalities and hurt...

5 minutes brainstorm to get as many ideas down as possible in a short space of time. Speed of thinking without pause for evaluation is key...

Question 2: What are some of the possible causes?

5 minutes brainstorm to get as many ideas as possible in a short space of time...

Question 3: What are some possible solutions?

Get as many ideas as possible down, small, large, ridiculous, serious, work fast...

3 minutes to reach consensus on the final key question:

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

Question 4: What is the best possible solution?

Craft an agreed solution which may include several of the ideas from the brainstorm

Four rounds of dialogue and reflection (in the style of Time to Think, a tool much recommended for spiritual organisations²)

Time to Think About Our Sangha Problem:

It is important that the whole Sangha acknowledges that a difficulty held by two people is part of the whole energy and tension of the Sangha itself, and that working together on increasing understanding and compassion, develops our mindful practice.

Presentation of the Problem / Situation:

As clearly as possible present to Sangha members the problem and the questions it raises for the Sangha as a whole. These need to be open questions e.g. 'How can we best honour both perspectives and find a way to move forward?'

Round One: (Unbroken in order of sitting)

In the order of sitting, allow each person to respond to the open questions and to speak for as long as they need, while taking care of the whole group by not taking longer than necessary, on the subject at hand. (Martin had a very clever silent way of letting people know the timing with coloured cards that he held up at our Community Meeting in February 2009!)

Round Two: (Unbroken in order of sitting)

Take, without any discussion or probably much comment from the facilitator, a second round of unbroken reflective speaking. It is often during the second round, having heard everyone and had time to see how things might work together, that people are able to move forward in their thinking...

Round Three: (Unbroken but people speaking in any order, if wished / if moved)

This time, allow people to speak across the room, in any order, if they are moved to do so. Still keep the unbroken or uninterrupted nature of the communication.

Round Four: (Unbroken in order of sitting)

Finally take a closing round of unbroken reflective speaking while people contribute what they can now see as the way forward...

² Kline, Nancy (1999). *Time to Think: listening to ignite the human mind*. UK Ward Lock

Richmond Mindfulness Meditation Group

Recommendations of Follow Through Group – May 2009 (version 4)

Facilitator could now offer a proposal to the Sangha if it seems very close at hand or the Pastoral Group could take away these reflections and make a decision / proposal...