

Minutes of a meeting of the board of trustees of Community Base held on 14th November 2006

Present: Sylvia Alexander-Vine (chair), Sarah Bourne, Bob Cristofoli, Paul Evans and Lucy Stone

In attendance: Colin Chalmers (director and minutes) and Annette Moss (building manager)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Hong Lu.

2 Minutes of previous meeting

1. The minutes of the board meetings held on 11th September 2006, 20th October 2006 and 31st October were approved.
2. The board noted that following a request from a participant group in May 2005 board minutes, with confidential matters removed, were available to members on request. Following two recent requests for minutes Colin had posted board minutes from January 2006 on our website and informed groups they were there. It was agreed to post future minutes on the website with confidential items retained.
3. A request was noted from Brighton and Hove Community and Voluntary Sector Forum that confidential items in our board minutes concerning their organisation should be made public. The board agreed to make these items public.

3 Matters arising

1. It was noted that TB Alert had become a participant group.
2. It was noted that Deborah Sprackling had been appointed our receptionist/administrator from 11th December 2006. The board thanked Sylvia, Lucy, Annette and Colin for the hard work they had done during the selection process for this post.

4 Correspondence

1. A letter from St Patricks Trust offering "a huge thank you" for our translated guides to local services was noted. Annette noted that we had received many phone calls thanking us for this service and asking for guides.
2. Correspondence with Mosaic was noted. Colin reported that he and Annette had met Althea and Naima from Mosaic that morning and they hope for an improvement in the relationship with Mosaic in the future.
3. An email from Colin to our surveyors concerning their fees was noted.

5 Health and safety

Annette reported that double glazing had been fitted at the back of the Chinese Centre improving insulation dramatically.

6 Director's report

Colin tabled a report.

1. Colin tabled a balance sheet at 31st October 2006 and an actual against budget report for April to October 2006 which were noted.
2. The results of the monitoring forms given to applicants for the post of receptionist/administrator were noted.
3. Colin reported that the Citizens Advice Bureau was no longer interested in licencing space at Community Base.
4. Colin reported that the Elephant Group were doing great work but that their sole employee was leaving soon and there seemed to be no effective management of the group. Colin was asked to monitor the situation.
5. Colin reported that Brighton and Hove Black History were over a month late with their rent having been refused permission to pay rent late in July. Colin said he was meeting Sarah from the group tomorrow and would monitor the situation.
6. Colin reported on a brief informal meeting with Patrick Saintas of the Black and Minority Ethnic Community Project and said he had asked Patrick to meet him again.
7. Colin reported he had been looking into what help we could provide to the more than 500 people a year coming into Community Base wanting information about volunteering. Colin had discussed the possibility of the Volunteer Centre Brighton and Hove licencing space at Community Base – there is currently no volunteer centre or bureau in Brighton, only one in Hove - but they had offered to do this only if they were not charged rent and we funded their staff at Community Base. This offer was rejected as it would be unfair on other participant groups who pay for space and are not subsidised by us. Colin agreed to further research ways in which we could offer information about volunteer opportunities to local people, perhaps through our website.

8. Colin tabled a draft budget for 2007-2012. The board agreed not to increase rents in 2007 unless there was a large, unexpected expense or drop in income. If a rent increase was necessary in 2007 it was agreed to give licencees as much notice as possible and at least three month notice. It was also agreed not to increase any other charges in 2007 other than our charge for parking which would increase by £80 per year per space from April 2007.

At this point Bob Cristofoli and Paul Evans left the meeting.

7 Brighton and Hove Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (the forum)

1. Colin reported that Brighton Housing Trust had made an offer to provide accommodation for the ChangeUp Project Manager in their London Road office as a way of resolving the dispute between Community Base and the forum. Colin tabled an email he had received from the forum's chief officer rejecting the offer and telling us "*to desist from interfering in the internal management of our company*".
2. Colin reported that our solicitor had received a letter from the forum's solicitor claiming that the licence agreement between the forum and Community Base was invalid and claiming protection as a leaseholder under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. The board noted legal advice that our licences are licences and that if they were transformed into leases the legal costs for everyone involved would be enormous. The board agreed to try to avoid an expensive and damaging legal battle over this issue but to defend any case brought against the validity of our licence as Community Base would cease to exist in its present form if such a case were successful.