

## Minutes of a meeting of the board of trustees of Community Base held on 8th January 2008

**Present:** Sylvia Alexander-Vine (chair), Sarah Bourne, Ros Cook, Bob Cristofoli, Paul Evans, Jane Frost and Hong Lu

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

### **1 Apologies and introductions**

- (a) Apologies were received from Tina Harrison, Lucy Stone and Deborah Sprackling.
- (b) The board noted the resignation of Mel Shad as a trustee due to other commitments.
- (c) The board appointed Ros Cook as a trustee and welcomed her to the board.

### **2 Dates of future meetings**

The board agreed to hold future meetings on the second Thursday of every other month from March 2008.

### **3 Minutes of previous board meeting**

The board approved minutes of the board meeting held on 6th November 2007.

### **4 Matters arising**

- (a) *This point deals with a confidential matter.*
- (b) The board noted that the xmas party had been a great success.
- (c) The board noted that volunteer search and its designer Pip Jones were runner up in the innovation category at the 2007 iT4Communities awards and that volunteer search had been congratulated by the judges for its innovative approach to supporting local volunteering.

### **5 Participant group meetings**

- (a) The board noted the notes of the November and December 2007 participant group meetings.
- (b) The board asked Colin to maintain contact with the National Coalition for Independent Action, an organisation that celebrates the power of voluntary and community action to challenge and change the world around us.

### **6 Health and safety**

Annette reported that the car park gate had been badly damaged by a car running into it resulting in the car park having to be closed for a week over xmas. The gate has now been fixed and Annette is looking into the practicality of getting a more sturdy gate to withstand such mistreatment in the future.

### **7 Finance**

- (a) The board noted a balance sheet at 30th November 2007 and a budget against actual report for April to November 2007.
- (b) Colin reported that he had agreed final payment for surveyors' fees relating to our new lighting at the rate originally agreed, £4,259 less than the amount demanded by our surveyors since 2006.
- (c) Colin reported that we had received £202.70 from the liquidators responsible for winding up Brighton Body Positive.
- (d) It was agreed that a bookkeeper recommended by our auditors could be contracted to carry out bookkeeping tasks if needed.
- (e) The board agreed to give all locum receptionist/administrators zero hour contracts from 1st January 2008.
- (f) The board agreed to pay annual leave to locum receptionist/administrators at a pro rata rate equivalent to five weeks a year if the post was full-time from 1st October 2007.
- (g) The board approved an increase in parking charges from April 2008 for participant groups and external charities from £1,400 plus VAT a year to £1,480 a year plus VAT.

### **8 Our carbon footprint**

- (a) The board noted that we had used 421,756 units of electricity in 2007, a decrease of 6% on 2006.
- (b) The board asked Colin to investigate the cost of buying heater timer switches for all heaters in rooms licenced by groups who have said they would use them to turn off heating at weekends or when empty.
- (c) Colin expressed frustration that he had still not received any reports on the possible installation of wind turbines from the companies he had contacted last year and who had said they could help us with such an installation. The board decided not to actively pursue the purchase of wind turbines at present but to monitor the market for roof-based wind turbines in case it improved.

## **9 Complaint about our advert lighting**

Colin reported that he had had a complaint passed to him by Brighton and Hove City Council about the lighting on our advert being on after midnight. Colin reported that the timer switch had been changed and he been assured by our advertising company that the lighting should now not be on after 9pm. The council officer dealing with the complaint had said he was happy with our response.

## **10 Director's meetings with participant groups**

Colin reported that he had met individually with each participant group in November or December.

## **11 Visit from Caroline Lucas MEP**

Colin reported that Caroline Lucas, the Member of the European Parliament for the South East of England, had visited Community Base in November and was very impressed by our environmental improvements and the work of the participant groups she met.

## **12 Green Champion 2008**

- (a) Colin reported on the creation of Green Champion 2008, a website and campaign aiming to involve lots of local community and voluntary groups, and individual champions within these groups, in reducing carbon use by making ten commitments. The scheme is intended to create a basis for further action on climate change by local community groups in 2009, perhaps with the creation of a separate organisation, on the basis of the wishes of the groups who join the scheme in 2008.
- (b) Colin reported that he had initiated Green Champion 2008 on behalf of Community Base following a number of local meetings on climate change and consultation with a number of local groups and individuals who continued to advise on the campaign's contents.
- (c) Colin reported that Green Champion 2008 would be launched publicly in January 2008.

## **13 Our 2008 guide**

Colin tabled our 2008 guide to Community Base and other local services and told the board that translated guides for 2008 would be published soon.

## **14 Open day**

The board agreed to hold an open day on or around 17th April 2008 to coincide with East Sussex Credit Union's official opening at Community Base subject to the availability of speakers on this day.

## **15 Policy on long service leave**

The board agreed a policy on long service leave designed to reward and encourage long service by our staff and the stability this brings to our organisation.

## **16 Reception use in 2007**

- (a) The board noted monitoring figures showing that 2,647 people other than visitors to participant groups had made face to face enquiries at our reception in 2007.
- (b) The board noted that 24% of these visitors were from black or minority ethnic communities and another 13% were white, but not British.
- (c) The board agreed to stop monitoring visitors to our reception for disability as doing so was impracticable or intrusive.
- (d) The board noted some other changes in the categories used to monitor visitors in 2008 aimed at making the figures more meaningful.

## **17 The Community and Voluntary Sector Forum and ChangeUp Consortium**

- (a) The board noted that the Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (forum) board meeting of October 2007 had decided that Community Base's support for local volunteering breached the Brighton and Hove ChangeUp Consortium's 'joint agreement on providing support service for groups'. The board rejected this criticism and expressed concern that the forum could make such a decision about one of its members without consulting the member.
- (b) The board noted that Community Base is not a member of the local Changeup Consortium and does not limit its charitable activities to conform to its rules.
- (c) The board asked Colin to contact the forum's chief officer to request a meeting between Community Base and forum trustees and chief officers to discuss the relationship between Community Base and the forum and any issues either group wanted to raise. Sylvia, Sarah and Colin agreed to attend such a meeting if it could be arranged.

## **18 Accusation of intimidating and threatening behaviour against Community Base director**

- (a) Colin tabled an email he received on 20th December 2007 from Sally Hiscock, chief officer of the Community and Voluntary Sector Forum, alleging intimidation and a threatening approach by the Community Base director in correspondence with a forum employee. After examining the correspondence the board considered that the Community Base director had not acted improperly in the way he had challenged misleading public statements concerning Community Base's willingness to work constructively with other charities.
- (b) The board rejected the allegation against the Community Base director. Sylvia agreed to write to Sally Hiscock giving the board's findings.

*At this point Sarah Bourne, Bob Cristofoli and Hong Lu left the meeting.*

## **19 The Credit Union and two smaller offices**

- (c) The board agreed to sign a licence allowing East Sussex Credit Union to licence space at Community Base from 17th March 2008.
- (d) The board discussed the licencing of the two rooms in the current Chinese Centre that will not be licenced by East Sussex Credit Union. The board agreed that these offices should only be licenced to groups not wishing to have clients visit their offices and that the licence agreements for these rooms would specify this in order to avoid confusion over the pavement entrance, which will clearly be signposted as that of the credit union.
- (e) The board considered a request from the Chinese Educational Development Project (CEDP) to licence one of these rooms but rejected it as CEDP had indicated they would want to see around 40 clients a week.
- (f) The board agreed to licence one of the rooms to Audioactive if it wanted to licence space and met the special criteria for this space.
- (g) The board considered other requests to licence these rooms and asked Colin to investigate these requests further.

## **20 Staff job descriptions and terms of employment**

Paul asked if staff job descriptions and terms of employment had been looked at recently. It was agreed that line managers would discuss job descriptions and terms of employment with all non-locum staff and that the next board meeting would discuss the present job descriptions and terms of employment and any suggestions from staff or trustees to change them.