

Minutes of a meeting of the board of trustees of Community Base held on 8th May 2007

Present: Sylvia Alexander-Vine (chair), Bob Cristofoli, Jane Frost and Tina Harrison

In attendance: Colin Chalmers (director and minutes), Annette Moss (building manager) and Deborah Sprackling (receptionist/administrator)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Sarah Bourne, Paul Evans, Hong Lu, Mel Shad and Lucy Stone.

2 Minutes of previous meeting

The board approved minutes of the board meetings held on 13th March 2007.

3 Minutes of extraordinary general meeting

The board noted draft minutes of the extraordinary general meeting held on 16th April 2007.

4 Correspondence

THIS POINT DEALS WITH A CONFIDENTIAL MATTER CONCERNING A PARTICIPANT GROUP.

5 Health and safety

1. Annette reported that annual written risk assessments had been done.
2. Annette reported that electrical portable appliance testing had been done
3. Annette reported that our electricians had done some testing of our mains electric circuits and had not found any problems.

6 Participant group meetings

1. The board noted the notes of the March and April 2007 participant group meetings and an email from Debbie Charman of the Carers Centre concerning the availability of hot water in the conference room and dishwashers and storage space in kitchens. Colin said that Annette and he were looking into a way of providing hot water for hot drinks in the conference room that was safe and energy efficient. The board reaffirmed that Community Base kitchens should not be used for storing foodstuffs and that storage space in kitchens was kept to a minimum to avoid mess and clutter with groups being asked to store food and other things that did not need refrigeration in their licenced space.
2. The board considered the request from Debbie that a dishwasher be put in every kitchen in Community Base. The board did not accept there was a big difference between the needs of smaller and larger groups for kitchen facilities as everyone needed facilities for washing mugs and occasional plates. Community Base's kitchens provide basic facilities, including hot and cold water, a kettle, washing up liquid and towels and the board felt this was realistic, allowing groups to be able to wash cups and dishes that they keep in their offices. Tina had experience of using dishwashers in an office environment and described their use as chaotic with washed and unwashed dishes getting mixed up, nearly empty loads being washed and so on. Given Community Base's circumstances the board decided it would not be a good idea to buy dishwashers for kitchens and asked Colin to let Debbie know this.

7 Finance

1. Colin tabled a balance sheet at 31st March 2007 and an actual against budget report for April 2006 to March 2007 which were noted.

8 Approval of accounts for 2006/07

1. The board noted a letter dated 4th May 2007 from our auditors, Clark Brownscombe, concerning the audited accounts for 2006/07.
2. The board agreed a statement stating the level of staff salaries and pensions.
3. The board agreed the basis on which audits are carried out as stated in a letter from Clark Brownscombe dated 30th April 2007.
4. The board agreed a letter to Clark Brownscombe confirming representations in respect of these accounts.
5. The board approved the audited accounts for the year ending 31st March 2007.

9 Estimate of capital spending over 25 years

1. The board agreed that it was important to try to estimate likely capital spending for 20 years beyond the five years we budget for and noted Colin's and Annette's consultations over this matter. The board decided it would be more accurate to call this an estimate than an assessment or budget and agreed that such an estimate, based on consultation with contractors, suppliers and others, should be considered every year alongside the budget.

2. The board decided that this estimate should be confidential to Community Base trustees and staff.
3. The board agreed to replace the current point 2 of the policy on asset management with "Once a year the director will prepare an estimate of capital expenditure required to maintain Community Base's property and services in good condition for the next 25 years on the basis of consultations with the building manager, contractors, suppliers and others and present it to the board of trustees for approval" and delete point 2b of the policy on financial controls.
4. The board approved an estimate of capital spending for 2007-32.

10 Other policy amendments

The board agreed a number of minor policy changes on the basis of suggestions received following the annual review of policies. Apart from wording corrections these changes allow a complaint at stage three of the complaints procedure to be made to the secretary as well as the chair and state that notes of participant group meetings will be posted on the website rather than be emailed to the email group.

11 Our carbon footprint

1. The board congratulated Annette on the successful installation of solar water heating panels.
2. Annette is looking into insulation material to reduce heat loss through windows.
3. The board agreed that for safety and energy efficiency reasons, and since participant groups could now borrow portable electric heaters from Community Base, no heaters other than those belonging to Community Base should be allowed in the building.
4. The board noted that fridges use significant energy all the time. The board decided that now that low energy fridges have been made available in all kitchens, participant groups should be asked to use these fridges rather than refrigerate food in their own fridges. The board agreed that groups would only be expected to stop using fridges in their office if Community Base is able to provide a reasonable alternative.
5. The board agreed to change licence regulation 14 to "not to use heaters or fridges other than those provided by Community Base without the written consent of Community Base, such consent not to be withheld unreasonably".

12 Audit of trustees' skills

1. The board noted information provided by individual trustees and tabled by Colin listing trustees' skills in the areas of finance, governance, employing people, community activity, equalities issues, legal issues, strategic planning, project development and property management. The board noted that all areas were well covered by a number of trustees.
2. The board noted that it was able to receive advice from experts in legal matters, financial matters and property management when it needed it.
3. The board asked Colin to list short descriptions of all Community Base trustees, board advisers and staff on the website.

13 Volunteer search, venue search and local service guide

1. The board noted an email sent at its request on 14th March 2007 from Colin to Cath Barry, manager of the Volunteer Centre Brighton and Hove (VCBH), seeking a meeting between Community Base and VCBH's steering group to discuss how best we could work together to help local potential volunteers. Colin said he had not received a reply to the email.
2. Colin reported that a lot of groups were showing an interest in listing volunteer opportunities on volunteer search and we were continuing to build up the database. Deborah said that a lot of people coming into reception found the information in volunteer search extremely useful.
3. It was agreed to promote the local information we make available on our website and at our reception as widely as possible.

14 Individual participant group meetings and annual questionnaire

It was agreed that the director would have his 2007 individual meetings with participant groups in October and that the 2007 annual questionnaire to participant groups would be sent out in November.

15 An empty office

The board noted a list of groups interested in licencing space at Community Base and that an office of 190 square feet was still vacant.

16 Pub quiz

The board noted that there would be a pub quiz on 21st May 2007.

17 Refugee week meeting

The board agreed to hold a public meeting during Refugee Week in June 2007.

18 Tenth anniversary event

1. The board agreed to celebrate Community Base's tenth anniversary with an event in July.
2. The board asked Colin to make a film about Community Base to be shown at the event.

19 Community Base review final report

1. The board welcomed the review's final report written by Jeremy Stafford.
2. The board agreed with the report's conclusion that "*all [involved in the review] were of the view that Community Base is for voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups and that it is vital that the public perceive Community Base as independent of the statutory sector*" and welcomed the broad consensus amongst participant groups on this definition of Community Base's identity
3. The board also agreed with the report's conclusion that there was a need for greater trust, consultation and discussion between Community Base and participant groups in order to stop potential differences over grey areas arising from this definition growing into major disputes.
4. The board agreed that in order to achieve this, participant groups need to know that there are robust mechanisms for ensuring Community Base does not make arbitrary decisions, consults fully and has transparent appeals and complaints procedures. The board agreed that these mechanisms had now been created.
5. The board agreed that there also needed to be an obligation on licencees to inform Community Base when considering taking any action that could be considered to be a grey area arising from this definition, even when the licensee does not consider it would breach their licence agreement.
6. The board agreed that Community Base needs to know the names of everyone working at Community Base.
7. The board agreed to change licence regulation 20 to "to provide Community Base reception with the names of all staff, volunteers, students and secondees working for or with the licensee at Community Base".
8. The board agreed that new people at Community Base would be given an introductory letter telling them what Community Base is and inviting them to participate in the email group, events and so on. The board also agreed that reception should keep an email list of everyone at Community Base to allow everyone in the building to be contacted if need be.
9. The board agreed to change licence regulation 21 to "not to allow any organisation other than the licensee to provide a service from Community Base or manage or employ or place seconded workers in the Designated Space without the written permission of Community Base".
10. The board asked Colin to communicate these decisions to participant groups by email and at the participant group meeting on 31st May.
11. The board agreed to wind up the review email group.