

Minutes of the Community Base annual general meeting held on 6th September 2006

Present: Sylvia Alexander-Vine (chair), Clare Bingham (Friends, Families and Travellers), Sarah Bourne (Sussex Youth and trustee), Michelle Bridgeman (Gender Trust), Bob Cristofoli (Victim Support, treasurer and trustee), Arran Evans (Sussex Interpreting Services), Lynsey Fairless (Carr-Gomm), Jane Frost (Assert Brighton and Hove), Paula Goldsmith (Brighton Body Positive), Lesley Heasman (St John Ambulance), Anna Hinton (Sussex Community Internet Project), John Holmstrom (Brighton Housing Trust), Hong Lu (Chinese Educational Development Project and trustee), Katy McGrory (Brighton and Hove Community and Voluntary Sector Forum), Nora Mzaoui (Scarman Trust), Liz Petty (Assert Brighton and Hove), Ros Cook (aMaze), Bert Williams (Brighton and Hove Black History Project)

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

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Debbie Charman (Carers Centre), Paul Evans (NHS Support Federation and trustee), Sam Self (Scarman Trust) and Lucy Stone (trustee).

2 Minutes of previous annual general meetings

Jane Frost proposed and Lesley Heasman seconded the approval of the minutes of the annual general meeting held on 16th November 2005 and this was agreed by the meeting.

3 Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the 2005 annual general meeting.

4 Adoption of accounts

Bob Cristofoli tabled the audited accounts for the year ending 31st March 2006. Ros Ward proposed and Bert Williams seconded the adoption of the accounts and this was agreed by the meeting.

5 Appointment of auditors

Anna Hinton proposed and Katy McGrory seconded the reappointment of Clark Brownscombe as auditors and this was agreed by the meeting.

6 Election of trustees

The chair reported that Sylvia Alexander-Vine and Bob Cristofoli retired by rotation at this meeting and were willing to be reappointed by the meeting; that Bert Williams resigned as a trustee in June 2006; that Paul Evans, Hong Lu and Lucy Stone remained trustees; and that Sarah Bourne was appointed a trustee in July 2006 and was willing to be reappointed by the meeting. The meeting noted that Paul Evans, Hong Lu and Lucy Stone remained trustees and reappointed Sylvia Alexander-Vine, Bob Cristofoli and Sarah Bourne as trustees.

7 Chair's remarks

Sylvia Alexander-Vine told the meeting that there had been a lot of scepticism about Community Base in its early days. Government regeneration funding was crucial in ensuring our financial viability but it had not been easy ensuring the charity's independence. Sylvia thanked Colin for playing the leading role in making Community Base the successful, independent and sustainable project it now is and Annette for providing inspired support. Sylvia remarked that while Colin had led the work of the charity, Sue Cole had embodied the ethos of Community Base and would be much missed.

8 Report on Community Base activities since the last annual general meeting and plans for the future

Colin Chalmers reported to the meeting on Community Base activities since the last annual general meeting and plans for the future.

- a) The year at Community Base has been overshadowed by the death of Sue Cole, the Community Base receptionist since we opened in 1997. A webpage of people's memories of Sue had been created at www.communitybase.org/sue.
- b) Colin thanked our locum receptionists Susanne, Daithi, Susy, Claire, Katie-Jo, Doug, Anna and Vicky for their hard work.
- c) Since the last annual general meeting Food Matters and the Workers' Educational Association have moved out of Community Base and the Elephant Group, rYico and Brighton Body Positive had moved in.
- d) Our most recent statistics, for 2005, show the number of people getting help or support at Community Base as greater than ever, with over 80,000 getting help or support from groups at Community Base and over 12,000 coming into Community Base for help and support, an increase of 26% on the previous year. On top of this, over 2,000 people were offered help at our reception. Over 1,200 did voluntary work with groups at Community Base and over 250 people were employed at Community Base in 2005.
- e) The results of our 2006 questionnaire asking groups at Community Base for their assessment of our services and facilities rated 40 out of 42 of these facilities and services good rather than bad with an average rating of 4 out of 5.
- f) In 2005 we received the final payment of a grant of £200,000 from Change Up, a government programme supporting the development of voluntary sector infrastructure, towards our new lighting. We also remortgaged in 2005, moving our loan from the Nationwide Building Society to Triodos, an ethical bank. This remortgage fixed the interest rate of our loan for the next five years and released £126,000 at little extra cost to us, enough to complete the financing of our new lighting and expenditure on energy saving technologies. as a result of this grant and remortgaging, we no longer expect to need grant funding to be financially sustainable.
- g) Rent levels and the cost of parking was increased in April 2006. Our charges for rent and services continue to offer excellent value for money
- h) Annette Moss, our building manager, had worked hard and effectively to supervise the installation of new ceilings and lighting throughout our building. We have also taken on a new cleaning company, who have proved very popular and efficient, and our handyman Ade has continued to sort things around the building.
- i) As a result of our new lighting, our energy use has decreased by 25% and we continue to look at ways of reducing energy use in the building, including the shutting down of electrical sockets at night.
- j) We have organised a number of events including an open day in May, our third essay competition, pub quizzes, a meeting for refugee week, a fire training session at Hove fire station, participant groups and working lunches on working with the media and charity accounting. Community Base also attended the award ceremony for the Argus charity of the year award after being nominated for the award, which was won by a group at Community Base, Assert.
- k) The changing relationship between charities and the state has had an impact on Community Base with government initiatives sometime obscuring the division between state and non-state organisations. Over the last year we have consulted widely on how Community Base should react to these changes and we have reasserted our policy of only providing accommodation to non-governmental and not-for-profit organisations.
- l) Community Base is proud to be a truly multicultural building, providing accommodation to a wide variety of groups, including many providing support to black and minority ethnic communities and bringing people and communities together, rather than separating them. We already publicise our guide to local services in Arabic, Bengali, Farsi, French and Mandarin and today we are announcing the publication of our guide in seven new languages - Lithuanian, Polish, Slovak, Czech, Russian, Portuguese and Spanish - in response to the needs of new immigrants to Brighton and Hove.

9 Any other business

Sylvia thanked Colin for his report and asked the meeting to join her for refreshments and discussion.