

Minutes of the Community Base annual general meeting held on 8th October 2007

Present:

Sylvia Alexander-Vine (trustee and chair), Sarah Bourne (Creating Futures and trustee), Paul Bramwell (Working Together Project), Ros Cook (AMAZE), Bob Cristofoli (Victim Support, treasurer and trustee), Paul Evans (NHS Support Federation and trustee), Jane Frost (Assert), Vikki Gimson (Sussex Interpreting Services), Sally Hiscock (Community and Voluntary Sector Forum), Melanie Matthews (TB Alert), Linsay McCulloch (Mencap), Filippa Palmgren (Working Together Project), Liz Petty (Assert), Lucy Stone (trustee) and Bert Williams (Brighton and Hove Black History Project)

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

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Debbie Charman (Carers Centre), Tina Harrison (TB Alert and trustee), John Holmstrom (Brighton Housing Trust), Asif Mohammed (Victim Support), Naima Nouidjem (Mosaic Black and Mixed Parentage Family Group) and Mel Shad (Carr-Gomm and trustee).

2 Introductions

Those present and in attendance introduced themselves.

3 Chair's remarks

Sylvia welcomed everyone to the general meeting. It had been an interesting year with the review conducted by Jeremy Spafford being extremely useful, if sometimes difficult. Community Base has always concentrated on its primary purpose of providing high quality accommodation to local community and voluntary sector organisations and continued to do this under the able leadership of Colin Chalmers.

Community Base remains a place which maximised synergy between different groups. We are proud to be a sustainable and independent charity providing a home to many groups and running valuable services, including volunteer search, which was introduced in 2007, and events such as our annual refugee week public meeting and our pub quizzes.

2007 saw Community Base celebrate its tenth birthday with its ethics intact - a remarkable achievement. When Community Base started with no building and no money such success was not guaranteed. Sylvia thanked Community Base's staff on behalf of the board of trustees for their hard work and dedication.

4 Minutes of previous general meetings

- a. Ros proposed and Jane seconded the approval of the minutes of the annual general meeting held on 6th September 2006 and this was agreed by the meeting.
- b. Jane proposed and Paul Bramwell seconded the approval of the minutes of the extraordinary general meeting held on 14th December 2006 and this was agreed by the meeting.
- c. Bob proposed and Paul Evans seconded the approval of the minutes of the extraordinary general meeting held on 16th April 2007 and this was agreed by the meeting.

5 Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the 2006 annual general meeting, 2006 extraordinary general meeting or April 2007 extraordinary general meeting.

6 Adoption of accounts

Bob tabled the audited accounts for the year ending 31st March 2007. Paul Bramwell proposed and Liz seconded the adoption of the accounts and this was agreed by the meeting.

7 Appointment of auditors

Bob proposed and Paul Bramwell seconded the reappointment of Clark Brownscombe as auditors and this was agreed by the meeting.

8 Election of trustees

Colin reported that all current trustees had indicated that they wish to remain trustees and that no other nominations to become a trustee had been received. Colin reported that Sylvia Alexander-Vine, Sarah Bourne, Bob Cristofoli and Hong Lu remained as trustees. The meeting agreed the reappointment of Paul Evans, Jane Frost, Tina Harrison, Mel Shad and Lucy Stone as trustees.

9 Director's report on Community Base activities

Colin Chalmers reported to the meeting on Community Base activities.

- a. Since the last annual general meeting in September 2006 the Fiankoma Project, Elephant Group, Brighton Body Positive, St John Ambulance Homeless Service and River Ocean had moved out and TB Alert, Mencap Pathways and Mediterranean Resources Network had move in.
- b. Deborah Sprackling joined us as our receptionist/administrator in December 2006.
- c. In 2006 138,000 people were offered help or support by groups at Community Base; over 9,500 people came into Community Base to get help from participant groups, 45% of them from black and minority ethnic communities; 1,600 visitors sought advice or help from our reception; and the joint income of participant groups was over £10m.
- d. In 2007 we held a number of events including pub quizzes, a successful public meeting for refugee week in June and a tenth birthday party attended by the mayor of Brighton and Hove in July.
- e. To coincide with our tenth birthday party we relaunched our website with a redesigned venue search, renamed service search, the creation of volunteer search and a poster and postcard publicity campaign aimed at reaching a wide range of people. Volunteer search now included 200 volunteer opportunities with 79 local community and voluntary groups and was proving very popular.
- f. As a result of a dispute between Community Base and a participant group a review into Community Base's policies and practices took place in 2007 conducted by an external consultant. The review was not always easy but did resulted in a consensus that Community Base was a home for community and voluntary groups rather than commercial or statutory organisations and that it was important that the public perceived Community Base as such. Community Base had introduced clear and transparent policies defining the role of the board and participant groups in the running of Community Base.
- g. Community Base is visited by hundreds of people every year, many of whom are in crisis or distress, and Community Base is committed to ensuring that our building is safe for all visitors and people working here. A child protection policy and a policy on bullying and harassment have been introduced as a result of this commitment.

Community Base is committed to taking all steps it can to reduce its carbon footprint. Between 1999 and 2005 we increased our energy use by 61% with no increase in occupancy. We will be looking at ways of reversing this trend and reducing the amount of energy used in our building.

10 Discussion on Community Base activities

Paul Bramwell said he felt that participant groups had had little say on some matters such as the banning of throwaway plates and cups from the conference room. Vikki asked if a dishwasher was being considered for the conference room now that paper plates were not allowed.

Annette said that dishwashers had been discussed at participant group meetings and board meetings. Annette said that Community Base was committed to reducing its carbon footprint and this would require a change in behaviour from everyone using the building – switching things off at night more, and so on.

Liz said there had been full consultation on issues through participant group meetings. There had been an online consultation on banning throwaway plates and cutlery from the conference room which had shown overwhelming support for the move.

Paul Bramwell felt there was not always sufficient debate when changes were made. Colin said that robust mechanisms for consultation had been introduced following the review that guaranteed all participant groups the right to put their views at participant group meetings and directly to the board on any matter and Community Base could not be held responsible if groups did not participate in these consultation mechanisms

Vikki said that participant group meetings were not always well attended. Sally said consultation with groups could be improved. Paul Bramwell said that sometimes decisions were taken abruptly and there was not always a proper assessment of the issues. Liz said that any participant group could bring any issue to a participant group meeting.

11 Any other business

1. Ros said it had been a tough year at times and congratulated the Community Base trustees and staff for how they had managed it.
2. Sylvia asked the meeting to join her for refreshments and to view the film made to celebrate Community Base tenth birthday *Welcome to Community Base*.