

Minutes of the annual general meeting of Community Base held on 28th January 1999

Present: Sylvia Alexander-Vine (chair), Bob Cristofoli, Dorothy Engmann, Alan Pratt and Freda Warman-Brown (outgoing trustees), Roisin Murphy (Carers' Centre), Esther Gill (Carousel), Susan Alexander/Alex (Friends, Families and Travellers), Julie Denning (Gender Trust), Angela Goodman and Wendy Horsfield (Lesbian and Gay Community Centre), Jackie King (Money Advice and Community Support), Bert Williams (Mosaic), Amy Lenzo and Clive Pepe (River Ocean Research and Education) and Nicole Dickens (Victim Support Scheme)

In attendance: Colin Chalmers (manager) and Sue Cole (minutes)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Chris Bull and Peter Greig (outgoing trustees), Rough Sleepers Project, St John Ambulance Homeless Service, Sussex Community Internet Project and Clark Brownscombe (auditors)

2 Minutes of the last annual general meeting

The minutes of the last annual general meeting held on 3rd November 1997 were approved as a true record.

3 Matters arising

Roisin Murphy voiced concerns over security within Community Base, in particular the fact that people admitted members of the public through the staff door despite not knowing them. Others voiced similar concerns. Colin Chalmers stated that as Community Base is a semi-public building everyone has to be responsible for not admitting people they do not know and that security arrangements were under constant review.

4 Adoption of accounts for financial year 1997/8

- (a) As Peter Greig the Community Base treasurer was unable to be present, it was suggested that members write to him with any questions or concerns they may have about the Community Base finances. Colin stated that the accounts show Community Base to be a going concern. The adoption of the accounts for 1997/98 was proposed by Bob Cristofoli and seconded by Angela Goodman of LGCC. The accounts were adopted.
- (b) It was agreed that Clark Brownscombe would be reinstated as the Community Base auditors. Bob Cristofoli proposed and Nicole Jenkins seconded the proposal.

5 Election of trustees

Sylvia Alexander-Vine handed over the chair to Colin Chalmers for this item.

It was reported that four valid nominations has been received for membership of the board of trustees. Sylvia Alexander-Vine, Bob Cristofoli, Gwen May and Clive Pepe were unanimously elected to the board of trustees.

6 Maximum number of trustees

A motion restricting the maximum number of trustees to 12 was proposed by Angela Goodman of LGCC and seconded by Alex of FFT. The motion was passed.

7 Signing of cheques

A motion enabling the company secretary to sign cheques on behalf of Community Base was proposed by Roisin Murphy of the Carers Centre and seconded by Alex of FFT. The motion was passed.

8 Chair's report on Community Base activities for 1998

Sylvia Alexander-Vine reported on developments at Community Base over the last year:

"I have six bursting files delineating the development of Community Base. They record the minutes, the negotiations, the hopes, fears and pitfalls since the early days of CB. There were two guiding principles for those of us involved with the establishment of this, in those days, daunting enterprise - the very real need of voluntary groups in Brighton and Hove for safe and accessible office space with a security of tenure and the desirability of voluntary groups working in proximity, in harmony, to share skills, information, conference and meeting rooms, facilities and equipment. Both concepts received an unfair share of ridicule, and those of us at the sharp end were made to feel we were living in never-never land. Indeed, there are still some privateers and parodists taking pot shots.

"But there was also amazing moral and imaginative support from the early days by many in the voluntary community. Dorothy Engman and Roisin Murphy assiduously attended protracted and numerous meetings and became trustees, giving what can only be called valiant service as all trustees have done throughout some difficult times: Nicole Dickens, always there, strong, Rob McClaren, Dave Nicholls, Clive Hewitt, Zosia Koc, David Lovesey and Bob, our Bob Cristofoli. Early interest and unfailing support was shown by John Holmstrom, Mary Blair, Rita Bowman, Keith Braid, Terry Herbert: and among council members and officers councillor Tehm Framrose, our erstwhile chair to whom tribute has not yet been paid by an annual general meeting, and to whom we record our thanks; councillors Lynette Gwyn Jones, Jenny Langston, Freida Warman-Brown, and Alan Pratt; among the officers Paul Bevan, Jo Ley, Steve Lawless. I do not just love lists, I want to name all those who showed faith, but I think I had better stop there at the risk of sounding like the last night of the local am-drams pantomime.

"Buying the building was a leap of faith and only those enjoying the amenities will know whether it was a waste of time. Hiccups, mistakes posing as worldwide, life-threatening disasters have dogged the discomfort of the early days – but then I found Sue Cole, our wonder-woman receptionist/administrative assitant, whose work cannot be faulted and who has the respect of all our participant groups. Colin Chalmers, who is the Community Base Manager, who represents the trust, who has our trust, and as company secretary, provides guidance and ensures board procedures are followed and regularly reviewed. Contrary to some participants' opinion, he is not the odd job man. He and Sue will record your difficulties, and instruct someone to attend to them. Having said that, one would hope that most grown ups in the building would assume responsibility for others' comfort and do what they can to help.

"Colin has taken great strides for all of us in the furtherance of the original goals of Community Base. He is caring about the corporate ideals and is forging a corporate image. He has a clear understanding of the ethos, and imparts this to prospective participants. He has attempted to maximise opportunities for synergy, which is at the heart of all our original intentions. Physical changes effected by Colin have been bright and clear signage, decor, new furniture, health and safety measures, an improved telephone system, fire precautions undertaken and correct signs displayed. The Community Base newsletter was initiated by Colin, who writes and publishes it. It is a necessary and informative tool.

"In April, we examined the role of the trustee/director, putting at the top of our priority qualities list, business acumen and financial expertise. I feel also that previous board experience and committee service is an essential. An awful lot of time is wasted by those attending a meeting who have not read the past minutes or acquainted themselves with the status quo and therefore are not up to speed. There is a very clear need for an understanding and evidential display of successful work in the voluntary sector, but more than that it is stability that is needed. After April we had terms of reference for all the committees, job descriptions and contracts for trustees. The board comprises among others, a veteran of voluntary sector organisations, a director of a local charity, a distinguished

solicitor, the chair of the education committee, the deputy leader of Brighton & Hove Council, an accountant who is the finance officer of a leading national charity...but more importantly the participants, those who the building accommodates, were made company members with voting rights.

"We have struggled with the lack of understanding and/or support of some council departments. We have looked for and not found cooperation from a number of statutory and voluntary bodies - for instance, over something as crucial as safe disabled parking, and disabled access at the rear of the building. We are very well aware that there are integral improvements to be made, and they will be made with your help."

Bob Cristofoli thanked Sylvia for her report and paid tribute to the work that Sylvia has put in to Community Base since its beginning.

9 Any other business

- (a) Alex from Friends, Families and Travellers asked if it would be possible for people to bring dogs into the building. It was agreed to maintain the present policy which does not allow animal into the building other than into the area inside the entrance to The Big Issue office when The Big Issue move in.
- (b) Nicole Jenkins of Victim Support asked if the trustees could reconsider the plan to paint the office doors on the second floor blue as most of the groups on that floor preferred them in natural wood. The chair asked the Community Base manager, Colin Chalmers, to respond. Colin explained that all doors in the building were being painted to a colour scheme that would significantly improve the look of the building, which still looked like an old insurance building, and that a unified colour scheme was part of this refurbishment of the building.
- (c) It was agreed to hold the group participant meetings on the first Tuesday of each month and to use a different groups offices each time. Jackie King of MACS volunteered the MACS offices for the next meeting to be held on Tuesday 2nd March 1999.

The chair closed the meeting and invited everyone to join her in light refreshments.