

Wirral society of the Blind and Partially Sighted

(Charity No 1147170)

(Company Limited by Guarantee No 07982870)

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Held on 4th July 2022 1:30pm

1. OPENING REMARKS

The Chairperson (Ed Lamb) welcomed members and supporters to the 30th Annual General Meeting of the Society. He commented on the pandemic & the unfortunate circumstances that had prevented us from having an AGM in 2020 & 2021. He thanked everyone for all their support getting us through this difficult time & helping us reinstate our services so quickly.

2. ROLL CALL AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

A total of 21 members and supporters were present at the meeting. No proxy nominations had been received.

Present: Ed Lamb (chairperson), Adele Law, John Bolderson, Mike Jones, Alan Brown, Gary Hodgson, Charlotte Simister, Lynne Sedgwick, Alan Smith, Janine Mount, Jo Tudor, Derek Beauchamp, Kit Beauchamp, Sue Hadley, Sally Harvey, Tom Herbert, Maureen Snow, Shelly Roberts, Kelsey Dickman, Steve Mann, Chloe Wood

Apologies had been received from Prof Ian Grierson (Patron), Neil Francis, Helen Pickavance, Elsie Lynch, Peter Lynch, Lynne Martindale, Margaret Farrell, Linda Herbert, Jill Stewart, John Berry, Lynda Sedgwick

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the 2019 Annual General Meeting were agreed.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Sue Hadley raised the issue that she didn't receive a copy of the minutes or the other documentation, prior to the meeting, by email. Apologies were given & the reason for this omission will be investigated. The relevant information will be read out at the meeting & copies sent to Sue via email.

Action – Review the AGM procedures to ensure all members receive the AGM information pack in an appropriate format, prior to the meetings.

Sue Hadley again raised a query regarding publication of minutes from Board meetings. Adele confirmed that she has reviewed the relevant guidance & board meeting minutes do not have to be made public.

Action – Adele will re-check official guidance & confirm to Sue by email.

5. ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT

A Trustees' annual report and financial statement for the year ended 31st March 2022 had been prepared.

- The trustees' annual report was read out by Lynne & the following questions/comments were raised:-
 1. Shelly Roberts raised the issue of her being blind & left on her own on reception. This was acknowledged as not being acceptable & we will ensure this is addressed.

Action – Review office procedures to ensure this situation does not reoccur.

2. Derek Beauchamp - Is Ashville Lodge now dual purpose?

Lynne explained that we are now members of a Community Interest Company (CIC) & in partnership with Merseyside Society for Deaf People (MSDP) to deliver sensory services as part of the CIC contract with Wirral Borough Council (WBC). A requirement of the contract was that MSDP had a base in Wirral, hence their duty officer is now based in Ashville Lodge three days/week.

The Deafblind society also use our facilities for their weekly social group meetings.

Lynne reassured members that WSBPS & MSDP are remaining as separate charities.

- Financial Notes for AGM 2022

2021-2022 - £124k reserves at end March 2022. This is gradually reducing & is currently £112k.

- Reserves are high and, although we are within the agreed 12 months reserves limit, this level has had a negative impact on recent grant applications. However we have funding commitments, which means the balance is reducing each month. Current expenditure means we should be back to only holding 6 months reserves, by October 2022 & will be seeking new grants.

- The pandemic was a difficult time for everyone. We thankfully received crisis grants which enabled us to maintain Ashville Lodge, ensuring repairs to the premises were completed & provide relevant personal protective equipment (PPE) to ensure we could reopen safely.

Below are the questions raised & the responses from the table:-

1. Derek Beauchamp – In relation to our counselling service, who provides it?

- It was explained that we have a qualified counsellor supported by The Eye Fund, which is a charity set up by Carol & Paul Sherry, in memory of their son, to fund raise & support other charities. They primarily fund counselling services.

2. Derek Beauchamp DB – Do rehab or WBC not provide counselling?

- It was explained that they do not provide person centred counselling for VI people and in any case, there is a long waiting list for counselling services. We are experiencing an increase in demand for this service, so one of our priorities will be to seek other sources of funding to cover these costs.

3. Sue Hadley – How are clients referred?

- Main referral routes are via the ECLO or our Advocacy service.

4. Derek Beauchamp – How many staff do we currently have?
 - We have seven permanent members of staff, including the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) who is funded by the NHS. The CIC contract with WBC, includes funding towards staff costs for the low vision aid (LVA), advocacy & braille services.

5. Derek Beauchamp - Have we explored other sources of funding? contracts with WBC to fund staff/services?
 - Yes, part of our strategy is to pursue this, we are in the process of identifying the relevant people to approach. We are small but strong,
 - unique & independent, but it would be good if we were less dependant on grant funding.

6. Sue Hadley – Membership uptake doesn't look good on the accounts?
 - The membership scheme does not contribute a great deal to our finances, plus we did not pursue membership contributions during the pandemic. However we believe it needs to be reviewed & we welcome any suggestions/ideas.

7. Derek Beauchamp – Commented that there shouldn't be a membership scheme.
 - This is an option for consideration, but it would require a change in our constitution

6. STAFF REPORT ON THE SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES

The report was read out by Ed Lamb & he commented that we are in positive exciting times, but with new challenges ahead. There has been a lot to adapt to in a short period of time post-COVID, but believes we will rise to the challenges.

7. APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTORS

Re-election of Adele Law & John Bolderson was endorsed at the meeting with no objections.

Election of two new Director for 3 years – Charlotte Simister & Gary Hodgson – was endorsed with no objections.

The meeting acknowledged the sad passing of Director Teri Holmes in 2020 & the huge contribution she made to WSBPS. We have a summer house in the garden in her memory.

8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

In the absence of any competing nominations the persons named below were elected unopposed to act as officers of the Society for 2022/23

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| i. Chairman | (Edward Lamb) |
| ii. Treasurer | (Adele Law) |

9. Vacancies

Any vacancies will be recruited as deemed necessary.

10. GENERAL QUESTIONS

Below are the questions raised & the responses from the table:-

1. Shelly Roberts commented it's a shame that the charity ball is more for sponsors than members & the awards were given to sponsors & staff.
2. Tom Herbert – Will there be members events?
 - It was explained that the Ball is a fundraising event & 2021 was the first one since the pandemic, so we wanted to recognise the work & commitment of those individuals & groups who had supported us financially or supported our members during lockdown.
 - In future, we will be holding an annual celebration/awards event for members, separate from the Charity Ball.
 - We are holding a Garden Party at Ashville Lodge in July 2022, this is a special joint event with MSDP to launch our new partnership. We would like to again to emphasise, WSBPS & MSDP are not merging into a single charity.

Sue Hadley, on behalf of the members, thanked the Directors & staff for keeping the charity going during the last 2 years.

The chairperson thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 2:15 p.m.