

Minutes of the 41st Annual General Meeting held at Amber House, Bracknell on 21st July 2011

The AGM of Age Concern Bracknell Forest was called to order at 12:40 pm on 21st July 2011 at Amber House, Bracknell by Bob Pennell, Chairman.

1. Members Present

Mr Bob Pennell	Chair
Mr Allan Emmett	Vice-chair
Mr John Tobin	Treasurer
Mrs Eve Marshall	Trustee
Mrs Janet Thomas	Trustee
Cllr Mr Clifford Thompson	Bracknell Forest BC
Ms Chris Cowap	Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action
Mrs Clair Harris	Berkshire NHS
Cllr Mrs Roberta Kaye	Winkfield Parish
Mrs Cheryl Spence	Bracknell & Wokingham College

Attending

Cllr Chris Turrell	Mayor of the Borough of Bracknell Forest
Ms Diana Hemfrey	Mayoress of the Borough of Bracknell Forest
Cllr Mrs Gill Birch	Mayor of Bracknell Town
Mrs Kim Dawson	Day Centre Manager
Mrs Coral Mist	volunteer
Mrs Betty Menon	
Mrs Freda Crookall	

Apologies

Mrs Diane Goodchild	Trustee
Cllr Mrs Adrienne Jones	Bracknell Town Council
Mrs Sue Collins	Retired Day Centre Manager
Mr Stan Saitch	volunteer

2. Chairman's Opening Remarks

Bob welcomed the members, trustees and honoured guests present and thanked them for attending. He was honoured to welcome the Mayor and Mayoress of the Borough of Bracknell Forest and the Mayor of Bracknell Town.

He wished to extend thanks to all supporters because in his short association with the charity he had been rewarded by the enthusiasm of staff and volunteers and the sheer amount of support and goodwill shown by the community.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the 40th AGM had been noted by the General Meeting 9 December 2010. These were duly approved.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Chief Executive Officer, Mrs Sarah Frenett' had resigned in February and a new appointment was planned to be made in September. Meanwhile, Bob had been acting as Chief Officer in order to develop management systems, and for trustees to gain a clearer understanding of the required role.

Sue Collins had retired at the end of May. She was unable to attend but had written to say how much she had enjoyed working with the enthusiastic and irreplaceable volunteers at the Day Centre. She said the service had developed considerably to meet the challenge of greater client needs and at the point of her retirement she felt the staff were well established to cope with the future and wished us the very best.

Bob said that the character and effectiveness of the Day Centre owed much to Sue and he moved a vote of thanks for her contribution. This was seconded by Allan Emmett and approved by all.

5. Annual Report

The statutory annual report and accounts had been prepared and were distributed to members present. The accounts are always for the charity year ending on March 31 and this year the written annual report had been aligned to refer to that same period, i.e. not including progress up to the date of this AGM.

Thanks were due to Mrs Kerry Edwards who continued to run the payroll after her resignation at the last AGM, until she handed over files to Mr John Tobin who was appointed treasurer in December.

In acting as Chief Officer, Bob had found that administration had been disrupted by provision of a regular advice service. Until more effective processes and funding were established there was insufficient space, phones and supervision to operate a regular information and advice service. The trustees had found no option but to reluctantly make Jo Wigmore redundant in June.

"Age Concern" is well known as a first point of call for elderly people, therefore the telephone answering service was continued on an ad-hoc basis. However, insurance queries and leaflet distribution are referred to Age UK Berkshire, which was also given local information to enable a back-up service. Thanks to the additional time that Janet had spent in the office, we were still handling as many calls as ever, but with reduced disruption we have been able to make accounting and other processes more efficient.

In preparation for Sue Collins' retirement, she had opted to work shorter hours and hand over responsibilities to Kim Dawson. Kim had progressed very rapidly and was now fully responsible as Manager of the Day Centre.

Bob was pleased to note that team working and administration had continued to improve throughout; and in this context, thanks were due to Mrs Cheryl Spence who was acting as trainer and mentor to the Day Centre Staff.

Bob was also pleased to report that Bracknell Forest had provided the same level of grant again this year, and it was now specific to the work of the Day Centre.

Nina Cardrick had recently resigned her job as carer/escort/relief driver and Lesley Memmott had joined in her place.

Kim Dawson said she was working closely with families and professionals such as the CMHT; and the service was running effectively. It was currently at 90% capacity but with no waiting list. She was grateful for the invaluable help of Day Centre volunteers.

The toenail cutting service continued to be effective and fully subscribed. Bob was pleased to report that the East Berks PCT had confirmed that they will continue to provide a grant to support it.

Bob thanked Janet Thomas for organising a very successful series of outings this year. Janet said that the six outings had all been more successful than the previous year, and it was pleasing that new people had participated. She felt this was largely due to early announcement of the programme.

Bob was grateful to the Coppid Beech Hotel for sponsoring the annual Care Day, and to John Oblein of Bracknell Community Police as the key speaker. It was hoped that the event would take place again this year. The Mayor, Cllr Gill Birch hoped that the event would take place again because it was a wonderful day out for the old people.

The annual Spring Walk was blessed with good weather this year. It was again supported mainly by the Warfield Brownies and fortunately this beautiful section of Swinley Park had been unaffected by the forest fires. Our arrangements were not well timed for the Brownies but Bob was very grateful to Debbie Warner for her help in rescuing the event and to John Grant for preparing the circuit. We had learned from the experience and already fixed the date, May 13th, for the 2012 event.

The Day Centre members enjoy constructing scarecrows for Ascot week, which are kindly displayed outside her house by our previous chair, Barbara Knight. Their added fun this year was to dress one to represent the mayor – and a visit by the mayor and mayoress to inspect their efforts. In 2010, our charity was selected to receive £1500 from the Locks Ride Committee. This year they selected other worthy causes but contributed £200 to us in recognition of the standard of our entry.

6. Financial Report and Accounts

Financial performance was much better than last year. The future had looked bleak until the council helped us to get a rescue grant of £25,000 from Berkshire NHS Community Trust. Bob was grateful to the director David Townsend for approving that grant and to the Community Mental Health Team for their ongoing approval of our Day Care facilities. This intervention had enabled us to survive the year, reduce the cost base, and develop effective in-house management accounting.

John Tobin said had been appointed as Treasurer in December and had reviewed the accounts in January to find that the year end forecast was better than previously predicted. This was further improved by year end because of the staff reductions. He noted that some essential refurbishment of the Day Centre had been deferred, and that reserves were not yet sufficient to replace the minibus when necessary, or in case of unforeseen changes in trading conditions.

John was grateful to BFC for providing a grant to support Day Centre operations for the year 2011-12.

Cllr Cliff Thompson asked why the amount of charitable trading was much lower than the previous year. Bob said that the difference was that we had discontinued arranged holidays because the benefits to a small number of users had been outweighed by the amount of management effort and financial risk involved. More generally, the format of annual accounts has to be maintained for consistent reporting but it does tend to mask operational details which will be clearer in the new management accounts.

7. The Year Ahead

Bob said that the charity faces two critical issues this year, being: the offer to be a friend of Age UK; and the full impact of personalisation. It would also be necessary to attract donations for the essential refurbishment of the flooring, central heating and water supply, toilets and PC systems.

He was still acting as Chief Officer but the administration was now sufficiently in order to recruit a replacement in September.

The trustees had been ambitious to “re-launch” the charity in order to contribute more to the local community. They were honoured and delighted that the Mayor, Cllr Turrell had selected Age Concern Bracknell Forest for his charity at this crucial time, because his presence will provide a focus to address all of these challenges.

The Mayor Cllr Chris Turrell said that Age Concern was an important local charity and he was pleased to have us as the Mayor’s Charity. The “Tea with the Mayor” event at Easthampstead Park had been a good kick-off, and forthcoming events were a collection in the town centre on August 6th and a charity meal at the Real China restaurant on September 26th.

On the issue of personalisation, Bob was in ongoing discussion with BFC. He was confident that our service provides best value for moderate dementia sufferers. However if there were no council grant or bulk purchase, fees would need to increase to cover the true cost of the service. In that case, some people might fail to get the care they need to prolong their ability to live outside of residential care. This would include dementia sufferers who are self-funding, or have not yet been awarded a personal budget, or do not understand the beneficial effect of social stimulation.

Therefore the issues to be addressed were:

- Informed choice for dementia sufferers
- Value based fees for the various care options
- Affordability
- Evolving needs for dementia sufferers
- Exclusion, including process delays

Age UK was formed in 2009 as a merger between Age Concern England and Help the Aged. It is claimed that half of the local Age Concerns had signed up to adopt the Age UK brand – although Age Concern Berkshire was the only one of our six neighbouring Age Concerns to do so. The remaining local charities including ourselves had the offer to become “friends of Age UK”. October 2011 was the “deadline” for this offer but dates have now been relaxed. At least seventeen Age Concerns have already declared their independence.

After lengthy discussions and study of documents and press reports, the trustees recommend that it is not in the best interests of Age Concern Bracknell Forest to accept this offer and our objects are best addressed independently of Age UK. These findings are summarised in a letter distributed to attendees and the decision whether or not to accept the offer will be taken by the General Meeting on September 27th.

Bob said that the Age UK issue had already existed when he joined, but the priority had necessarily been to put our own affairs in order. If we leave Age UK, we will not have rights to use the existing logo and they had implied a threat that we would not be able to keep our registered name. However the latter is a more complex legal issue and we do not intend to change our name unless this is enforced. Age UK seem unable to appreciate the harm they have caused whether or not we become a friend. It was ironic that, at a time when we have had to cut back on information and advice, we have to deal with new enquiries and complaints created by Age UK’s promotions; and it was presumptuous on the part of Age UK to assume we would do so at our cost.

Attendees generally felt that the purely local focus of our activities should be preserved even if that required us to change our name.

8. Election of Trustees

The current trustees are

Mr Bob Pennell	Chair
Mr Allan Emmett	Vice-Chair
Mr John Tobin	Treasurer (appointed 21 Dec 2010)
Mrs Eve Marshall	
Mrs Diane Goodchild	(elected 9 Dec 2010)
Mrs Janet Thomas	(elected 9 Dec 2010)

Revd Jane Manley had resigned with effect from July 7th because she will be taking up a position in another parish.

a. Re-election of Honorary Officers under clause 6c of the Constitution.

John Tobin proposed and Cliff Thompson seconded the re-election of Mr Bob Pennell as Chair. The motion was carried.

John Tobin proposed and Cliff Thompson seconded the re-election of Mr Allan Emmett as Vice-Chair. The motion was carried.

Allan Emmett proposed and Cliff Thompson seconded the re-election of Mr John Tobin as Treasurer. The motion was carried.

b. Re-election of Executive Committee Members under clause 5c of the Constitution.

Cliff Thompson proposed and John Tobin seconded the re-election of Mrs Eve Marshall. The motion was carried.

9. Any Other Business

The next General Meeting would take place at 12:30 on Tuesday 27th September. The agenda will include the Age UK decision and the schedule for future meetings. Evening meetings should be considered if members find it more difficult to attend at lunchtime.

The meeting closed at 13:45.