

General Meeting No 40/1 – 9 December 2010 Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action, Board Room

Present: Mr Bob Pennell *Chair*, Mr Allan Emmett *Vice-chair*, Mrs Eve Marshall *trustee*, Mrs Sarah Frenett *CEO*; Cllr Adrienne Jones *BTC*, Cllr Cliff Thompson *BFBC*, Mrs Cheryl Spence, Mrs Janet Thomas, Mrs Clair Harris, Mrs Chris Cowap

Apologies: Revd Jane Manley *trustee*, Cllr Roberta Kaye *WPC*, Mrs Kerry Edwards, Mr Martin Gilman, Mrs Diane Goodchild

1 Opening remarks

Bob called the meeting to order and thanked the members present for their participation. The agenda had been amended two days prior to the meeting for the election of new trustees, which would follow the formal approval of amendments to the constitution, and precede an update on progress since the AGM and an open discussion of future activities.

As advised by email, the minutes of meetings and detailed proposal to amend the constitution were published on the www.ageconcernbracknell.org.uk website. Paper copies were also distributed in the meeting. Bob felt that this use of internet saves costs and would also assist reference to earlier records.

2 Approval of minutes

The minutes of “General Meeting No 39/1 – 8 July 2010” were approved with one deletion. These will be amended and published on the website.

The meeting had no matters arising.

The minutes of the 40th AGM, held 26th August were circulated for comment and were noted with a small change to members attending; for formal approval at the next AGM.

The meeting had no matters arising.

3 Register of Members

The charity now maintains a register of members. The names of the 15 current members were displayed and noted by those present. Bob asked members to inform the office of any corrections, additions, and contact details including email address.

4 Changes to the Constitution

Substantial changes had been detailed on the website and referenced in the calling notice. These were needed for two reasons:

- To replace ambiguous and cumbersome wording which had been a source of confusion for trustees, and
- To improve efficiency, by utilising modern methods of banking and electronic communications.

In answer to a query, Bob confirmed that these were changes that could be effected by the members without prior approval of the Charity Commission. It required a two-thirds vote of those present and would constitute more than one third of those entitled to vote.

The amendments had been arranged under ten reasons for change, each with reference to the clauses affected. The amended clauses were described in an annotated copy of the constitution with new text in colour and deleted text enclosed in 'balloons'.

Cllr Thompson proposed that it was not necessary to go through the changes 'piecemeal', nor to try to achieve perfection, because a further iteration could be made if and when additional improvements were identified. This was generally agreed.

Bob thereby presented slides proposing refinements to the published wording for clause 11(d) concerning banking provisions and the addition of a clause 7(j) to define the quorum for meetings of the Executive Committee.

Cllr Thompson proposed a refinement to the wording of clause 7(d) to include casual vacancies in the Honorary Officers of the Charity.

The proposed amendments as published, together with the said refinements, were unanimously approved by the members present and thereby took immediate effect.

5. Election of Trustees

Four persons had come forward to offer their services as trustees. Two trustees were already elected under clause 7(b)(ii) of the new constitution and three more trustees could be elected under this clause. The Executive Committee has the power to appoint to fill casual vacancies under clause 7(d) of the new constitution.

Accordingly, Bob Pennell proposed and Allan Emmett seconded to appoint Mrs Kerry Edwards for the casual vacancy of Honorary Treasurer. However, Mrs Eve Marshall being the only other Trustee present and entitled to vote expressed strong reservations about this appointment because of past experience. In the event that this forum was not a properly convened meeting of the Executive Committee the proposal was not carried and the issue would be referred to the Executive Committee.

Under clause 7(b)(ii)

- Allan Emmett proposed and Sarah Frenett seconded the election of Mrs Janet Thomas as Trustee. Carried unanimously.
- Bob Pennell proposed and Janet Thomas seconded the election of Cllr Mrs Roberta Kaye as Trustee. Carried unanimously.
- Eve Marshall proposed and Allan Emmett seconded the election of Mrs Diane Goodchild as Trustee. Carried unanimously.

In view of issues at hand, it was urgent that Bob should convene a meeting including the old and new trustees prior to his January holiday. There was some discussion of venue but confusion over dates.

6. Progress update

Bob reported that he had only been in the UK for three weeks since the AGM due to foreign travel that had been noted when he was appointed. Nonetheless he had:

- Compiled these essential amendments to the Constitution
- Initiated progress meetings based on a joint work plan with the CEO.
- Worked with Sarah on documents for the Day Centre
- Worked with Janet to create a bespoke database of Client Records

Sarah described the work of the charity since the AGM.

- The program of outings had been completed. Seven were planned instead of the traditional four but subject to each one achieving break-even sales. This was a trial that failed possibly because of insufficient advance notice, but the last four outings were fully sold out and a total 83 clients benefitted.
Trips have already been identified for 2011 and announced at the Care Day. Three clients have expressed interest.
Eve queried whether multiple pick-ups and drops could be arranged for future trips
- An Autumn Fair had been organised at the Forest Park Community Centre. This raised a useful £300, cleared accumulated jumble, and generated good PR.
- 248 of our clients attended the annual Care Day at Coppid Beech Hotel on 29 Nov. We are grateful once more to the hotel and Thames Valley Police for mounting this prestigious and enjoyable event.
- The distribution of Christmas hampers was not organised this year for various reasons – cost; difficulty of identifying those who would benefit most; and overlap with the Kerith Centre food bank. However, above all, we hope to identify a better alternative early in the new year.

- We took advantage of the Care Day to survey clients about the services they need from us and 60% identified information and advice. Essentially we provide signposting and want to broaden reach beyond Thursday sessions at the Lookin.

7. Future activities and funding

This was a free round table discussion of issues.

What are the needs of the old people of Bracknell? Should ACBF play a co-ordinating role? It was felt that there are already a number of forums and the most suitable place to identify if there are gaps in what is provided is the Older People's Partnership which Sarah already attends.

Can we identify any revenue earning activities such as the supply of services: at a profit but much cheaper than commercial alternatives? None were actually identified but Cliff offered that there is no harm in making a profit.

There was considerable but inconclusive discussion on funding and personalisation. It is not generally known to the voluntary sector what impact government cuts will have on BFBC grants. It is difficult to plan the provision of Day Care with so much uncertainty about funding and perceived values but it is unlikely anyone will be able to offer fees in the region of £8.50 per day. Personalisation will continue to phase in during the next year. It was thought that referrals from social services will associate a personal budget and referrals from the mental health team will not. There is a real threat of exclusion for clients/carers who need day care but do not pass means-test criteria.

Age UK is still an open issue. Sarah and Bob had met with Age UK Reading to explore options. The options are branded partner, friend, or independent. Reading had opted to be a branded partner, which is appropriate for the larger ACs. Slough, however, has gone independent. For Bracknell, the choice is quite clearly to be a friend of Age UK or an independent charity. It may well come down to branding. This is an issue the trustees need to debate carefully.

Sarah reported that Age UK had created brand confusion, for example we have received cheques written to Age UK and the Christmas cards we sell are branded Age UK. Cliff suggested we should inform and educate local solicitors, accountants, banks etc to confirm if their clients intend payments and legacies to the local charity.

9. Future Meetings

Meetings are scheduled for February 24th and May 6th.

The consensus was that lunchtime (12:15 to 12:30) is the favoured start time for general meetings including the AGM, and July is preferred to August for the AGM