

## General Meeting No 41/2 – 29 May 2012 BFVA Board Room at 12:30 pm

**Present:** Mr Bob Pennell *Chair*, Mr Allan Emmett *Vice-chair*, Cllr Cliff Thompson *Trustee*, Cllr Mrs Adrienne Jones, Ms Karen White, Ms Chris Cowap, Mrs Tracey Hedgecox *CO*

**Apologies:** Cllr Mrs Roberta Kaye, Mrs Cheryl Spence, Mrs Clair Harris, Mrs Coral Mist

### 1 Opening remarks

Bob thanked all for attending. Because of extraordinary events, he had failed to call a meeting in February and this meeting was called at short notice as explained in the email, Appendix A.

He introduced Tracey Hedgecox and welcomed her as a Member of the charity.

### 2 Minutes and matters arising

The minutes of General Meeting 25 October were approved as read. They had been distributed by email and published on the web site.

#### **Matters arising**

Bob commented on progress of various items discussed at the previous meeting:

**Age UK.** Due to pressure of events, Bob had not yet rejected the offer to be a friend of Age UK but the deadline had been extended to end July 2012. However, the trustees now felt that circumstances had changed considerably in the last year and on balance it may be in the best interests of the charity to accept the offer.

They had met with Age UK reps on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> to discuss the benefits and obligations or constraints that would apply and had been informed that there was a revised agreement that should be more acceptable. They would carefully review terms and report their findings in good time to enable members to ratify a decision at the AGM.

The trustees did not intend sale of products such as insurance for which Friends earn a tiny one-off commission and no renewals - but Christmas cards might be considered.

Cliff added that "Friends" can claim a proportion of any legacies left to Age Concern within their postcodes.

**Information:** Since Tracey joined we do have 9am to 1pm phone cover. But information and signposting still needs addressing.

**Computers and phones:** Switching to O2 has saved £2000 p.a.

**Outings:** The outings programme was cancelled and is under review.

**Incorporation:** The incorporation process has not yet been started. It is more complex than originally understood. Trustees need to review options. Chris thought it inadvisable to await CIO legislation. Cliff noted that the need to re-appoint holding trustees was even more urgent.

**Christmas card design:** We had printed our own based on a painting of robins by Allan's wife and a Lily Hill Park photo taken by the Mayor. We broke even on sales, gave 1250 cards to attendees of CARE day and have stock left over for sale in 2012.

**Bathrooms:** work has been completed to replace the bath with a wet room shower, install an additional WC and replace and re-site 2 others. Karen would arrange for the CMHT Occupational Therapist, Gemma Gregory, to visit in order to advise on finishing touches and discuss possible use by third parties.

**Sponsored swim:** This had been over-ambitious in the time scales and was cancelled.

**CARE Day** This was very successful again. It should be noted that it takes a whole morning to arrange every ten attendees, so as usual this took 25 days of office work, mainly volunteered by Janet.

**Christmas raffle:** Kim's Christmas raffle raised £300.

**Open Day:** Was very successful thanks to Tracey's efforts and an increased number of stands including CAB. Noting Eve's comments, we utilised two rooms at Coopers Hill.

**The Grand Fete** had been cancelled. Allan said that it would have competed with other events planned for that bank holiday. Those present believed it would be more appropriate to take a stand at various other events such as Warfield Fete on June 9<sup>th</sup> and Ascot Fair in August.

**The Spring Walk** was successful and enjoyable thanks to the efforts of Tracey, the staff and volunteers, the Mayor and Mayoress, and four units of Brownies

**Window panels and blinds** were duly replaced as identified by Kim. Adrienne noted that the Town Council would consider grants for this kind of project but please avoid repeated applications for the same thing which had been very embarrassing for her.

### 3 Financial report

Bob presented the year end balance, Appendix B. Operating surplus had increased by nearly £9,000 since the October meeting mainly due to the delay in recruiting new staff. Day Centre utilisation was up which had increased fees but also costs. Donations and fundraising had increased and more had been spent on refurbishments. The surplus is badly needed to shore up reserves and provide for minibus replacement.

Bob then presented the first draft of a budget for 2012. This does include contingencies and provides a small operating surplus, which is in fact 1.8% if we ignore the windfall mayor's charity donation. A three year plan is needed to reflect possible changes in the funding basis.

### 4 Role of Chief Officer

Bob wished to reflect on the role of Chief Officer because it is key to the success of the charity.

The role is hard to define in terms of tasks. It is a set of responsibilities to execute day to day operation of the charity on behalf of the trustees and there are no technical support staff for the various admin functions. He had needed to develop a management accounting system and other computerised processes to improve operational effectiveness and make the job viable once more. He had avoided personally answering telephone queries, which proved to be too disruptive.

The three key lessons Bob identified were:

- Take care to do things right first time. Financial transactions and staff matters that had not been dealt with promptly with the CO properly informed, wasted a disproportionate amount of time.

- Exercise good judgement on where to compromise because there is never enough resource to do everything perfectly. A second opinion from reliable staff or trustees is often essential.
- Prioritise. Desirable and seemingly important and urgent issues constantly arise. New ideas and the desire to extend services have to be balanced with existing quality control.

It was felt that third parties had been confused by the chair person acting as Chief Officer.

**Action** Bob to clarify the distinction in roles at the forthcoming AGM.

Tracey had recently worked for Wokingham Volunteer Centre where she had successfully managed the mobility scooters project. Her first task at Age Concern had been at short notice to complete the arrangements and manage the Open Day event. She noted that the social aspect seemed just as important to attendees as the information provision. Much interest was expressed in coach trips but these had been postponed pending a full risk assessment. She completed the arrangements for the Spring Walk but despite her efforts no groups other than the Brownies had participated. Bob noted that there were twice as many walkers as the previous year including far more adults from the local community.

She had found the information service was important and was producing FAQs for volunteers and staff to give consistent responses. Very often we are able to use the internet to find information for elderly people who are otherwise disadvantaged. It was necessary to check where calls came from because Age UK refer people from outside our area. One service that was frequently requested was painting and decorating the home.

In future she hoped we could reach more isolated and vulnerable people who may be struggling to make do and not be getting the material help they deserve. Many have a "war baby" mentality and are reluctant to ask for help. It would be good to attend more information giving events including of course the Ascot Retirement Fair.

## 5 AOB and Next Meeting

There is no signage outside the Day Centre. This may have been a planning restriction or a matter of objection by neighbours. It was felt that a small name plate may be helpful. **Action** Bob to enquire if planning have any constraints. (Barry Francis, CO Property, may be able to advise)

Whereas we refer the handyman service operated by Age UK Berks or BFVA's domestic support; a recurring request by elderly people was for painting and decorating which is not covered.

Christmas hampers were not distributed for the last two years, nor intended this year. A problem was to identify people who would benefit most. There isolated people who benefitted not so much from the need of a food parcel but to know that someone cares. It was really a need for social contact which had once been addressed by lunch clubs.

Chris asked if there was any conflict of interest for a BFC Councillor to act as Trustee. There is not. Cliff has much to offer the charity and in the unlikely event that a conflict of interest arose Cliff would be excused from those particular discussions.

The AGM would be held on July 18<sup>th</sup>.

This meeting closed at 2:05 pm.

## **Appendix A – Calling note of 17th May**

I was to call a meeting in February but that was overtaken by events and therefore I want to update you on significant progress. In brief:

The Day Centre has gone from strength to strength and much thanks is due to Cheryl for training and supervising the staff. We spent £13,000 on refurbishment last year and expect to spend more this year to redecorate and replace the (original) boiler. Also the minibus is seven years old and last year it cost £3,200 for repairs and maintenance - so that is also on the horizon.

As a result of improved cost-effectiveness and staff restructure we have reduced the cost base by about £16,000 per year.

In addition, Janet Thomas and I worked long hours to save a further £18,000 from the salary bill, and we ended the year with a £26,000 cash surplus, which can bolster up the reserves for refurbishment and minibus replacement.

I have now computerised client records, billing, accounts and toenail bookings and started to introduce a server based network. So far we spent £510 on hardware and utilised software donated by Microsoft, valued at \$2,300. Further work is needed to upgrade the server and integrate the applications to increase benefits. BTC gave a grant of £750 which will enable that.

The first quarter this year was horrendous. Eve Marshall passed away on January 1st and is sadly missed not least because her past knowledge and persistence were a steadying influence on our affairs. Our newly appointed CO left on January 13th because she was not able to cope with the stresses of the job. A new administrator joined on February 13th but only stayed for one week. Diane, Janet and John resigned on February 23rd leaving myself and Allan as the only two remaining trustees. I'm sorry that events were too pressing to hold a meeting in February as we had intended.

BUT. Tracey Hedgecox took on the post of administrator on April 2nd and has made a magnificent start with a very successful Open Day and Spring Walk. She is now acting Chief Officer and we are discussing additional objectives. Cliff has agreed to be appointed trustee representing BFC and I am sure you will agree his experience and judgement will be invaluable.

Chris Turrell ended his term of office yesterday and we have started 2012-13 with the added bonus of a £16,000 donation from the Mayor's Charity. I hope we can deploy our new strengths to best effect and maybe bring together and involve more of the people and groups who benefit the elderly of Bracknell Forest.