

## **Minutes of the 2022 Annual General Meeting**



**Meeting Held: Monday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

**Time 6.00pm to 6.50pm**

**PRESENT: Keith Siseman, Zoreen Hill, Becci Murray(BM), Ian Guthrie(IG), Mike Greener, Mike Crawford, Joan Montgomery, David Purvis, Becki Cooper, Catherine Handley, Martin Laidler, Joanne Douglas, Sarah Ponton, Flora Simpson, Rowena Redgwell and Paul Barrett.**

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies were received from David Harper, Colette Harper and Georgina Hill.

### **WELCOME**

In the absence of the Chair David Harper it was agreed that Keith Siseman the Vice Chair would chair the meeting. Keith welcomed everyone and advised that he felt the Trust was having a real impact in the town and developing good relationships with many partners as well as looking at innovative ideas on future developments. He particularly highlighted the Food Bank service as a real asset and the help it gave to so many people. He was also excited about future developments on the Quayside and the key presence the Trust has in the area with its acquisition of the Lookout cafe.

### **MINUTES**

The minutes for the previous year's Annual General Meeting held on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2022 were circulated at the meeting and it was agreed that they were a true record. The only matters raised were that in view of the new accounting system being introduced it was agreed to continue to use JH Greenwood & Co for accountancy support and BM confirmed that the defibrillator outside the William Elder Building was now operational.

### **ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR TO 31<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2022**

Ian Guthrie(IG) was introduced by the Chair who explained that Ian would be retiring next month after 15 years service with the Trust. He was thanked for his work during this period. IG spoke to the accounts and he advised that a full set were available at the meeting and also available to be sent to anyone who requested them. Copies of the three key pages ie the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet and the Resources by Activity were given to all attendees.

IG confirmed that the Trust's accounting system had moved from Sage to Quickbooks at the start of the year. This move had went well and thanks were due to JH Greenwood & Co. for their initial support in the implementation and to Joanne Douglas for her day to day work and understanding of how the system works. IG then explained that a budget for core income and expenditure was prepared at the start of the financial year and this was reviewed during the year to reflect any ongoing changes. Each Board meeting considers a standard item on budget monitoring when the

profiled budget is compared with the actual income/expenditure to the same date. This enables any problems to be identified quickly and remedial action, if necessary, to be taken. Finance and financial control are therefore a key priority in the successful running of the Trust's affairs.

IG explained that the accounts for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022 showed that the total unrestricted balances at the year end were £929k compared with £930k at the start of the year. Similarly the designated balances at the year end were £191k compared with £201k at the start of the year. The restricted balances at the year end were £329k compared with £333k at the start of the year.

The following points were made on the figures

- The Trust had acquired the Lookout cafe on the Quayside during the year which resulted in an increase in the fixed assets but also enabled rental income to be obtained from the property
- The previous Welcome Visitor tourism project which had been fully externally funded ended on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. It was agreed that the Trust would create a new tourism post to benefit the offer to local businesses, tourist attractions, festivals and community groups. This was fully funded externally through a payment from the Town Council and other external funding.
- The Here For You service was partly funded by external grant money with the residual cost being met from Trust funds.
- The Food Bank use had increased during the year due largely to inflationary and energy price cost increases. This however had been matched by increased donations of both food and cash from a variety of sources. IG felt that the food bank was an exemplary model where those in need can get help and support but those in a position to help do so for the benefit of these people.
- The William Elder Building continues to be well used and appreciated by both the long term tenants and the casual users and provides a vital source of revenue for the Trust.
- As a result of the increasing interest rates available on cash balances held by the Trust it was agreed that a Flagstone Account would be opened to maximise the potential income from this source. This has proved very successful but of course is tempered by the knowledge that inflationary factors do diminish the true value of cash balances.
- IG thanked JH Greenwood & Co. for their work in preparing the final accounts in a format suitable for submission to both the Charity Commission and Companies House and for their independent examination of the accounts. He thanked all the staff and Board members for their help and support on a whole range of issues and he particularly thanked Joanne Douglas for her work during the year.

There were no questions asked on the accounts and they were formally adopted by the meeting.

#### **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER AND ACCOUNTANCY SUPPORT**

IG advised that he was very satisfied with the service provided to the Trust by J H Greenwood & Co. and that they had indicated that they were prepared to continue to provide accountancy support for the current year. It was agreed that J H Greenwood & Co. be appointed and it was important that this continuity continued in view of IG's impending retirement.

#### **APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES**

Of the current Trustees John Fisher and David Purvis were due to stand for re-election. They had both expressed a willingness to continue to stand and they were duly re-elected..

## **REVIEW OF THE TRUST'S WORK**

The Chair asked BM to give a review of the Trust's work during the year and to update on current plans. BM shared a sequence of captions to illustrate the variety and nature of the work currently being undertaken.

- The variety of casual users who hire rooms within the building were illustrated and the building continues to be extremely well used and appreciated.
- The Here For You service had 1158 appointments on a variety of subjects including employment support, budgeting, benefit checks and general support and signposting.
- The Food Bank had supported 1528 people during the year. This support is absolutely vital to these people but the service offers much more than food parcels. The service works closely with Here for You to give clients a wide range of help and advice to enable them to better manage the financial situation they are in.
- The Family Hub Children's Centre continues to be partially staffed by our employees and provides a key service to families with young children. It also works in partnership with the Seed to Fork Nursery Growers where the young children are encouraged to grow plants in a community garden.
- The Castlegate Community Garden offers a range of free fruit/vegetables to passers by but volunteers are desperately needed to keep the garden under control and tidy.
- The Young Carers project is externally funded and gives the carers an opportunity to have some structured time away from their caring duties. It fulfils a key role for these people.
- The telescope has finally been installed at Spittal promenade and is seen as a novelty attraction which will produce a limited source of income. Thanks go to Fabvent and the Town Council in helping for this to be operational.
- The Beach Wheelchair project is progressing well and is being operated in partnership with Beach Access North East who have wide experience in operating these systems. The funding is now in place and a trial run of the wheelchairs has been held. Volunteers to operate the system are also in place but more are needed. Whilst there is not anticipated to be wide use of the facility it is of immense benefit to those who do use it.
- The Trust, along with the Town Team, have supported the Serendipity shop for many years in their premises at 40 Marygate. They vacated these premises earlier this year and we have been helping them to find alternative accommodation at 1/3 Marygate. They are delighted with their new premises and operating successfully.
- As reported earlier the Trust acquired the Lookout in March 2022. It is currently tenanted and is a very popular place with both locals and tourists. The railings on the viewing area above the cafe at the end of the Old Bridge are needing some attention and this is being dealt with.
- Finding a use for the Old Brewery continues to be a problem. A number of potential uses have been looked at but none have yet materialised. There is currently some interest in using the premises by creative artists but exploration of this option is at a very early stage.
- The CoRe Legacy Fund continues to be accessed by local community and charitable organisations to help fund energy saving projects they are developing.
- The Trust staff are regularly involved in a wide variety of advisory and fact finding tasks all with the common aim of making the town and district a better place.
- The tourism post is tasked with promoting Berwick as a tourist destination through various networking opportunities and through the visitberwick website. The role also has a spin off for local people, businesses and local festivals. Freya Herriott has just left the post and Becki Cooper has been appointed and will fill the role from November onwards.

- The flower barrels along the Quayside are in poor condition and are needing to be replaced. Funding opportunities are being explored.
- There are a number of confidential projects currently being explored but as they are at the very early stages of consideration it is not appropriate to expand on these at this time. BM however indicated that a review of the operation of the food bank to give recipients wider choice is something which will be considered.

Finally, on behalf of the staff, BM thanked the Trustees for the time they devoted to the Trust and for their listening to, and consideration of, the various ideas submitted to them for consideration.

#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no matters raised but Paul Barrett did express his thanks for all the work the Trust does for the town.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6-50pm