

## Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting



**Meeting Held: Monday 12<sup>th</sup> August 2024**

**Time 6.00pm to 6.45pm**

**PRESENT: David Harper (Chair), Keith Siseman (Vice Chair), Becci Murray (BM), Joanne Douglas (JD), Mike Crawford, Joan Montgomery, Sarah Ponton, Liberty Holloway, Colette Harper, John Fisher, Julie Kennedy, Lucy Hodgson and Cllr Gary Smith.**

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies were received from David Purvis, Mike Greener, Catherine Handley, Mark McLeman, Paul Barrett and belated apologies from Jo Hart and Dan Inglis.

### **WELCOME**

David Harper welcomed everyone extended his thanks for the hard work by the staff team. Fellow Trustees joined David Harper in thanking the team for their work over the past year.

### **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. There were no matters arising.

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

David thanked JD for presenting the financial reports which he felt were very clear and concise. JD thanked David and the Trustees for their support since coming into post. She also thanked J H Greenwood & Co accountants for their support and guidance over the last 12 months.

JD informed the meeting that regular monthly reports are provided to the Board of Trustees to ensure that the finances received appropriate oversight.

JD explained the headline figures in the papers she provided, breaking the figures down to cash at bank, fixed assets and designated/restricted funds. She also mentioned that the Trust runs at a deficit each year. David Harper informed the meeting that the deficit was reducing year on year and that the available funds are being used wisely in order to address the deficit and generate additional revenue streams.

JD mentioned the William Elder Building (WEB) as a primary income source, she thanked Sarah Ponton for her hard work in running the WEB bookings.

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

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

JD 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.

## **APPOINTMENT OF TRUSTEES**

Of the current Trustees Joan Montgomery, Catherine Handley and Mike Crawford were due to stand for re-election. Catherine Handley had tendered her resignation from the Board due to other commitments. David thanked Catherine in her absence for her contribution. Joan and Mike had both expressed a willingness to continue to stand and they were duly re-elected.

Lucy Hodgson has attended as an observer at a Trustee meeting and expressed an interest in becoming a Trustee. Lucy was duly voted onto the Board of Trustees.

## **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 slides to illustrate the variety and nature of the work currently being undertaken.

**Here for You** – numbers of appointments and jobs attained were presented, all staff except Liberty have now had updated Welfare Benefits training to ensure up to date advice and guidance. Here for You provides benefit advice and application support, CV writing, job applications and searching and budgeting sessions.

David Harper mentioned that Liberty has been mentioned in the town for her work with local businesses, David congratulated Liberty on her work.

**Food Bank** – numbers of individuals supported were given and the process of the food bank was explained. Sources of food and financial support were talked mentioned, they are currently meeting needs. The 7 volunteers were thanked for their work. The Food Bank has started working with FareShare. This is funded by NCC for 12 months. The Food Bank receives 100kg+ of food per week. We are now also included on the Aldi collections through neighbourly. Sarah Ponton has taken over the running the Food Bank. BM thanked her for her hard work in running and organising the Food Bank so efficiently.

**Tourism** – Liberty Holloway is now in post, she started in December 2023. BM described the Tourism role supporting local traders, festivals and organising networking events. The increases in figures in social media and the website are considerable in the first 6 months of Liberty being in post. Liberty has represented us at the Northumberland Tourism Conference, she also supports individual traders with promotion.

**Beach Wheelchairs** – Georgina Hill officially opened the facility last year. We now have more volunteers and, BM thanked Lucy Hodgson for her help in encouraging more volunteers. Signage is now on order to make the container housing the facility more attractive and provide information on how to access the equipment. Planting will be at the base of the container rather than vertical growing, that was originally planned, as this may not survive in the harsh conditions.

**Castlegate Community Garden** – partnering with Greener Berwick’s Growing Communities project. They held a workshop there recently and are looking at further planting to provide more interest.

**Creative Action Fund** – details around the fund were shared including the allocation of £64K of grants for 21 local businesses. Our role is in the initial sift and checking of the applications. The Trust is pleased to be part of ensuring that these grants have a direct impact on local people.

**CoRE Legacy Fund** – administered by Julie Kennedy. BM thanked Julie for her work in processing 5 successful applications in 2023 for green energy solutions.

**Quayside Barrels** – now replaced through sponsorship through Simpsons Malt, there is enough funding left over to plant another 2 seasons. The seagulls removed some plants, but the Town Council helped us out with some spare plants and have taken over watering going forward.

## **Premises**

### **WEB**

Sarah Ponton runs the bookings in our building and has almost reached her income target for this year of £30K, she is very proactive in promoting the building and maintains excellent relationships with tenants and casual bookings alike.

**Old Brewery** – the Trust submitted an unsuccessful application to the CCZ (Creative and Cultural Zone) for a grant to create artist workshops. The Trust reached the final two in the sift, Berwick Barracks was successful. We are not giving up. We are engaged with a funding expert specifically for this sector. NCC have committed a £9K grant to pay for this expert support.

**Marygate Properties**– Serendipity, Ramsdens and i-repair shops have been purchased as a package in 2023. Serendipity have ordered window vinyls for their premises which acknowledge the support of the Trust. Energy efficient lighting and heating has been installed in the Serendipity premises to minimise the running expenses of the shop.

**The Lookout** – still running successfully.

**Work that has ceased** – We no longer employ staff for the Family Hub (formerly Sure Start) the contract came to an end and the staff have ben TUPE’d to NCC. This is better for the staff as they can access more opportunities for carer development. The income will be a loss for the Trust. We have also stopped the Young Carers Group, we had come to the end of the funding and numbers attending were getting less and less. Carers Northumberland are also providing more options for this group of young people.

**Coming soon** – Stuart Hynes is starting Tweedside Debt Advice, an independent charity, which will be hosted in our building in the near future. This will work together with the support we offer Food Bank customers.

**Newfields Pavilion** – the Community Asset Transfer is in progress awaiting the repairs to be done that are outstanding to bring it into appropriate condition.

David Harper asked Kevin Smith, as a member of the public, for his view of the Trust, he was very positive in his opinion of the work of the Trust.

David Harper thanked the staff team for all their hard work over the past year.

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

David Harper tendered his resignation in the post of Chair, but he will remain as a Trustee. BM thanked David for his support and hard work and recognised the difference David's input had made to the smooth running of the Trust.

The public and staff other than BM and JD left the meeting.

John Fisher proposed Keith Siseman and he was unanimously voted in as Chair  
Joan Montgomery was proposed by David Harper and was unanimously voted in as Vice Chair

BM agreed to circulate the Trustee handbooks and information around the role of a Trustee to all as a refresher for existing Trustees and an introduction for Lucy Hodgson.

John Fisher suggested that succession planning be considered for Trustees to maintain a level of numbers in the Board and to plan for future Chair hand overs.

There followed a discussion around encouraging more people to become members of the Trust and to engage with the organisation. There was a very poor turn out from the public at the AGM and this will be a topic of future a Board Meeting. Lucy Hodgson suggested that Trustees task themselves with finding 1 new member per month.

The Trustees thanked David Harper for his work in the role of Chair over the past years.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 6-45pm