

COMMUNITY FIRST

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 14th October 2020

held online due to COVID-19 restrictions and isolation guidelines

PRESENT:

Sarah Troughton	President
William Wyldbore-Smith	Vice President
Ken Whatley	Vice President
Martin Hamer	Chairman
Brian Clake	Vice Chair
Jane Rowell	Vice Chair
Steve Boocock	Trustee
Piers Dibben	Trustee
Peter Duke	Trustee
Edward Heard	Trustee
Jane James	Trustee
Ginnie Keen	Trustee
James Moody	Trustee
Tony Pooley	Trustee
Lynn Gibson	Chief Executive

A total of 71 guests, trustees and staff were in attendance for the event. *(A full list is available on request from Community First's offices.)*

1. **WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS** by Dr Martin Hamer, Chair of Community First, and Mrs Sarah Troughton, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Wiltshire, and President of Community First

Martin Hamer welcomed everyone present to Community First's Annual General Meeting, the first held remotely.

He introduced Lynn Gibson, Chief Executive, Brian Clake, Vice Chair and Chair of the Finance Committee, and Jane Rowell, Vice Chair and Chair of the HR Committee.

Martin introduced Sarah Troughton, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Wiltshire and President of Community First.

Sarah welcomed everyone and expressed her thanks to Martin, Lynn, all the staff and volunteers of Community First, and the Vice Presidents for their loyalty and commitment. She acknowledged how fortuitous it is to have the support of HRH The Duchess of Cornwall as our Patron, who recently met some of the young carers when she attended Oxenwood Outdoor Education Centre where young people can take part in activities and experience country life. It is facilities and opportunities such as this that make Youth Action Wiltshire and Community First so special.

Sarah thanked Ken Whatley, Vice President, and recognised his incredible support to the organisation, and, in particular, Youth Action Wiltshire since its start. He has been a remarkable advocate for young people and has continued to provide his support for 60 years. A trophy was presented to Ken to mark such devotion and dedication to the youth of Wiltshire over so many years.

Ken Whatley thanked Sarah and Community First for the award, noting it was a pleasure to have been involved with so many inspiring people. He expressed that young carers and those who work with young carers do a fantastic job, and that he would continue to provide his support whenever he can.

Martin thanked Sarah and Ken for their continued work.

2. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S ANNUAL REPORT

Lynn's presentation covered the year April 2019 to March 2020.

Lynn thanked everyone for attending the AGM and invited questions at the end of her presentation.

She acknowledged this has been a challenging year and expressed her thanks to the Trustees, staff, volunteers, and partners for their efforts and fortitude in these difficult times.

The organisation remains resilient and in a healthy financial position. As expected, we did take a hit on our reserves due to the purchase of Oxenwood OEC in October 2019, and the closure of the defined benefit pension scheme in January 2020. Both of these decisions hold Community First in good stead for the future and reserves remain within the range set of 3-6 months, although at the lower end at 3 months.

Only 11% of our funding comes from the Local Authority meaning we have a broad platform of funding which is a strength. Our trading operations generated £45,000 profit which was transferred across to the Charity to be used for charitable purposes.

Community Insurance

We have partnered with Zurich to offer specialist insurance for local councils, village halls and community buildings, and a key priority for next year will be generating growth and attracting new customers. The contact for this service is Jess Emery jemery@communityfirst.org.uk.

Impact of COVID-19

Lynn advised on the impact of the pandemic. The Levelling Up Our Communities report written by Danny Kruger MP, states "the more connected our communities are, the better they cope" and this sums up the motivation behind much of Community First's work over the last 6 months.

We have received over £126,000 in COVID-19 related grants through Wiltshire Community Foundation, National Lottery Community Fund, Sport England, and Government business grants.

Part of the National Lottery Community Fund grant was to improve access to IT and provide digital connectivity for people on the Building Bridges Programme and young people supported by Youth Action Wiltshire. We have been able to purchase 50 laptops and devices

for those identified as digitally excluded and worked in partnership with Wiltshire Council to deliver this.

Oxenwood Outdoor Education Centre

One of the key areas impacted by COVID-19 has been Oxenwood, where the majority of income is based on school residentials which ceased in March 2020 when lockdown began.

In the first 6 months of operation, it attracted income of £92,000, with more than 30 groups using it for day activities. Post March, it was necessary to furlough staff and re-adjust delivery as overnight stays could no longer take place.

On a positive note, the Centre has been a vital resource during the crisis. Throughout the summer, all our YAW delivery was carried out there and we were able to reach and offer group work to the most vulnerable young people in the county, being confident we had a safe, and clean facility to use. 350 young people accessed the site over the summer with 12 groups running a week. This has been so important in allowing young people some kind of social normal, build confidence and alleviate anxiety about returning to school. We were delighted to have a Royal visit from our Patron, HRH the Duchess of Cornwall in August 2020.

LINK and Community Development

The community transport schemes and volunteers have been crucial in being a first response service to deliver essentials such as food and medicines. A key issue has been a loss of volunteers which dropped from more than 2,000 pre-pandemic to approx. 400 and its lowest level. We are targeting volunteer recruitment through our Connect 2 Wiltshire programme in Amesbury, Royal Wootton Bassett, Trowbridge and Chippenham.

Through community organising teams, we have been identifying those most isolated and supporting them to connect to health, social and support services. LINK is one of those services which is so important to be available for people to attend hospital appointments and other needs.

Youth Clubs

The impact of youth clubs closing during lockdown was highlighted. We have worked to help volunteers adapt during COVID-19 restrictions and change support in line with the Government guidance.

Building Bridges Programme

One of the highlights this year has been the Building Bridges team achieving joint winners of the Team of the Year Award at the National ERSA Employability Awards.

This programme has managed to support 359 participants face to face and remotely during the COVID-19 crisis. 1,221 participants have been supported over the years we have been running it. A recent calculation showed that for every £1 invested, there is £1.71 generated in economic benefit.

We will shortly be launching a film on the Building Bridges website, www.buildingbridgessw.org.uk and it can also be viewed directly on You Tube <https://youtu.be/98UwzgFWIN8>

New Partnerships

We recognise that people are now seeking connections at a very local level to reduce travel and we are supporting a new initiative, Wiltshire Together, led by Wessex Community Action.

This is a new community platform which makes connects people together.
www.wiltshiretogether.org.uk

Our new Information Champions programme funded through Wiltshire Council will link in, aiming to support local groups to improve knowledge of support locally.

VCS Emergencies Partnership

Community First is part of the national programme initially developed after the Grenfell Tower disaster called VCS Emergencies Partnership which aims to ensure communities get the right support in a crisis. It captures local needs which can be escalated to a wider national network for support and resolutions. The local infrastructure partnership is led by Voluntary Action Swindon, and includes Wessex Community Action, Community First, Swindon Volunteer Centre and Wiltshire Community Foundation. www.vcsep.org.uk

Homes of Our Own

This project is in partnership with Community Land Trust, Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council promotes community housing being brought forward for development.
www.homesofourown.co.uk

Macmillan Cancer Connections

Over the 2 years this has been running, we have listened to people about their experiences of accessing cancer services, with work carried out in key areas in Wiltshire and Swindon. This partnership has now come to an end but there have been 7 new support groups set up, creating a great legacy.

Young Carers

Our partnership with Carers Support Wiltshire continues and, despite the COVID-19 difficulties this year, we have supported 315 young carers over the past year, with 198 new referrals in 2019/20. Capacity and funding remain a challenge. Wiltshire Council provide 25% of our total support given to young carers, with Community First sourcing the other 75% ourselves.

Project Inspire

Project Inspire works with young people not in employment, education, or training. 60 young people have accessed support, with 83% gaining accreditation through Project Inspire, and 83% securing a place in employment, education, and training.

We have recently applied to be an intermediary for the Kickstart programme which supports young people back into employment. Our consortium of not-for-profit partners across the county would create more than 35 roles over 18 months.

Splash

Splash goes from strength to strength, with 552 young people facing challenges in their lives engaged in Splash provision and 91% reporting improved mental health wellbeing.

Lynn thanked the PCC for their continued support of our work with the programme and with young victims of crime.

Landfill Communities Fund

This programme continues to make improvements to community spaces. In the past year, 33 projects have been funded and £318,000 awarded.

LEADER

Lynn thanked Alan Truscott and Lesley Thomas for their fantastic management of this phase of the programme which has been supporting rural business since 2014/15. 59 grants have been awarded, totalling £2.26 million, with the average grant being just over £38,000.

Sadly, the scheme comes to an end in December 2020 with no news yet of any succession.

Wiltshire Association of Local Councils

There are 227 councils with WALC membership, an increase in numbers from the previous year. Training for Clerks and Councillors continues to be in demand through the training sessions delivered by Katie Fielding, and 98% of surveyed attendees rated WALC training as 'excellent' or 'good'.

Youth Consultants

In partnership with Wiltshire Council, we have employed 7 young people to talk to other young people about their views on accessing local services. Recently they have been working with children in care, talking to them about their Independent Review processes and reports and improvements that could be made. The Youth Consultants will be starting work on a national programme on contextual safeguarding, around young people harmed outside of the house.

Lynn advised that this service was available for consultation work if required.

Village Halls

We currently have 175 halls in our membership. Village halls have been instrumental in the COVID-19 response with many staying open to provide essentials services. They are facing challenges including a drop in income through fewer bookings and fundraising opportunities, and funding streams being affected.

Get Out Get Active

In partnership with Wiltshire and Swindon Sports (WASP), we are working to bring disabled people together with able bodied people to take part in physical activity.

Lynn thanked everyone for their time and advised that our Annual Review and Business Plan further detailed the activity of Community First and our impact over the past year as well as future plans. A copy can be found on our website - <http://www.communityfirst.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CF-Annual-Review-20-21-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>

There were no questions raised.

Martin thanked Lynn for an informative presentation which highlights the breadth of work that Community First has carried out over the last year and plans moving forward. Given the resources available to us and the challenging circumstances, it has been a remarkable achievement and a great credit to Lynn and the whole team.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were 16 apologies reported.

4. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 9th October 2019

The minutes were circulated with the meeting papers. No questions were raised. Martin proposed acceptance of the Minutes of the AGM on 9th October 2019 and this was seconded by Jane Rowell. This was unanimously agreed. Martin signed them as a true record.

5. MATTERS ARISING

There were none.

6. PRESENTATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2020

The Report and Financial Statements were circulated with the meeting papers. No questions were raised.

Martin proposed acceptance to the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2020. This was seconded by Tony Pooley and unanimously agreed by the meeting.

7. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

Martin thanked David Owen & Co on behalf of Community First for their support for the year 2019/20. Martin proposed the re-appointment of David Owen & Co for the financial year 2020/21. This was seconded by Brian Clake.

There were no other nominations and the meeting unanimously agreed that David Owen & Co be re-appointed.

8. ELECTION OF HONORARY OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

a) President: Martin proposed that Sarah Troughton be re-elected as President for this coming year. There were no other nominations.

The nomination was seconded by Steve Boocock and Ken Whatley, and unanimously agreed by the meeting.

b) Vice Presidents: Martin proposed the re-election of The Earl of Radnor, George McDonic MBE, James Layton, Ken Whatley, and William Wyldbore-Smith, Vice-Lord-Lieutenant of Wiltshire, as Vice Presidents.

The proposed nominations were seconded by James Moody and unanimously agreed by the meeting.

9. CLOSING REMARKS

Martin expressed his personal thanks to staff, volunteers and Trustees for their dedication and commitment in what have been remarkable and unexpected circumstances this year. Their hard work helps to improve the lives of so many across our community.

Martin thanked everyone present for their attendance. and continued support of Community First.

6.45pm END OF FORMAL BUSINESS