

Minutes of the Refugee Support Devon (RSD) AGM held on 26th October 2021 at 6pm via Zoom

Present:

Jenny Longford (Chair), Chris Hill (Treasurer), David Mezzetti (Company Secretary), Bob Mycock (Company Director), Denise Parker (Education and Employment Coordinator), Shurouk Al-Sabbagh (Operational Planning), Grace Frain (Community Fundraising), Ben Hudson (Company Director), Liz Oxburgh (Events), Bernadette Chelvanayagam, Jeremy Toye (Events and Publicity volunteer), Michelle Lambourne (Accountant), Harriet Watford (Resettlement Coordinator), Emma Wallace (Auditor), Rupert Blomfield (Interim Manager), Ruth Grove-White (Company Director), Elizabeth Smith (Minutes Secretary),

Apologies:

Bernadette Chelvanayagam, Trupti Desai (Administrator)

1. Welcome:

For the second year running the AGM took the form of a small meeting on zoom, with no talks from service users. The annual review and final accounts were circulated in advance, and covered the financial year to the end of March 2021.

Rupert Blomfield was welcomed, having started work the day before as interim manager, Trustees introduced themselves to him.

2 Minutes of the previous AGM held on 20 October 2020:

There were no matters arising from the minutes of 20th October 2020. Liz Oxburgh proposed and David Mezzetti seconded the approval of the minutes and this was agreed by all.

3 Annual Report and Accounts for the year 2020 – 2021:

The year leading up to March 2021 had largely taken place during the Covid lockdown, with the Community Centre closed and most people working remotely. All the staff were thanked for their hard work and commitment under very difficult circumstances. Remote contact with service users was harder than contact in the office and staff had dealt with the challenges in a very dedicated fashion, providing an excellent service. Trupti was thanked for drawing up the report.

Chris and Emma reported that the effects of the pandemic are more likely to affect the current year (2021-22) than 2020–21. Reserves are currently good, donations up, costs have been well managed and the accounts are in a good state. On the balance sheet there are strong assets, with designation of a part of the funds specifically for Covid. Devon County Council contribute about half of the usual income but this will

change in the current year. Although reserves are strong the current year needs to be treated with caution.

Ruth, Michelle and Emma were thanked for their hard work.

Accounts are about to be filed with the Charity Commission.

It was suggested that some more details of donations would be useful: a breakdown by category of where they are from, and the motivation of people who support RSD, and how this compares with national and international trends.

Shurouk paid tribute to the fantastic job done by Chris, keeping on top of the accounts every year.

It was proposed by David and seconded by Bob that the accounts for 2020-2021 be signed off as correct. This was agreed by all.

Emma to provide a fresh copy of the accounts with the dates of approval inserted, as agreed.

4 Appointment of Directors:

Liz was standing down for the time being, although she planned to continue her involvement with RSD. Members of the Board thanked Liz for her very hard work coordinating events, providing imaginative ideas, giving words of wisdom and caution on a range of issues over many years.

Trustees who were new in the current year were asked to stand down for re-election. Accordingly, Ruth stood down from the Board. Shurouk proposed and Ben seconded the motion that Ruth be appointed as a Director on the RSD Board, and this was agreed by all.

Shurouk took over from Jenny as chair of the meeting. Each year at the AGM three of the longer term members step down and therefore Jenny, Chris and David stood down as Directors. Bob proposed and Grace seconded the motion that Jenny, Chris and David should be re-elected to the Board, and all agreed. Shurouk proposed and Ruth seconded the motion that they should be re-appointed to the same positions, and all agreed.

5 Any other business:

David asked for a quick summary of the current situation even though the AGM was not formally dealing with events beyond March 2021. Jenny reported that Afghan refugees in hotels in Exeter and Exmouth were awaiting permanent accommodation, some of which was likely to be in other parts of the country, since the

accommodation has to be with private landlords. In some cases there might be a need for up to four bedrooms, for larger families.

Devon County Council has not been forthcoming about what help might be needed from RSD but we are ready to offer support if asked. HIKMAT is also involved in helping.

Liz knows that Clare Henry, city of sanctuary, is lobbying district councils and others to make clear commitments to find accommodation for the current groups of refugees.

Bob reported that the group of refugees in Exeter may be staying longer than would otherwise be expected because he believed there was a connection with the Pen Farthing charity: the group in Exeter may be his charity staff from Afghanistan. Classes for 40 adults are being planned at once with a view to helping them settle in the community.

Rupert is keeping a close eye on the situation and expects RSD to get involved with the second tranche of Afghan refugees. RSD's past experience makes their involvement potentially very valuable.

P.S RSD Manager Annette Hughes is on unpaid leave from 1st September 2021 – 31st March 2022, but we have arranged with her to continue to do the salaries during this period.

We wish to thank Annette for her efforts and determination to enable RSD to continue to provide a valuable service to our clients throughout the challenging year of lock-downs and Covid measures in 2020-21.