

READING ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON
TUESDAY 24th OCTOBER 2017 AT 2.30 P.M.

Present:

Bob Bristow (Chair), Mohammed Ayub (Cllr and ex Mayor) Bill Kennedy (Treasurer), Ginny Williams (Manager) Karen Rowland (Trustee acting as Chair in the absence of the Mayor), Chris Cole (Trustee), Ron Cutting (Trustee), Mick Paige (Trustee), Cynthia Beard, Rod Dalglish, Marion Haynes, Wendy Whitehead, Kathy Porat, Abby Knowles, Geoff Canterbury, Martin Aust, Michael Asberry, Lorraine White (part), Jean Channing, Shirley Englefield, Maureen Tegg, Margaret Weale, Mike and Jenny Sadler, Alf and Barbara Turner, Alan Dare, Charles Jagger, Leslie Hutt, Julia & Pete Canham, Virginia Weeks, Sue Allan, Sheila Whitfield, Tony Taylor, Anne Horsley, Pete and Julia Canham.

Bob Bristow welcomed everyone to the meeting and reported that The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Reading, Councillor Rose Williams was unable to attend and under the Constitution he could appoint a Trustee to Chair the meeting. In these circumstances he was pleased to pass the Chair of the meeting to Karen Rowland. Karen Rowland reiterated the Mayor's apologies due to an appointment which could not be re-arranged, and sent her pledge and good wishes, and her hope that she would attend the Christmas Fair on the 1 December. Karen introduced Councillor Mohammed Ayub, who said he was delighted to attend and congratulated RAB on the work and services provided to sight impaired people. He also thanked the trustees, staff, and volunteers for the important work undertaken, and said he looked forward to working together with RAB in the future with the local Council.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Rose Williams (Mayor), Alan Futter, Anne Canterbury, and Hilda Russell.

2. Minutes of the AGM held on 22 November 2016.

Maureen Tegg said that as the Minutes had been tabled she had not had time to see these. It was explained that these had been sent out with the original invitation to the AGM (6 weeks previously). Karen Rowland apologised to anyone who had not had the opportunity to see these previously, and said that the distribution would be looked at in the future.

These minutes were voted a true and accurate account of proceedings – Proposed by Ron Cutting and seconded by Jenny Sadler.

3. Chairman's Report

Bob Bristow reported that this was his second year as chairman and this role continues to be challenging. Bill would be providing a full update on the finances

later but he was pleased to say that our fundraising to date is going from strength to strength!

During the past year there have been a number of community fundraising activities, including the Santa run which saw some of our members, volunteers, staff & trustees dressing up as Santa's & taking part in the 5k run which raised much needed funds for us. There was also a collection just before Christmas at Tesco on Portman road which we are doing again on Friday 22nd December this year, if you wish to help please let us know.

Activities on Tuesday & Friday clubs in the hall continue to do well and we have a waiting list for people wanting to join us. We have a number of volunteers who help us in running a variety of clubs, Alan Futter runs the rambling group, Julia Canham provides a very varied social club programme, Wendy Gibson runs the reading group on a Friday and we are currently looking for someone to help us with the Young at Heart group, as sadly Sarah Watts who ran this group retired in the summer. Huge thanks go to all of our volunteers who help us selflessly, without their help we would be unable to function and provide the services that we do.

He was pleased to report that following a very successful fundraising campaign, we secured funding for a new minibus, so we now have two minibuses with tail lifts for our less able members.

The other large project we have successfully completed was to have a new roof put on Walford Hall. Unfortunately the hall is getting to an age where numerous repairs are required, so fundraising for this will be ongoing so that we can provide a safe and secure environment for our members.

Thanks have to go to all the staff who all work tirelessly for the good of Reading Association for the Blind. We now have a fundraising department where we employ a Community Fundraiser who has worked successfully on the ground in the community, and a fundraiser who works with corporate and grant making trusts.

The home visiting service is a vital part of the services we provide and we have seen a number of changes throughout the year, but we are hoping, going forward, that we will recruit another visiting officer who will complement the already efficient team we already have.

We have an exciting time ahead of us and we are always looking at different ways of improving and complementing our service. The Trustees are currently working on a 5 year strategy and we look forward to speaking to our membership to see what they would like from RAB in the future.

Many hours go into making Reading Association for the Blind work and it is only down to the commitment of the staff and volunteers and my fellow Trustees that we are able to make this work for you, our members. Bob's thanks go to all of these people and he was sure the members would like to thank them also.

Karen Rowland said what an exciting year and times this had been for RAB.

4. To consider and, if approved, adopt the Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements for the year ending 30 April 2017

Bill Kennedy, Treasurer, addressed the meeting and explained that this was his 5th year of presenting financial report. He advised that the Accounts had been approved and signed off by the Trustees in September 2017. Bill gave a detailed commentary of the Accounts, highlighting items on pages 14 – 17 of the Trustee Report & Financial Statements for the Year Ended 30th April 2017.

During the 2016/17 financial year donations and bequests had totalled £116,814 which had shown an increase of £57,314 on the previous year. He stated that this was a reflection of the hard work undertaken by staff within the fundraising team.

The amounts received in respect of charitable activities was at £67,987, which was £24,392 higher than previous year. He explained that this increase was mainly due to the additional funding received from the local authority, and an addition from a charitable trust to fund incremental investment in the home visiting services.

Investment income was £18,086, which is a yield of 4.3%, was slightly down on previous year.

Income was £202,987 (2016: £121,531), showed an increase of £81,456 on previous year, and is the highest in the last 5 years. This is a strong performance considering the economic environment including pressure on local government funding and criticism of the charity sector due to behaviour of some charitable organisations.

Net expenditure on charitable activities was £135,556 which was £3,355 lower than previous year, however total expenditure at £157,719 was £8,014 higher due to increased spend on fund raising.

Income exceeded expenditure by £45,268 compared to expenditure exceeding income by £31,249 in 2016, a turnaround of £76,517

Net gain on investments was £28,396 compared to a loss in prior year of £14,602, a turnaround of £42,998

The net movement in funds was £73,664 compared to a negative of £46,031 in 2016, a turnaround of £119,695 with funds carried forward of £743,240. The funds carried forward were £669,576 in 2016, £715,607 in 2015, £707,219 in 2014 and £683,536 in 2013, so we can see that we have had a very strong performance for this year.

Tangible assets were £178,802 which are down by approx. £5,000 on the previous year due mainly to depreciation. There were minimal purchases in 2017, the major portion of the value is in respect of Walford Hall property at £165,409 fully owned by RAB which has not been revalued for many years.

Cash has increased by approx £43K as a result of the increase in restricted funds of £59,000

The balance sheet continues to be strong, and it's strength is at times an obstacle to raising funds.

The high level of investment funds contributes to our objective in sourcing income from multiple sources.

Bill paid tribute and thanked our volunteers, without whom we could not provide the range of services provided

Bill concluded his presentation and handed the meeting back to Karen Rowland, who indicated how pleased she was with the finances.

Mick Paige proposed that the financial statements be adopted, and this was seconded by Tony Taylor.

5. To consider and, if approved, re-elect the following Trustees who are due to retire by rotation:

Karen Rowland, Bob O'Neil and Danuta Curtis are due to retire by rotation and are willing to seek re-election. These re-appointments were proposed by Mick Paige and seconded by Margaret Weale.

6. Any Other Business

Karen Rowland asked those present if there was any other business:

Jean Channing asked if papers for the meeting could be printed larger and on yellow paper and it was agreed that this would be considered for next year.

Barbara Turner raised the question of why subscriptions had gone up this year when RAB had had a good financial year, and also that when attending the Social Club in the afternoon of a day when they had already paid to come to the Day Centre there were additional charges. Bob Bristow highlighted that the income from subscriptions was only £3,600 per year, and that this contribution was a very small part of the total income for the charity. Julia Canham said that she thought this question referred to the Social Club and members were asking why they should pay again for the social club if coming in during the morning. Cynthia Beard suggested that the charges should be half if someone was already present on the day of the Social Club. Ginny Williams pointed out that the Trustees had already discussed subscriptions, and it was agreed that these points would be looked at again. Bob Bristow explained that often on the once monthly social club there was also extra entertainment costs which needed to be covered over the months. He felt that in real terms the amount that members were paying is lower than other groups who run clubs. He pointed out that it cost £200 a day to open the Day Centre, and whilst this year finances had been good, the previous year this had not been so good, and contingency sums need to be retained. Mike Sadler pointed out that the Social Club is held once a month only. It was noted that the Rambling Group also paid £4 just for the transport to their walk. In conclusion it was agreed that the Trustees would look at all the points raised and feedback to members.

Jean Channing asked why it was not possible to pick up in Tilehurst on a Friday morning when she visited the Day Centre on her second day of the week, and when she arranged her own transport for this day? Sometimes she felt there were spaces

on the minibus, and she did not think this was fair. Ginny Williams pointed out that if everyone on the route was to come in, then there would not be sufficient places on the transport. Members who came twice a week were privileged and currently there is a waiting list of new members to attend. Consideration needed to be given to open this to people who currently cannot attend, and it may be that it might not be possible to attend twice a week. It was pointed out that RAB serves people living within the Reading Borough Council area.

Alf Turner said he did not know who the Trustees and management were, and he felt he wanted to know what was going on and have regular chats. It was noted that Mick Paige (Trustee) was in the Day Centre most weeks, and other Trustees visited very regularly. Ron Cutting responded by saying that Trustees were volunteers too, and were voted in by members.

Karen Rowland summed up by saying that there were always members of the management team in the Day Centre along with volunteers.

All of the above comments will be considered by the Trustees at their next meeting.

Karen Rowland thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and brought the meeting to a close, inviting everyone to stay for refreshments.