



Working Together Ludlow

to include people with learning difficulties and disabilities

Annual General Meeting Notes - Tuesday 23rd November 2021 – Rockspring

Trustees Present: Nicola North; Mike Beazley; Alison Holman; Simon Lambourne; Emily Mosley; Julian Crombleholme **Apologies** Louise Anton; Sarah Jones

Others present: Jane Jenner; Helen Crombleholme; Jan Amphlett; James Small; Helen Hughes; Alan Hooper; Steph Hooper; Sarah Edwards; Andrew Norton; Brian Woodall; Roma Jackson; Sam Hine

Nicola welcomed everyone to the AGM and shared her thoughts on the past 12 months:

Welcome everyone and thank you for coming – so nice to see people for real. What can I say about the last year or so and the difficulties faced by everyone that hasn't already been said?

I am sure I speak for all parents, carers and members when I say we are so appreciative of the efforts by the staff and volunteers who have waded through litres of sanitiser, tons of masks and aprons, the retching and sneezing of tests in order to keep services going and keep everyone as safe as possible. They have been ably led by the redoubtable Nigel who I feel has been training his whole life for this role and didn't run away when the going got tough. He and the trustees have been supported and advised by the wonderful Sam who has witnessed and guided WT for more years than I am sure she cares to remember.

WT has not only proved it can be a sustainable organisation, but it has come of age in so many ways behind the scenes thanks to the efforts and far more hours than stated by Nigel's job description.

I know that Nigel will say it is a team effort – as indeed it is. The finances have been untangled on many occasions by Jane Jenner and more recently Helen and now with scrutiny by Trustee Treasurer Mike Beasley. Policies have been advised on by Trustees with experience in relevant areas such as safeguarding, Personnel, Health and Safety and much much more. Front line staff have embraced the restrictions and ways of working with energy and humour, although we do worry about Jan trying to eat lunch while wearing a face shield!

The team have been amazing role models and confidants, helping our members to adjust not only to the demands of the pandemic, but personal challenges and at times difficult news. We all know who they are: - James, Jan, Sarah, Janine, Helen, Sammy and Di.

So, this financial year saw the centre opening up to members in a controlled and safe way. Over time the number of members able to attend has increased. We are incredibly grateful to James Cooper, from the Furniture Scheme for letting us use the 2 extra rooms so that we can keep social distancing in place. In the background was the rumbling excitement of the proposed bookshop takeover of which we will hear more in next year's AGM.

Safe, meaningful and truly long-term opportunities for people with learning disabilities are few and far between. Whilst we Parents and Carers know what a Lifeline Working Together and its team are, in the future we may need to strongly make the case for such organisations to those who hold the purse strings.

Since we last met as an AGM in person, we have lost some amazing friends. Richard one of the founders and the leader of Working Together for so many years. Dan a regular support worker to some of our members with a heart as big as he was tall. And Fee who filled the WT space with laughter and such energy.

But for now, this AGM should be a celebration of WT and all who are and have been associated with its activities over the last year and a beacon for the year ahead.

Many thanks to everyone.

To approve the minutes from last year's AGM

The notes were agreed and approved.

To receive the Annual Accounts 2020/21 - Mike

Mike presented the annual accounts, which show Working Together to be in a strong financial position. Copies of the accounts can be made available on request.

Looking Forwards 2022 – our 20th anniversary year - Nigel

Nigel shared his thoughts:

Firstly, I'd like to say thank you to the members, families, carers, volunteers, staff, trustees, funders and supporters for all your support - as we've continued to navigate the uncertain waters of Covid-19.

And, again, thank you to our landlords, the Furniture Scheme, especially to James Cooper and to Rob for continuing to be so supportive of Working Together here at Rockspring.

I would like to say a special thank you to Nicola, as Chair of Trustees, for her ongoing, help, support and advice.

Going forward...

Whilst Covid restrictions have been relaxed since August this year, we still continue to operate within many of the rules that were first put in place way back in July 2020.

We have all adapted and learned to work with these and it is very pleasing to have been able to welcome most, in fact, almost all of our members, back to Rockspring - since the guidance on attending more than one setting was lifted.

Youth Club, Writers' and Sewing Bee/Makers Club are all operating – I would say thriving - and Diversity is beginning to meet regularly again.

Sports Club remains the one area of our pre-Covid activities that we are still working hard on to find ways to get it back up and running.

I'm sure some operational and financial challenges still lay ahead, and, whilst Covid cases remain high in Shropshire – the highest in the West Midlands - we remain cautious and diligent. The safety of our members, volunteers and staff remains our first priority.

As it says in the annual report:

This year has certainly tested our resilience, but as an organisation we are proud to report that we have come through this time as a stronger and even more focused organisation.

Our Café is gradually reopening, our partnership supporting the Ludlow Food Bank continues to provide members with a real sense of purpose and community involvement, the Rockspring community garden is re-emerging and the community gardeners are already planning for the spring. Our involvement will be another opportunity for members to enjoy gardening, access to the outdoor space and use of the pizza oven!

We continue to grow our relationships with the Ludlow Food Networks and Ludlow Festivals which, I'm sure will lead to real opportunities for participation and involvement in 2022.

We have, of course, now taken on the Charity Bookshop in Craven Arms – the purpose of this is to both support our fundraising and to provide supported opportunities for our members - learning new skills and enjoying new experiences.

I would like to say a particular thank you to the staff team – to James, Jan, Helen, Janine, Sammy, Diana and Sophie for their ongoing dedication, support and hard work. To Nicola B who left us for a new life in France and to Sarah, who has recently joined us as a new staff member.

Thanks also to our Rockspring volunteers, Sarah, Louise, Neil, Emily and Helen and to our community gardeners Nick, Pete and Jay and to all our new bookshop volunteers. They've all been brilliant.

As you will all know our much loved colleague and close friend Fiona sadly passed away in October - her fun, laughter, care and compassion will be sadly missed by everyone at Working Together - and I ask that we all pause for a moment to remember Fee.

Simon lit a candle for Fee and a candle for Richard.

And now we must all look forward, just as Fee would want us to.

To quote again from the annual report

We have all learned new skills and activities, which we will build on going forward - blending these together with what we've always done well before, to provide more supportive and fulfilling opportunities for our members and the Working Together family.

Our challenge, and our commitment, for the next 12 months is to work together to maximise these opportunities - in what will be our twentieth anniversary year. Thank you

20th Anniversary – Nigel read a letter received from Thomas Geuter

Dear Trustees and friends

We would like to tell you about our plans for Working Together's 20th anniversary.

We have been getting together an archive of pictures and memories form the past 20 years and will be putting this on display at Rockspring.

We are appealing for anyone who has been involved with |Working Together to come forward and tell us about their memories so these can be included in the archive too.

We have also been planning a party to celebrate the anniversary of the opening of the café in Fish Street. This will be held on 24th of September 2022 and we will be inviting all those who have been involved in Working Together over the past 20 years and also many members of the local community.

I would like to tell you that we have received a letter from the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge who unfortunately aren't able to come to our celebrations in September but have sent us their best wishes and were delighted to hear about the wonderful work being done by Working Together.

We are planning a number of activities throughout our anniversary year including a mural and display at Rockspring, We will be producing an anniversary badge which includes the original logo and the new logo together and special editions of our newsletter telling the story of Working Together over the last 20 years.

Thomas Geuter

Any other business

Everyone was invited to join Working Together Youth Club's Children in Need Danceathon in the main hall.

Refreshments were served in the Working Together rooms with drinks, scones and mince pies.

END

DRAFT