



## Working Together Ludlow

to include people with learning difficulties

### Annual General Meeting - Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023 - Rockspring

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

**Others present:** Nigel Bishop; Jane Jenner; Helen Crombleholme; Jan Amphlett; Thomas Geuter; James Small; Emma Small; Lorna Stokes; Fran and Juliette Best; Steph Hooper; Simon North; Sarah Edwards; Andrew Norton; Dan Wall; Kath Ainsworth; Alan Hooper; Roma Jackson; Sam Hine

**Apologies:** Sally and James Cullen; Susan and Danie Geuter

Nicola welcomed everyone to the AGM and shared her thoughts on the past 12-18 months:

*Welcome to everyone - A slightly later AGM date than normal but our usual November slot felt a bit unrealistic given the amount of new paperwork stuff that had to be done and also I think there was some sort of football match on?*

*It's hard to think back to the period of this AGM – I can't remember this morning's crises, so I thought I would run through a quick recap to take you back in time and give a bit of context to what was affecting life within the world of Working Together.*

*When our financial year began we were in the throes of Euro 2020 – delayed by a year to 2021 due to the madness of Covid. The success and jubilation of reaching the finals was marred by the wave of racism after the failed penalty shoot out. The impact of social media was once again in the spotlight showcasing a nasty side to modern life. (You will of course remember that the women won their tournament). We had the Tokyo Olympics, a third Covid Wave and confusion over who should and when to have the second vaccine. Test, Test, Test, masks on masks off. The chaos of the Afghanistan withdrawal under the supposedly better than Trump, President Biden. Should we have Christmas 2021 with Grandma and Grandpa or go to an office party? When is a work event a party, is Downing Street different and how many people can you mix with where.*

*Just when we all thought 2022 would be an improvement on the previous two years, Putin decided to send troops into Ukraine to rescue the country from itself. Britain became plastered in Blue and Yellow statements of support (WT even helped out with a Cuppa and Cake event raising £4500).*

*Elon Musk bought Twitter; Rises in energy prices were announced kicking off the cost of living crises; Sue Grey delivered her party gate report; The Queen held her Platinum Jubilee, and Ukraine and Sam Ryder won Eurovision.*

*So that's a World events context. Some of the fallout of outside events have had an impact on WT. The biggest of which is largely hidden from WT members but is being brilliantly managed by Nigel. That is the creeping wave of rules, regulations, policies and procedures which sometimes feel as though they are impinging on the original ethos of WT. It is only through the creativity and compassion of the WT team led by Nigel that the odour of institutionalisation is held at bay.*

*WT has had its own share of highs and deep lows over this financial year. The successful opening of the bookshop and increasing attendance of members to the Rockspring was overshadowed by the sudden loss of our beloved Fee.*

*The constant underlying anxiety over Covid took its toll on everyone. But the resilience and positivity that reigned within the Rockspring and the Bookshop has been inspirational as any glance through the old newsletters will show.*

*My thanks and those of the Trustees goes out most humbly to everyone who has contributed to WTs continuing to survive and thrive. Staff and volunteers, members, parents and carers and funding agencies such as Shropshire Council, Ludlow Town Council, BBC Children in need, The Rotary Club, Millichope and Humphrey Salway Trust.*

*Some of the most successful elements of the year have centred on community involvement. Supporting the Food Bank, Community Lunches, Food Festivals and increasing interaction with the bookshop have all contributed to establishing a sense of purpose, work and independence related skills and camaraderie. It is this taking part and being relevant to society at large that will help shape and safeguard the future for WT. Let's hear it for the WT team.*

### **To approve the minutes from last year's AGM**

The notes were agreed and approved.

### **To receive the Annual Accounts 2021/22 - Mike**

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

### **The Fee Star Award – Simon**

*As many of you will be aware, our colleague and close friend, Fiona Calderwood, passed away in 2021. Fee was at the heart of Working Together and brought us fun, laughter, care and compassion and she is sadly missed by everyone. To remember Fee we will be presenting an annual award. The Fee Star will be presented to a person who has really shone by bringing fun, laughter, care or compassion to Working Together.*

*This year's award goes to **James Small**. James stepped into the role of Activities Manager after Fee passed away and helped support members through a what was a difficult time for Working Together and what must have also been a difficult time for James too. It is for this reason that we have decided to present the first Fee Star award to James for the care and compassion he showed through this time.*

### **Nigel's thoughts – looking back, looking forwards**

*Firstly, thank you to the members for their hard work and commitment without which we wouldn't be able to do a fraction of what we do - particularly during what have continued to be unprecedented times. And thank you the families and carers for your support too.*

*Thank you to the staff team for their hard work and commitment. There have been a number of changes over the past year and we've welcomed some new people to the team. We'll be doing a spotlight on the staff in our next newsletter so you'll learn a bit more about them all!*

*Thank you to our long-standing volunteers, Louise and Sarah for continuing to run Sewing Bee and Writers' Club respectively, returning volunteer Helen Crombleholme and new volunteer Emma Small. We are also extremely grateful for the contribution our Bookshop volunteers and Community gardeners make and bring to the wider Working Together family.*

*We are now in a position to start to welcome in more volunteers at Rockspring - so if you, or someone you know, would like to volunteer for our daytime or evening activities, please get in touch.*

*I would like to thank the trustees for their hard work behind the scenes and particularly to our Chair of Trustees Nicola North for her help and support to myself as Chief Officer.*

*Thank you to our funders, our supporters and our friends – we are the sum total of our parts and everyone makes a really important contribution to make Working Together what we are and what we can offer.*

*Looking forward.....this has been difficult to write, not because there is nothing to say, but because there is so much that has happened and is happening I could talk all night!*

*Whilst our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary will no doubt feature in next year's annual report I want to mention our wonderful Garden Party, held on a sunny and warm September Saturday, which everyone that came along to enjoyed.*

*Going forward, we will continue to build on the activities we have been delivering over the past few years and will be cautiously expanding the range of opportunities for our members as Covid guidance is relaxed further and we can get out and about more in the community and welcome more people in to spend time with us.*

*Food and independent living skills remain key to what we do and this fits well with the Community Lunch collaboration alongside the Baptist Church and our relationship with the Food Bank.*

*Our involvement with the Spring Festival and Food Festival helps promote the positive role people with learning disabilities can play in the local community and to raise awareness of Working Together. We look to increase further the opportunities for member involvement at these events in 2023.*

*The bookshop continues not only to provide a valuable source of income for the charity, but opportunities for members to be involved in the operations associated with the bookshop. Online sales and the beginnings of supported volunteering opportunities at the shop have already provided purposeful opportunities for members and we aim to grow these going forwards.*

*The community garden has become an important part of what we do. Working alongside the community gardeners we aim to increase what we grow and also make more beds available to other community members to share and enjoy the space.*

*Youth Club has a new cohort of young people as the group who were with use during Covid have grown up and moved on. It's good to see a vibrant group of young people enjoying the activities, friendship and social environment that Youth club offers.*

*And finally, Diversity has restarted after its enforced Covid break and staff changes. It is good see a vibrant group of members shaping the club and activities they want to participate in. It has been a hugely positive start and we're keen to see how it develops.*

*So, to summarise, we are looking forwards with positivity, continuing to offer what we know we can do well at Working Together and continuing to ensure our members are at the heart of everything we do.*

### **Any other business**

Nigel informed the AGM of the recent passing of Barbara Hutchinson and Trish Oldham, longstanding bookshop volunteers, our thoughts are with their families and friends.

Everyone was invited to enjoy refreshments and a chat in the Working Together rooms and another chance to take a look at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary archive.

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