

Voluntary Action South Leicestershire

Annual General Meeting 2020 held on Monday 28th September 2020 by Zoom

Minutes

1. Election of Chair of Meeting

Maureen O'Malley (VASL Charity Manager) welcomed everyone to the AGM and asked for the election of the chair of the meeting.

Proposer: Linda Jones was proposed by Mike Herbert
Seconder: Kate Godber

This was **APPROVED** with no objections.

2. Opening remarks from the Chair

Linda Jones (Chair of VASL Trustee Board) welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming to the VASL 2020 Annual General Meeting. She said it is sad that we are not able to meet face to face this year.

Linda said she is proud to be taking the Chair again this year, her 10th year of doing so. She said she is proud of everything we are achieving – the staff, volunteers and trustees. Thank you, all.

In the period up to the end of March, which covers the year 2019-20, VASL had another fantastic year. All of the projects continued to operate and deliver a range of services to those in need in Harborough District and beyond – whether it be across Leicestershire for the Support for Carers Project, or into the villages of north Northamptonshire for Community Champions.



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Registered Charity No. 1141274

Company Registration No. 7517828

The feedback we receive from users of our services, their families, and the organisations with which we work, validates the quality of the services we provide and their impact in making a difference to the lives of those who engage with us. On behalf of the Trustees, Linda thanked all of the staff for everything they do for VASL, our beneficiaries and local communities.

Linda acknowledged that since 23 March things have changed (due to the pandemic). She said she is pleased that all of VASL's services – except the social transport scheme – have continued to operate and support those in need. It is sad that they have not been able to operate face to face with our service users, but technology – and the flexibility and creativity - of the staff have enabled us to continue to provide support, advice, and companionship to those who have needed it.

Indeed, as the pandemic took hold and we were in lockdown, VASL worked with Harborough District Council to support their Community Hub, recruiting volunteers and helping with the needs identified by those most isolated. Linda said that she is proud that our Charity Manager, Maureen O'Malley, and all of the staff, were proactive in seeking to do their bit in helping in a time of crisis. Thank you, all.

Linda ended by commending all of those working in our VASL family – Maureen O'Malley, the staff and managers, our wonderful volunteers and her fellow trustees.

Linda expressed thanks to our funders who have all been so supportive during the pandemic. They have continued to fund our contracts and grants, even if we have not been able to deliver our services in the same way. Their trust in VASL is justified. We continue to provide quality services, meeting contract requirements wherever we can, and always using the funds given to us to achieve our aims, even if we are having to do this in different ways at the moment. She concluded by expressing hope that when we meet next year, it will be face to face and we can celebrate the excellent work of VASL together.

Linda then reminded attendees that all members, including organisations, have the right to vote in the AGM.

3. Apologies for absence

None recorded.

4. Resolution 1:- Adoption of the Annual Report and Year End Accounts 2019/20

Gail Lamb, Treasurer, presented the Accounts for 2019/20 to the AGM.

We began the year by reviewing the structure and staffing of our Business Support Team with a view to streamlining to reduce costs. This action was essential to accommodate the £19k reduction in the Support for Carers Contract retendering process. It was with regret that we made two business support posts redundant. The Support for Carers contract was released in May and VASL tendered for the two-year contract having carefully considered the additional deliverables against the



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reduced funding. We were successful in our bid and the new contract started on 1st November 2019.

As part of the financial strategy for VASL it was agreed that, to ensure a stable future for VASL, we would approach Market Harborough and The Bowden's Charity to seek additional longer-term core/operational funding. After a thorough application and a meeting with their trustees, we were delighted to be awarded £35k per year for 5 years to support the core overheads of VASL. As well as securing funding for core costs we also approached the Lloyds Foundation and secured funding to redevelop both our VASL and Support for Carers Websites. This was also successful, and we received £15k to carry out this work. By the end of October, we had a new and updated VASL website which is brighter and easier to navigate.

We are, as ever, most grateful to all of those who have provided funds to support our work throughout 2019/20. The funding that we have received has ranged from individual donations and one off pots of funding from individuals, community groups and businesses to larger grants from organisations - in total 11 different sources. We are extremely grateful to the Market Harborough and the Bowden's Charity for their pledge of a grant towards our core funding for a five-year period.

The financial period covered by the accounts and this report was a 12 month period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. The annual income was £545,889 (2019: £498,237) and the total costs were £506,048 (2019: £526,286). This resulted in a net surplus of £39,841 (2019: £28,049 deficit). There was a £40,336 surplus in restricted funds (2019: £33,589 deficit) (primarily due to receipt of grants in advance) and a £495 deficit in unrestricted funds (2019: £5,540 surplus).

VASL continues to operate in a period of considerable financial uncertainty in relation to core funding from statutory bodies and project funding from other agencies. In view of this the Trustees considered it prudent to retain a designated financial reserve of £110,000 to cover contingencies.

Gail then asked for any questions.

She was asked how the income compared to last years income? It was confirmed that our income had increased by £39,000 but the costs had decreased which was very good.

Gail then recommended the acceptance of the Accounts for 2019/20



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Proposer: Mike Herbert
Seconded: Roger Lewin

The Accounts for 2019/20 were **APPROVED** with no objections

5. Resolution 2:- Trustees Retirement by Rotation and Re Elections

One Trustee had been appointed by the Board of Trustees this year: Martin Dyke. Martyn has made an excellent contribution to the Board since his appointment in May. Martyn is not able to continue as a trustee so will not be standing for election onto the Board. Martyn was thanked for all he has done for us.

One of our longer serving Trustees, Peter Van Herrewege, stood down in May. Peter was thanked for his time as a Trustee.

Of the existing Trustees two need to step down as required each year: Sarah Cawdell and Gail Lamb. They are both willing to be re-elected.

Proposer – Mike Herbert
Secunder – Martyn Dyke

The re elections of Sarah Cawdell and Gail Lamb were **APPROVED** with no objections.

Kate Godber and Linda Jones are willing to be re-elected.

Mike Herbert has decided to stand down this year after 12 years as a trustee with VASL. Linda Jones thanked Mike for his long standing support as a Trustee and presented him (virtually) with a gift of an engraved glass in recognition of his excellent contribution. Mike thanked VASL for it.

6. Resolution 3:- Election of Trustees Appointed during the last year

None. This has been dealt with under Resolution 2 as Martyn Dyke who had been appointed was not standing for election.

7. Resolution 5:- Appointment and remuneration of Independent Examiner/ Auditor

Proposer - Gail Lamb proposed that the auditors should remain as ET Pearson
Seconded – Sarah Cawdell

APPROVED unanimously.

8. Any other Business

There was no other business from the floor.



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9. Date of next Board of Trustees Meeting – Monday 26th October 2020

Due to the current situation with COVID 19 the board of Trustees are meeting on a monthly basis.

10. Formal business meeting closed

11. Presentation

Linda then introduced Maureen O'Malley, Charity Manager, to speak about VASL.

Maureen said that it has been another year of challenges and changes for VASL.

During the early part of the year the board undertook a review of our Young Carers Group following the resignation of our longstanding Young Carers Manager. The Young Carers Project was relaunched in May following the appointment of a new Manager and an agreed partnership with a local youth organisation, HCYC (Harborough District Children's and Young Peoples Charity). VASL signed an agreement with HCYC to provide Young Peoples Safeguarding and youth practise support and supervision for our Young Carers Manager. This partnership has proved to be invaluable and allowed our Young Carers Group to thrive.

Towards the end of the year VASL was informed that the organisation had been nominated by a Harborough District Councillor for the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. We were visited at the offices by Mr Richard Brooks, Deputy Lieutenant, who spent time talking to trustees, staff and volunteers. In the New year we also successfully reapplied, and were awarded, our Investing in Volunteers accreditation for another three years.

Of course, no one could have predicted the end of the year for VASL and the rest of the world when the Covid19 crisis hit. VASL staff moved from Torch Trust to homeworking on the 18th March 2020. We are extremely proud of all staff, trustees and volunteers who stepped up to this incredible challenge and adapted our services and support quickly to support the most vulnerable in our community. We quickly forged a partnership with Harborough District Council to recruit Covid19 Volunteers



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and address the very basic needs, such as shopping, medication collection and providing a listening ear, to those who were lonely, isolated and anxious.

We now look forward to continuing to support those most in need as the Covid 19 crises continues.

Despite all the challenges we have had another successful year. I am still proud and grateful to be at the helm of VASL, supported by a fabulous trustee board, staff team and the many volunteers who work tirelessly to support our projects.

Support for Carers continue to provide support and advice to unpaid family carers across Leicestershire. In November 2019 we were successful in securing the tender for a further 2 +1 years. There are a few changes in delivery of the service which now includes 7 evening carers' groups across the County, closer partnership working with GP surgeries plus offering a 24 hour urgent response time to a referral. We have also been successful in taking on another De Montfort University intern. SFC have implemented 5 carers' clinics in GP surgeries; unfortunately these had only just got up and running, along with the evening carers' groups, when they were postponed due to Corvid. The team had worked extremely hard getting this in place by March 2020. A new carers' guide booklet has been designed by the team; it is a huge success, with many GP surgeries, including LAC workers, using them as a carers' information pack.

VASL's Carers Website, www.supportforcarers.org continues to provide up to date, relevant information to Carers and Professionals across Leicestershire.

The **Young Carers Project** runs a fortnightly evening activity group at The Cube youth centre in Market Harborough. The centre has excellent facilities, including a coffee bar and well-equipped kitchen, pool table, table tennis, basketball, table football, games consoles and a large outdoor area. We offer snacks and refreshments, and run activities including arts and crafts, baking and cooking workshops and games evenings. We are able to offer transport to and from the group, thanks to our wonderful team of volunteer drivers and chaperones. Transport is crucial and often means the difference as to whether a young carer can attend the group or not. This makes our Project unique as no other Young Carers group in Leicestershire is able to provide transport to service users. During the school holidays, we run a variety of trips which gives the young carers the chance to have fun and adventures that they would otherwise not be able to experience due to their home circumstances and caring responsibilities. Trips this year have included the Aquapark at Rutland Water, roller skating, Tamworth Snow Dome, go karting and several meals out. Referrals to the Project during the past year have increased by 200% on previous years' averages; 18 young carers have been referred this year from a variety of sources including Barnardos, Home Start, Bower House, and some self-referrals.

Community Champions goes from strength to strength – we now have 80 volunteers (including 2 in New Zealand !) who provide regular social contact to clients through weekly home visits, accompanying clients out into the community, regular telephone calls, and being pen pals or email pals. Our digital volunteers provide one to one support at home, and since October 2019 have run monthly sessions in Market Harborough library, showing older people how to use

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their smartphones and tablets to stay in touch with people, research information, pursue hobbies and book doctors' appointments online. We produce a monthly project newsletter for volunteers and clients, which shares information about project progress, signposts community information and gives details of forthcoming events. In this way we empower clients and volunteers to be active citizens. We hosted 12 monthly Community Gatherings with free accessible transport enabling 40 people to meet over coffee and cake at cafes and golf clubs. These events enabled people to make new friendships and hear from relevant community groups eg, Repair Café, the Well. We also hosted 11 quieter, smaller, non-Transport Community gatherings at cafes in the town where clients can make their own way there. We work in partnership with Harborough District Council, Leicestershire County Council, Adult Learning, Libraries and Museums to promote interventions that alleviate loneliness. This year we have also started inter-generational activities with Welland Academy and the Scouts which have been beneficial for all involved. We chair the Leicester Befriending Network to facilitate peer support. Our progress has been documented in an Impact Report and a qualitative Community Research report which have been shared with internal and external stakeholders. The project rapidly adapted its delivery mode when the social distancing restrictions imposed by Covid-19 meant that face to face events were no longer possible. Since the start of the pandemic, Community Champions volunteers are phoning, writing, or emailing people; and we know from feedback that this has made a positive difference, especially to people who have been shielding.

Our big recruitment campaign to recruit more volunteers continued in 2019; 15 new drivers joined the **Transport Team** this year, which brought our total number of drivers to 61 at the end March 2020. Our volunteer drivers drove 85,788 miles and completed 6,012 passenger journeys, taking people to health appointments, social/educational destinations and visiting loved ones in hospital or nursing homes.

Some of the lovely comments from our clients over the year:

"The volunteer driver went above and beyond the call of duty – what a very nice man".

"The driver was brilliant yesterday, he is an asset to VASL Car Scheme, very much appreciated the wonderful service".

"I always feel very safe with them, I consider we are very lucky to have this service".

"Your service has made a great difference to my getting to hospital".



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“Very helpful service, especially when anxious about medical appointments”.

Unfortunately, due to the Covid 19 Crisis, and considering the risk to volunteers and clients, all transport requests were suspended at the end of March. Many of VASL volunteer drivers and most of our transport clients, fall into the over 70's category, and following government guidelines were asked to shield for 12 weeks.

The **My Mind Matters** project team continues to provide a service to support individuals within the Harborough District by providing information, advice and navigation, and one to one support, around wellbeing. The aim of the project is to promote empowerment, emotional resilience, social inclusion and overcome social and personal barriers. During the Covid-19 pandemic, workshops took place virtually, over Zoom, but workshops usually run within areas of the district. The workshops cover topics such as the importance of social connections, self-esteem and coping techniques to encourage positive mental health. The project continues to build on its strengths through working closely with GP surgeries, organisations and partnerships within the community.

The majority of VASL services and projects are heavily reliant on the skills, time and expertise of our volunteers. As an organisation, we continue to provide quality volunteering opportunities, with excellent training and support. VASL volunteering opportunities are publicised and promoted on a regular basis. We hold the Investing in Volunteers Accreditation which is a recognised quality mark for volunteer involving organisations.

VASL continues to sit on key forums and engagement groups throughout Harborough District and wider Leicestershire. We are regularly consulted by health and social care to help identify and shape services that support our client groups and the wider community. We continue to have a close working relationship with Harborough District Council and responded quickly to the Covid-19 crisis by supporting the Covid Community Hub.

We are grateful to our funders for their support in 2019/20:
Leicestershire County Council, Harborough District Council, Market Harborough and the Bowden's Charity, National Lottery Community Fund, BBC Children in Need, Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Community Foundation, Lloyds Foundation, Leicestershire County Council Shire Grants, Postcode Community Trust, HDC Community Grants, Howard Watson Symington Memorial Charity. We have also received individual donations and one off pots of funding from individuals, community groups and businesses. Thank You.

Following Maureen's comments, Kerry Tunstall, Support for Carers Manager, thanked Maureen from all the VASL staff for her support.

Linda Jones, Chair of Trustees, also confirmed the unanimous support of the Board for Maureen and all the staff.

Maureen ended by officially thanking Linda for her commitment to VASL and said that we were very lucky to have her as the Chair of the Trustees.

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12. Meeting closed at 5.40 pm



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