

Voluntary Action South Leicestershire Annual General Meeting 2024

Venue: The AGM was held at Torch House, Torch Way, Northampton Road, Market
Harborough, LE16 9HL.

Date: Monday 30th September 2024

Time: 5.00pm

A G E N D A

1. Election of Chair of Meeting - Julia Synnott asked for nominations for the Chair for the meeting. Linda Jones was proposed.
Nomination – **Howard Grant**
Second – **Kate Godber**
Agreed.

2. Opening remarks from the Chair

Linda Jones took the chair. She gave a very warm welcome to VASL's 2024 AGM. Thank you to everyone for joining us. She went on:

It is good to see you and to be able to share with you what VASL has been doing over the last year.

I would like to especially welcome our guest speaker, Brendan Daly, Armed Forces Lead, Op Community Services Manager, Chair Armed Forces Staff Support Network, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust We look forward to hearing what you have to share with us.

Our Annual Report and Accounts for 2023-24 have been completed and they will be sent out to our members after today's meeting.

The Annual Report shows that VASL has had another excellent year. Our income has been sustained and our projects have continued to operate effectively - and been further developed.

We were delighted to continue our long-term relationship and contract with Leicestershire County Council for **Support for Carers** across the county, which

is in place until 2025. The team provide an excellent telephone advice service to family carers, together with holding meetings with carers in the districts. Our relationships with Health and Social Care are excellent. We were pleased to be able to respond to the County Council's request to provide grants, on their behalf, to family carers whose loved one was being discharged from hospital. This was part of the drive to reduce hospital numbers. The scheme unfortunately ended in March. It made a real difference to many carers.

We are delighted that our **Carer's Dementia Guardian** project is now well established, providing help and support to those who endure this tragic condition and their families. We have secured funding for the next 2 years from the Masonic Charitable Trust Fund, a new funder for us.

Our **Community Champions** Project continues to thrive. It is funded by the National Lottery until 2025. It enables us to provide a range of creative services and activities to reduce loneliness and isolation of those over 60. I was delighted that, a couple of months ago, a number of our clients, and Rohini Corfield the Manager of the Project, joined me in a sponsored walk around Welland Park in aid of World Vision. It was a lovely event.

Our digital volunteers host surgeries in Market Harborough and Lutterworth libraries to help older people get online which opens up so much more for them. A recent initiative is to help older, less technically knowledgeable, people to access and use the NHS App, helping them to order prescriptions, book GP appointments and access their medical records.

Our **Social Transport** scheme continues to be greatly valued. Using volunteer drivers to take clients to mostly medical appointments provides an essential service to those less mobile. We are pleased that we have also been able, with Harborough Community Transport, to provide social trips. We are so grateful to our lovely volunteer drivers. We are always looking for more; if you know anyone who would like to join us, we would love to hear from you.

Having first piloted our **Wellbeing Befriending Harborough** project, we have now secured funding from the National Lottery to continue and develop it. The project provides support, befriending and signposting to those with mild to moderate mental well-being challenges – sadly, so desperately needed by many.

Finally, we have enjoyed the opportunity to advise and support Carers through the **Energy Project**. Nearly £10,000 has been saved for Carers on their yearly energy bills, free loft insulation or debt write off. Such valuable, practical help which, again, makes a real difference.

The essential ingredients to the services provided by VASL are the creativity, innovation and the dedication of our managers, staff and 150 volunteers who help deliver them.

On behalf of our Board of Trustees I want to say how proud we are of them all. Thank you so much for all you do for VASL, our clients and our communities.

I also want to say some other 'thank yous', to:

A special 'thank you' to **Julia Synnott**, our Charity Manager, who has now been in post for nearly a year. It has been a sharp learning curve for her but she has risen to the challenge brilliantly.

My thanks too to my fellow **trustees**. We have had some changes over the year but the board remains committed to our unique role within the organisation. Every Charity must have trustees or committee members. They play a central role in supporting staff and seeking to further develop services to meet the needs in our communities. Thank you for your time, commitment and support.

I would also like to thank our funders, including, but not exclusively: Harborough District Council, Leicestershire County Council, the National Lottery, Leicestershire NHS, Market Harborough and Bowden's Charity and the Masonic Charitable Trust Fund.

Those who have fundraised for us again this year. We are always so grateful to the individuals, businesses, and other organisations who choose us as their Charity. Thank you, all.

And, lastly, to all of our members who continue to show such excellent support for VASL.

Thank you, everyone.

Now to move on to the business.

3. Apologies for absence – We have apologies from Lauren Wooley and Suzanne Packer
4. Resolution 1:- Adoption of the Annual Report and Year End Accounts 2023/24

Julia Synnott, Charity Manager, presented the Annual Report and Accounts.

VASL continued to thrive throughout 2023/24. All projects have successfully continued to grow, support Volunteers and Clients, and meet funding targets.

We have continued to raise our presence within the local community and have had fund raising events with local businesses. We have a good relationship with Market Harborough and The Bowden's Charity and meet regularly.

Following the successful pilot of the Dementia Guardian project, we applied for 2 years' funding to continue the service with the Masonic Charitable Trust and were successful. The project will continue until August 2026.

VASL continues to have the Investing in Volunteers and Trusted Charity Mark level 2 awards.

The Board of Trustees, led by Linda Jones, continued to oversee and support the everchanging developments of VASL. We have recruited 4 Trustees and 2 have stood down.

VASL is a highly successful, well run and financially secure charity and is in an excellent position to face the necessary changes during the coming year. Our focus will be to gain funding to continue our Community Champions project and work with NHS England on new collaborations.

We are, as ever, most grateful to all of those who have provided funds to support our work throughout 2023/24. 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 including:

- Leicestershire County Council,
- Harborough District Council,
- Market Harborough and the Bowden's Charity,
- National Lottery Community Fund,
- Leicestershire and Rutland Community Foundation,
- Leicestershire County Council Shire Grants,
- Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland NHS Trust.
- The Energy Savings Trust

Accounts:

VASL's Charitable activities have risen from £420k to £550k. This is primarily due to changes in Transport, so thank you to Lisa and the team. Our investment income has raised due to interest rates and our donations and legacies have increased.

We have seen an increase on expenditure; however, this is largely down to the cost of living salary increases.

The Chair asked for someone to propose the approval of the Annual Report and Year End Accounts 2023/24

Proposer: **Howard Grant**
Seconded: **Richard Clarke**
Vote for approval: **Voted**

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

Each year, our Articles of Association require a third of our Trustees to stand down and seek re-election. This year, it is the turn of Howard Grant and Richard Clarke. I am pleased that both are willing to be re-elected. The Chair asked for a proposer for their re-election.

Proposer: **Kate Godber**
Seconded: **Angela Holdsworth**
Vote for approval: **Voted**

6. Resolution 3:- Election of Trustees Appointed during the last year
There have been 2 new Trustees join us this year:

Lauren Woolley and Angela Holdsworth – we are delighted to have them on board. The AGM is required to formally elect them.

Proposer: **Kate Godber**
Seconded: **Howard Grant**
Vote for approval: **Voted**

7. Resolution 4:- Appointment and remuneration of Independent Examiner/
Auditor
We would like the AGM to re-appoint our Auditors: Edward Thomas Pearson & Sons.

Proposer: **Richard Clarke**
Seconded: **Angela Holdsworth**
Vote for approval: **Voted**

8. Any other business - None

9. Date of next Board of Trustees' Meeting – Monday 25 November at 5pm

10. Formal business meeting closed – 17:18

11. Talk by Brendan Daly, Armed Forces Lead, Op Community Services
Manager, Chair Armed Forces Staff Support Network, Leicestershire
Partnership NHS Trust

Brendan discussed his time after serving in the RAF, which included a period of homelessness. Brendan started volunteering with the NHS and this has now led to him becoming the Armed Forces Lead within the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust.

Brendan works in the Op Community service which aims to support veterans and their families who are experiencing challenges, including accessing services and isolation.

The Armed Forces Act 2022 says that anyone in armed forces services, including families should not face disadvantage in accessing health services. Therefore, their status should be recorded on their GP record. Brendan has started an initiative where he asks surgeries to put up posters to make sure that the Armed Forces Act is followed, called "I said I served".

Brendan is doing some work with alternate therapies to support mental health such as Equine Therapy and Swimming with Newfoundland Dogs.

Questions:

Howard Grant – what support is there for people seeking housing after leaving the armed forces?

Answer – It is up to the individual to find their own accommodation. There are welfare teams who can help but difficulties come when people are transitioning to civilian life.

Comments:

Jen Lyon – Thank you for opening our eyes to it.

Linda Jones – VASL will look into working with Brendan around supporting veterans who use our services, and consider whether the Board should sign up to the Veterans' Charter.

Jenny Young – Community Champions occasionally support people who have served in the forces and introduce them to the Veterans Breakfast and other charities to apply for grants. It would be good for VASL to know more about what is out there and signpost.

12. 17:52pm Close of meeting