

# Shire Training Workshops t/a OPENhouse

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

5.00pm, Monday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018

The Hall, The British School, Stroud

### 1. Welcome and Introductions by the Chair

The Chairman, Richard Brinton welcomed Members, Trustees and Service Users to the meeting.

In his opening address, Richard said that Shire Training Workshops/OPENHouse was celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> year and this represented an excellent achievement. He said this anniversary coincided with nearby Hawkwood College celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> year and meanwhile Prince Charles was also approaching the same milestone. Richard said there was soon to be a conference to celebrate Prince Charles' accomplishments. He quoted from Prince Charles' book "Harmony" in which HRH reflected upon the apparent world numbness in toleration of and understanding each other's religions. Richard said replications of this trait could also be found in many aspects of everyday modern life. Austerity has inflicted much hardship and injury to vulnerable people, particularly to children with special needs. The problems have been exacerbated by the adoption of silo mentalities many of those in positions of decision making. It was becoming all too easy to be pessimistic about this.

However, Richard said a number of worldwide movements were emerging which were trying to reverse this trend and gave as examples the New Story Hub movement and the book Blessed Unrest written by Paul Hawken.

Richard also drew on the evidence of positive health benefits which arise when people work together. He quoted the example of the work being done by the community of Frome. In all this Richard said there lay a challenge for OPENHouse to reach out and find new ways of collaboration. This would be the major task over the years ahead, to find and work together with organisations which have common interests for young people in need of help to deal with difficult circumstances.

Richard finished his opening address with a quote from Mahatma Gandhi:

"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."

### 2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Deborah Leah, Chloe Maliphant, Martin Large, John Marjoram.

### 3. Approval of 2017 AGM Minutes

It was proposed by that the Minutes of the 2017 AGM be approved and signed by the Chairman.

**Proposed:** Lucas Schoemaker                      **Seconded:** Nicki Severs

The proposal was agreed unanimously by those members present.

### 4. Presentation of Trustees' Reports for 2017/18

**Structure, Governance and Management**

Richard Brinton said the structure, governance and management of OPENHouse continued much as before with regular Trustees' meetings being held to scrutinise and review operations.

### **Education Overview**

The CEO, David McAuley said that over the course of the year each Department at OPENHouse had been reviewed against the criteria of does it meet the needs of today and does it remain viable. A significant outcome from this was that it had been determined that the Education Department no longer meet these criteria. David said he had been working with Commissioners to develop a plan to deal with this. Progress had been slow but a plan has emerged which will combine Education with Supporting People. A further aspect of the changes will be the closure of the music studio which has lost £330K over the last 6 years. Regrettably these changes have resulted in three staff being made redundant. While these were sad decisions, they were vital to the future viability of OPENHouse. David said education was not ceasing but was being re-focussed.

David said he would be continuing to speak to commissioners at GCC about the difficulties faced. The objective would be to find ways of working together. David said that OPENHouse had relied heavily on local government commissioned funding over the last 9 years and it was now time to look for income streams from new sources in order to build the organisation up. To this end it was planned to employ a fundraiser, but it would take time for results to filter through. Typically it took on average 24 months for a fundraiser to cover their costs.

Education staff and Members expressed their sadness that the Education Department was closing and hoped that OPENHouse didn't lose something that was very special in the process. David sympathised and said it had been a very hard decision to make but despite the changes, core values would be maintained.

Lucas Schoemaker said he was concerned that staff were not receiving sufficient training in Steiner principles. Richard Brinton said the Trustees had held a number of conversations around this subject. While not wishing to compromise Steiner principles, most of the people passing through OPENHouse are 18+ and the organisation has to find practical ways to enable them to re-connect with the world they have lost. To obtain funding for this, it has to be demonstrated how the money is being spend with evidence to show that young people are being enabled to move on to the next stage in life. The HR Manager, Anna Herbert, added that at recruitment interviews, candidates are asked how they can show a holistic approach in a person centred way. This process is regularly followed up during performance appraisals.

Lucas Schoemaker suggested land based learning may help excluded young people. He was a director of the Stroud based Biodynamic Land Trust and offered to work with OPENHouse. David thanked him for the offer and agreed to meet to see how this might help.

### **Housing and Support Overview**

The Team Leader, Christina Hardeley described the work at Painswick Inn at which accommodation was provided for up to 10 people aged between 16 and 25 who were in need of housing. She said that inevitably the students had a wide range of needs but it was important to establish and cater for the requirements of each individual. An essential aim was to establish a structure and through this to find ways of helping to link skills between students. Christina said she had become very impressed by how through this process the students are learning to show support for each other.

Christina introduced Gordon and Liam who were the two longest serving residents at Painswick Inn and had seen a lot of changes during their time there. Gordon and Liam said the provision of a lounge area had brought everyone together. Introducing night staff had also been really helpful as this had curtailed some of the night-time disturbances. Introducing fair share food had also been

valuable as it made money go further. There was still scope for further improvements in security, but in recent times there has been an overall improvement in living at Painswick Inn.

### **Enhanced Support Department**

David McAuley said Enhanced Support at Delmont's Lot continued to evolve. The challenge was to get the right mix of people. This often meant OPENHouse had to be picky in accepting residents, but it was also essential to ensure the accommodation was fully occupied.

### **HR & Central Support**

The HR Manager, Anna Herbert said, in recent times, it had been necessary for OPENHouse to go through huge changes in order to maintain its potential to deliver much needed services. Throughout this process one of the major challenges had been to recruit and retain quality staff. She said there was no obvious trend among people who left with only one mentioning pay as an issue. Recently there had been a decrease in male applicants and this could lead to OPENHouse having an all-female team.

Anna said a review of conditions was being undertaken with the aim of trying to improve staff remuneration in a number of forms. Some new initiatives were being introduced to the HR system and these would include an all-staff survey to be carried out later in the year. An apprenticeship scheme had also just been introduced. Anna said that while a lot of work remained to be done, OPENHouse was committed to working to its values of Integrity, Compassion and Excellence.

## **5. Presentation of Accounts and Annual Report for the year ending 31 March 2018**

The Accounts for the year ending 31 March 2017 were presented by David McAuley. His said preparation of the accounts for last year had been a very difficult process and had culminated in the recording of a loss of £115,365 for the year. However he said measures were being put in place to ensure the organisation has the best chance of pulling through these difficult financial times.

To illustrate this, he said that the deficit so far for 2018/19 stood at just £8K compared to £60K at the same point last year. David said OPENHouse had to be sustainable in order to move forward. He thanked Richard Brinton and the Trustees for their support and co-operation in striving to achieve this.

On the positive side, David said the overall balance sheet remained healthy with OPENHouse funds rising from £1.486M to £1.596M during the course of the year. The year had also seen a decrease in outstanding debts from £79K to £63K.

The Chairman then put forward the following **Resolution**:

**To adopt the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.**

**Proposed:** Nicki Severs                      **Seconded:** Andy Warner

On being put to the vote, the Resolution was passed unanimously.

## **6. Submitted Questions and Answers**

Members had been invited to submit questions which would be answered at the AGM. No written questions had been received.

## **7. Resignation from the Board of Trustees**

The Chairman said that during the year Jem Sweet and James Slated had resigned from the Board. He thanked them both for their contributions while serving as Trustees.

#### **8. Appointment to the Board of Trustees**

The Chairman said that since the last AGM, Eilis Cope had been co-opted to the Board and was now standing for formal election to the Board. Elise introduced herself to the AGM and described her background and reasons for wanting to become a Trustee.

The Chairman then put forward the following **Resolution**:

**To appoint Elise Cope to the Board of Trustees of OPENhouse.**

**Proposed:** Andy Warner                      **Seconded:** Lucas Schoemaker

On being put to the vote, the Resolution was passed unanimously.

#### **9. Re-appointment of Auditors**

David McAuley wished to record special thanks to the auditors, Hewitt Warren for carrying out £2.5K of additional work for no charge in preparing the accounts and he put forward the following **Resolution**:

**To re-appoint Hewitt Warren Ltd as auditors for the current year.**

**Proposed:** Elise Cope                      **Seconded :** Andy Warner

On being put to the vote, the Resolution was passed unanimously.

#### **10. Presentation by CEO on last 12 months**

David McAuley said the last 12 months had been a year of getting to grips with many of the underlying problems at OPENHouse. Looking forward, the mission remained the same as before but with clearer values. An accommodation feasibility study has been undertaken and work to seek funding for refurbishments was now under way. £75K had been awarded last week with a further £3K to follow from Stroud Town Council. If a target of £100K could be achieved, this would trigger match funding from the District Council.

David said his job was to make OPENHouse sustainable and this started with the prime purpose of ensuring the wellbeing of the clients.

#### **11. Any Other Business**

There was no further business for discussion.

#### **12. Close of AGM**

Richard Brinton brought the AGM to a close by thanking everyone for the contributions they brought to the meeting and invited them to stay on for refreshments. He thanked those who had helped to prepare the food and drinks. He then lit the candles on the OPENHouse 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary cake.

The AGM closed at 7.10pm.