



READING ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND
MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON
WEDNESDAY 21ST OCTOBER 2015

Present:

Alan Futter (Chair), Sarah Hacker (Mayor), Bill Kennedy (Treasurer), Ginny Williams (Manager), Tom Barker, Cynthia Beard, Terry Boyington, Bob Bristow, Julia Canham, Pete Canham, Ann Canterbury, Geoff Canterbury, Danuta Curtis, Rod Dalglish, Alan Dare, Shirley Englefield, Mike Ferriday, Jenny Ferriday, Chimene Fitzgibbon, Keith Hester, Charles Jagger, Paddi Lilley, Bob O'Neil, Mick Paige, Amanda Pocock, Karen Rowland, Mike Sadler, Jenny Sadler, Alf Turner, Barbara Turner, Sarah Watts, Sheila Whitfield.

Alan Futter welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanked our patron the Mayor, Sarah Hacker, for attending, and passed the chair of the meeting on to her.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Sue Allen, Michael Beakhouse, Reading Borough Council, Ann Price and Nina Barnes.

There were no apologies from the floor.

2. Minutes of AGM on 15th October 2014

These minutes were voted a true and accurate account of proceedings.

3. General Matters

Sarah Hacker invited Alan Futter to summarise the key issues from the previous 12 months.

Alan Futter informed the meeting that it has been a difficult year for all small charities and it was particularly difficult for fundraising. He stated that RAB's accounts are reasonably strong; however the Charity is living beyond its means year on year and it was proving very challenging to raise money for revenue items.

Although financially it had been challenging, in terms of the Charity's operations it has been an excellent year. Particular thanks were given to RAB's team of visiting officers. Their work was praised as the most important service RAB provides for the blind and sight impaired people of Reading, and the number of visits increased this year to 1,186.

As always the Social Club has provided a full and varied program of activities ranging from singers, dancing and attendees giving talks; the talk from hearing dogs proved especially popular. Thanks needs to go to Julia Canham for all her hard work in making this happen.

The Young At Heart club has enjoyed great success under the leadership of Sarah Watts. Trips have included the Isle of Wight, The National Trust and a holiday. The range of activities has been excellent, and particular thanks are due to Sarah for all her hard work.

The rambling club continues to be enjoyed, with about 20 rambles taking place over the year.

The craft club is still going strong, as is the men's woodworking classes.

I.T. classes are now up and running, for which thanks are due to Mike Ferriday.

Thanks were given to all staff members, who regularly exceed the hours of work they are contracted for, and have given a sterling service over the past 12 months.

Thanks as always go to all the various volunteers, in the kitchen, in the Reading Room, on rambles, and as general helpers, without whom RAB would be unable to function. Special thanks were given to Mick Paige.

And finally Alan extended his very sincere thanks on behalf of the whole charity to Ginny Williams, whose input over the past year has been transformative.

4. Financial Statements

Bill Kennedy, Treasurer, addressed the meeting, giving a detailed commentary on the Charity's accounts.

Bill stated that there was a big decline in donations in comparison to the previous year; however grants had remained more constant. In total for 2014/15 RAB had received donations of £78,184 compared to £143,398 during 2013/14. Expenditure had risen to £151,871 which left an overall deficit for the year of £73,687. Bill asked for any questions from the floor but there were none.

Sarah Hacker proposed that the financial statements be adopted. This was approved by all present.

5. Election of Trustees

Bob Bristow and Bob O'Neil are due to retire by rotation and are willing to seek re-election. This was proposed by Sarah Watts and seconded by Cynthia Beard.

6. Election of Officers

Alan Futter was retiring as Chairman and Terry Boyington as Vice-Chairman. Bob Bristow was willing to stand as Chairman and Bill Kennedy was willing to stand as Vice Chairman. This was approved by all present.

7. Amendment to Articles of Association

It was proposed by Alan Futter that a minor change was made to the Memorandum and Articles of Association as RAB would like to instate a small annual membership fee. People who are registered would still receive the service; however RAB would encourage them to become members.

Paddi Lilley raised an issue with regard Associated Members and asked whether RAB was allowed to enter into partnerships as matters currently stand? Alan Futter replied that we are currently excluded from entering into partnerships and he wished to make it clear that RAB are not currently in any form of partnership. Mick Paige asked if there were any charities specifically in mind and Alan Futter responded that there were not and that the matter was being raised as we were being encouraged to work in partnership with other organisations to bid for funding from Reading Borough Council.

The proposal was approved.

8. Any Other Business

Ann Canterbury brought the 50/50 club to the attention of the meeting. She explained the concept and how it would work in practise, and estimated that it would raise at least £600 for RAB. Anyone looking for further details was advised to contact her.

Mike Ferriday stated that he felt it was not easy to read the AGM paperwork in the format they were presented in. He felt that for a charity that caters for the needs of the blind and sight impaired the documents issued are ill-suited. He made the suggestion that all documentation should be issued in advance of the meeting itself, and made available online so that people could take advantage of screen reading software. Alan Futter commented that this would be more efficient.

Paddi Lilley raised the issue of the incorrect date for the Charity's foundation being on the trustee report. The date quoted was 1883, but the Charity's foundation was actually in 1926, a point on which she was certain as it had been founded by her grandfather. Karen Rowlands suggested that the wording could be changed to reflect and honour the history of all charitable support for the blind community in Reading.

Tom Barker drew the attention of the meeting to his own research in the archives of the local press: in 1883 the "Reading Blind Aid Society" was founded by Mr. Walford – which was how Walford Hall got its name. When the "Blind Person's Act" was passed by parliament in 1920, local authorities were made responsible for the care of blind people in their districts for the first time. Local charities worked in collaboration with local authorities to ensure provision of support. In Reading the main point to note was that there was a continuity in the service for blind people from 1883 up till 1926, when there was a distinct change, and Reading Association for the Blind was formed, with the residual funds of the previous charity, along with the premises, passing to RAB. Tom wanted to note that the change in memorandum 4.1, voted on above, in which the dissolution of the status of Associate Member was passed, was merely a reflection of the current reality, since RAB hasn't kept a comprehensive register of blind and visually impaired people in Reading for at least twenty years. However, although it was a reflection of reality, the change marked the passing of an era, and that it was sad, because it was a definitive break from the past which should not pass unnoted.

Sarah Hacker thanked Alan Futter as outgoing Chairman and invited Bob Bristow to take the Chair.

Bob Bristow thanked Sarah Hacker for chairing the meeting and thanked all the members for attending and closed the meeting by inviting everyone to help themselves to refreshments.