



Houghton Regis Helpers
07587 004514

Minutes of 10th Annual General Meeting
10 February 2022
19.00 hrs

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, Houghton Regis Town Council

Present Members (volunteers)

Eric Gallucci (Chair), Terry Jones (Vice-Chair), Jenny Gallucci (Secretary), Caprese Green (Treasurer), Rae Bird, Tara Earnshaw, Yvonne Farrell, Sarah Gelsthorp, Susan Goodchild, Charlene McCoppin, Sheila North, Martha Nunes, Sofie Richards, Zunaira Sabih, Betty Todd

Guests

Mike Fayers (BedsRCC), Cllr Ken Wattingham, Roger Turner (Houghton Regis Heritage Society)

Apologies

Members (volunteers): Lucy Downs, Sandra Gibb, Laura Hart, Donna Hercock, Ange Kings, Christine Lyus, Kev Merridew, Brian Mew, Charlie Miller, Theresa O'Shea, Bryan Owen, Omer Shoaib, James Stroebel, Paulette Tompkins, Anne & Paul White

1. Welcome and Apologies:

EG welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies received from several members – noted above.

2. Minutes of 9th AGM held 9 February 2021:

Unanimously agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters Arising:

No Matters Arising

4. Presentation of Annual Report 2021:

A copy of the Annual Report is included with these Minutes in Houghton Regis Helpers AGM folder.

JG summarised the report:

Volunteers 2021: another busy year, with Covid continuing. Started 2021 with 59 volunteers on the books, some of whom sensibly stepped back due to shielding or self-isolating. JG particularly thanked the volunteers who joined us during the pandemic and continue to support us. Four new volunteers joined us during 2021 but we also said goodbye to eleven volunteers who are now back working full-time and can no longer give their time. JG thanked them all.

Condolences expressed to Betty on the passing of Peter Todd, who died in February 2021 – a long standing founder member of the group

Job Summary and Clients 2021: JG reported that volunteers completed 2430 jobs in 2021, the second highest achievement since our launch ten years ago, due to the unprecedented rise in requests for help during the Coronavirus pandemic. In 2021 we saw a rise in gardening and outdoor jobs, after these jobs were restricted in 2020 due to the pandemic. Indoor jobs also increased in 2021 after we started home visits again. Shopping and prescription collecting have reduced from 2020 but remain higher numbers of calls than pre-Covid. Advice and advocacy remain high as well as befriending and signposting to other agencies and professionals for callers from Houghton Regis and other areas. Once risk assessments and precautions were put in place for volunteer drivers, we were able to give more lifts to medical appointments and other activities during the year. JG reported that 225 individual residents were helped, not including children in families – more younger families are requesting help or being referred to us, particularly for food parcels from the food

banks. JG commented on Houghton Regis being an area of high deprivation and concerns for the vulnerable, especially with rising costs, means we expect to continue to see a rise of requests of this kind. We continue to work with other professionals and in partnership with the Well-being team at Titan Primary Care Network; Time2Connect; and with the Town Council.

Celebrating 10 Years: 1st December 2021 saw the celebration of ten years since our launch in 2011 - a summary of the ten years is included in the report. JG referred to the many social and community events volunteers and clients used to enjoy that were cancelled during Covid and hopes that 2022 brings a return of these events, such as our monthly coffee mornings, and an opportunity to celebrate the Birthday when the weather is warmer this year.

Continuing Impact of Covid-19: JG summarised the impact of Covid-19 on the year on fund-raising, with most fund-raising opportunities cancelled. We were fortunate to receive funding support, including a grant of £1000 from Bedfordshire & Luton Community Foundation - from the Whitbread Chairman's Fund - and a donation of £200 from Houghton Regis Town Council. Asda Foundation donated £300 and patients at Wheatfield Pharmacy collected £90.06 in thanks for Houghton Regis Helpers support in collecting and delivering prescriptions. JG thanked volunteers for helping raise over £1300 by delivering Neighbour Plan leaflets and the Town Crier on behalf of Houghton Regis Town Council, and thanks to Morrisons for the donation of prizes for our stall at Houghton Rocks.

5. Financial Report and Approval of End of Year Accounts 2021:

The end of year accounts, examined and confirmed as fairly stated by Independent Scrutineer, Roger Turner, were presented to the meeting.

Expenses were able to be spread across the unrestricted and restricted funds as the Whitbread Chairman's Fund Grant for £1000 was allocated towards running costs.

Balance b/f from 2020: £1331.48

Total Income for 2021: £3723.51

(Unrestricted Fund £2723.51 / Restricted Fund: BLCF (Whitbread's) £1000)

Expenditure in 2021: £2520.13

Balance c/f at end of 2021: £2534.86

Costs for PPE and reimbursement of travel costs for volunteer drivers continued during Covid lockdown in 2021. Thanks was given to the volunteers who supported residents to attend appointments for their vaccinations and those who helped at the vaccination centre.

Members approved the accounts for 2021.

6. Appointment of Independent Scrutineer of Accounts for 2022:

EG thanked Roger Turner for his thorough and diligent examination of the 2021 accounts.

EG proposed RT be appointed Independent Scrutineer for the accounts ending 2022 and asked RT if he would be willing to accept the role. RT replied that he would be pleased to do this and was duly appointed.

RT commented the task was very straight forward, the accounts presented clearly. One query was the Microsoft Office 365 subscription package which would provide TEAMS for free if we subscribed as a charity. MF from Beds RCC agreed to investigate whether groups can use their charity number for this purpose.

7. Election of Honorary Officers

Vice-Chair TJ explained to the meeting that the Officer roles of Chair and Treasurer are up for election this year. Officers normally stand for a 2-year period of office.

7.1 Thanks to Officers:

Before proceeding with the elections TJ proposed a vote of thanks to EG for at least the past two years as Chair, and to CG for being Treasurer for the last year. TJ also proposed a vote of thanks to JG as Secretary who has worked extremely hard in this challenging and difficult year.

7.2 Elections:

TJ informed members that EG is nominated as Chair but wishes to stand for one-year only.
Eric Gallucci nominated as Chair, seconded by BT

EG re-elected unopposed and will remain in post until AGM 2023.

Charlene McCoppin nominated as Treasurer, seconded by YF

CMcC elected unopposed and will remain in post until AGM 2024.

8. Election of Committee:

EG informed the meeting that the following members have been nominated and agree to stand for re-election to the Committee: *Rae Bird, Yvonne Farrell, Christine Lyus and Betty Todd.*

One new nominee who wishes to stand for the Committee – *Zunaira Sabih.*

Members unanimously elected these members to the Committee.

Committee members remain in post until AGM 2023

9. Looking ahead to 2022:

JG commented that we hope there will be more opportunities this year for activities and events.

The opening of All Saints View should be within the next couple of months. The Helpers have been approached to support residents in the transition from Red House Court to settle them in, and coffee mornings and other events may once again be possible in the building.

Clients have asked if we are planning an activity for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the committee will discuss what we can offer.

JG again commented on the expected rise in requests from vulnerable adults and families in the coming year and informed members we are working in partnership with the Trussell Trust food banks in Houghton Regis and Dunstable to collect food parcels for those without transport and living in Houghton Regis.

JG introduced a new project being set up by the Town Council called the 'Later Living Social Group' and called on TE to tell us about the scheme. TE (Community Development Officer) explained a group of retired residents have formed a committee to provide activities and events for residents, starting with 'Time for Tea & Crumpets' on the first Tuesday in the month. Posters available at the meeting. Further activities and trips will be planned throughout the year. The group is for retired residents who want to make new friends and enjoy meeting up together.

10. Volunteer comments / feedback:

EG invited members to comment and give feedback on their experiences during the year.

SG expressed her thanks to all the volunteers for the work they have done throughout the year. She feels ever indebted for the way volunteers help to change lives, the time given to listen to others in times of distress, and wonders 'where were we' before Houghton Regis Helpers started. SG commented that the evidence is in the report but what volunteers actually achieve goes far beyond this and that Houghton Regis Helpers is well respected across the whole of Central Bedfordshire. SG praised the partnership working and added that, in her role as Ward Cllr, she knows the group is highly regarded for this work and as part of Houghton Together. SG thanked volunteers and wished us success for the coming year.

MF, on behalf of Beds RCC, commented that it does not seem ten years since the group started, with a small steering group and just a few volunteers. MF congratulated the group on how it has grown.

11. Thank You's:

EG expressed thanks to Ange Kings who has stood down from the committee after six years. He thanked her for her work and wishes her well.

EG thanked CG for keeping the accounts so well.

EG closed the meeting by thanking everybody for making it possible for Houghton Regis Helpers to continue and for all they do and for attending the meeting. All gave applause in thanks.