



Houghton Regis Helpers
07587 004514

Minutes of 11th Annual General Meeting
9 February 2023
18.45 hrs

VENUE: COUNCIL CHAMBER, Houghton Regis Town Council

Present **Members (volunteers)**
Eric Gallucci (Chair), Terry Jones (Vice-Chair), Jenny Gallucci (Secretary), Edward Costello, Yvonne Farrell, Susan Goodchild, Joan Hensbrey, Christine Lyus, Kev Merridew, Sheila North, Theresa O'Shea, Zunaira Sabih, Sue Thorne
Guests
Cllr Ken Wattingham, Roger Turner (Independent Scrutineer), Fr Diego Galanzino (All Saints' Church)

Apologies **Members (volunteers):** Rae Bird, Tara Earnshaw, Sarah Gelsthorp, Donna Hercock, Linda Johnson, Charlene McCoppin (Treasurer), Martha Nunes, Betty Todd, Paulette Tompkins, Anne & Paul White
Guests: Susan Lousada (Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire), Mike Fayers (Beds RCC) Rachel Pearce (Linnmere Estates), Sharon Warboys (Don't Let Dunstable Die)

1. Welcome and Apologies:

EG warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting.
Apologies received from several members and guests – as noted above.

2. Minutes of 10th AGM held 10 February 2022:

Members agreed the Minutes are a true record and they were signed by the Chair.

3. Matters Arising:

No Matters Arising

4. Presentation of Annual Report 2022:

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

JG summarised the report, starting by explaining who the Honorary Officers were in 2022. Normally officers are elected on two-year rotation however in 2022 the Chair EG elected to stand for one year only therefore three officer roles are due for election this year. CMcC, elected as Treasurer in 2022, remains in post for one more year.

Volunteers 2022: started 2022 with 51 volunteers on the books, some of whom have stepped down during the year, mainly those who kindly joined up during Covid pandemic and have now returned to work. Four volunteers joined the group in 2022 and we end the year with 47 signed up.

Job Summary 2022: JG referred to the graph in the Report which draws a comparison between jobs completed in 2021 and 2022. A big difference is in the number of prescriptions collected – 339 during the Covid pandemic compared to 49 in 2022 as more clients now collect their own again.

Befriending continues to be one of the biggest roles for volunteers, slight decrease in phone calls as we have come out of Covid but home visits and walks with clients are regular. Driving jobs increased in 2022 as the social distancing and other restrictions due to Covid were lifted.

Overall JG reported that 2022 was a record year with 3339 jobs completed and thanked volunteers for their wonderful support. Teamwork is important to volunteers and post-Covid there have been more opportunities to work as a team, for example – gardening, fund raising and helping with refreshments.

Clients 2022: JG reported that during 2022 volunteers supported 312 residents, 107 of whom requested help for the first time. Increasing number of calls from new developments as the town grows, particularly Bidwell West. We also started accepting requests from residents in the village of Chalton, not covered by any other good neighbour scheme. The group continues to work in partnership with other professionals and other organisations – more than 50 during 2022, with referrals, joint meetings and sharing information. This was a record number last year.

Cost of Living Crisis is affecting many families and JG reported that we are in receipt of a monthly cost of living donation from Houghton Regis Town Council (HRTC) to support households with the purchase of essential provisions, top-ups for pre-paid meters, and we gave gifts for children at Christmas. Volunteers also delivered, on behalf of HRTC, Packs of Support during December to residents who were struggling in the winter months. The packs and gifts were warmly received. JG reported that we continue to work with the Food Banks with collection and delivery of food parcels for clients who cannot get to the Food Bank themselves. At the end of 2022 we started working with the charity Small Acts of Kindness, based in Hertfordshire, who provide Warm in Winter bags and have expanded their service into Bedfordshire. We have 20 bags to deliver to nominated residents, over the age of 55. The charity also donated mugs, hot drinks packs and activity books in December which were given as gifts to residents who attended our Christmas Celebration Tea.

Celebrations in 2022: we were finally able to celebrate our 10th Birthday with an afternoon tea in July 2022, which was enjoyed by all. Other events starting up again in 2022 were Cheering Volunteering: ten volunteers attended an afternoon tea; Festival for Older People – several volunteers and residents attended; Christmas Celebration tea, with musical entertainment, for our residents – first time the event has been held for three years and the feedback has been wonderful.

Committee Report 2022: JG summarised the work of the committee during the year – meetings; review of policies; community and other events attended as representatives of Houghton Regis Helpers.

Thank you: JG closed her report with Thank you's to all our volunteers, colleagues and supporters, with special reference to the organisations and individuals who have provided venues for meetings and events, and awarded grants and donations during 2022. JG reminded volunteers and supporters that our newsletter E-News is emailed out bi-monthly and invited guests to sign up to receive the newsletters if they do not already receive it.

Comment: TO'S commented on the Safeguarding training offered in 2022 that she had been unable to attend and if there will be more sessions coming up. JG stated that further training sessions will be planned for Spring 2023.

5. Financial Report and Approval of End of Year Accounts 2022:

In the absence of the Treasurer JG presented the end of year accounts, examined and confirmed as fairly stated by Independent Scrutineer, Roger Turner.

JG explained that in addition to the Unrestricted Funds, expenditure was spread across three Restricted funds in 2022.

The Bedford and Luton Community Foundation (Whitbread Chairman's Fund) Grant for £1000 that was allocated towards running costs, including admin and phone.

The HRTC Later Living Social Group funding, allocated to support transport of members of the group to events.

The HRTC Cost of Living Crisis funding, being used to support families struggling with food costs, energy bills and other household costs.

Total Income for 2022: £4083.14

Total expenditure in 2022: £3265.01

Balance b/f at end of 2021: £2534.86

Surplus 2022: £ 818.13

Balance c/f at end of 2022: £3352.99

JG commented that the Cost of Living Crisis funding is paid monthly and will continue to June 2023. SG informed the meeting that the Town Council have recently agreed to extend the Cost of Living Crisis funding beyond June 2023 and we should be informed soon.

Members approved the accounts for 2022.

6. Election of Honorary Officer - Chair

EG informed the meeting that the Officer role of Chair is up for election for one year only.

TJ nominated as Chair, seconded by YF and ZS

TJ unanimously elected and will remain in post until AGM 2024.

At this point in the meeting, TJ takes over role of Chair of the AGM.

7. Election of Honorary Officers – Vice-Chair and Secretary

TJ informed members that the Officer roles of Vice-Chair and Secretary are up for election for two years.

Eric Gallucci nominated as Vice-Chair, seconded by CL and KM

EG unanimously elected and will remain in post until AGM 2025

Jenny Gallucci nominated as Secretary, seconded by EC and ZS

JG unanimously elected and will remain in post until AGM 2025.

8. Election of Committee:

TJ thanked the committee who have been in post for the past year and 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, Zunaira Sabih, Betty Todd.

Members unanimously elected these members to the Committee.

Committee members remain in post until AGM 2024.

9. Appointment of Independent Scrutineer of Accounts for 2023:

TJ and JG thanked Roger Turner for his thorough scrutiny of the 2022 accounts.

JG proposed RT be appointed Independent Scrutineer for the accounts year ending 2023.

TJ asked RT if he would be willing to accept the role. RT replied that he would be happy to and was appointed unopposed by members.

RT commented that the accounts were well presented and that it's amazing the work we do over the year and a stunning amount of work is carried out by the group for only £4000 a year. JG thanked RT and commented that this is due to the goodwill of volunteers.

10. Thank You's:

TJ thanked all the volunteers for their hard work and commitment and thanked RT again for scrutinising the accounts. TJ thanked volunteers who willingly say Yes when responding to phone requests to help others.

TJ thanked EG for being Chair for a number of years, for leading meetings with humility and kindness, and for agreeing to take over as Vice-Chair. TJ thanked JG for continuing to be Secretary and who shoulders most of the work behind the scenes to enable others to feel good about their work helping others. TJ thanked JG for the fabulous report, year after year, and for all she does for the group.

A round of applause followed.

TJ invited the attendees to comment or give a Thank you.

SG thanked TJ and commented on how blessed we are as a community to have Houghton Regis Helpers. In particular, that the community is stronger for the partnership working that takes place, with the growing community in the new developments, and the recognition within Adult Social Care of the work and value of the group.

ST thanked everyone for the warm welcome she received tonight, having taken a step back for a while she would like to become more involved again and being made so welcome was lovely.

RT commented on the increasing help we are giving residents in Bidwell West and was this the same in the new Linmere Estate developments? JG explained that fewer residents have moved in to Linmere yet and there have been no requests, but we are working in close partnership with the Estates Manager, leaflets are being distributed and the area has more infrastructure in place than in Bidwell West – community hall, shop, café, frequent bus. SG commented on the differences between the two developments with regard to social and affordable housing and informed the meeting that a temporary community centre will be in place soon in Bidwell West.

TJ closed the meeting with a Thank you to all who attended.

TJ asked committee members to stay behind to agree next meeting date and invited any Volunteer interested in joining the committee to please stay behind as well.

*(*see note below)*

Annual General Meeting ended at 19.20 hrs

Minutes by JG 12.02.2023.

***Co-option of member to Committee**

Following the meeting volunteer Sue Thorne expressed an interest in re-joining the committee. Committee members unanimously agreed to co-opt ST to the committee.