



**Houghton Regis
Helpers
07587 004514**

**Minutes of 12th Annual General Meeting
14th February 2024 19.00 hrs**

VENUE: COUNCIL CHAMBER, Houghton Regis Town Council

Present

Members (volunteers)

Eric Gallucci (Vice-Chair), Brian Mew (Treasurer), Jenny Gallucci (Secretary), Rae Bird, Michael Carpenter, Edward Costello, Roger Croft, Yvonne Farrell, Joan Hensbrey, Angela Kings, Christine Lyus, Kev Merridew, Sheila North, Theresa O'Shea, Debbie Pointing, Norman Reading, Jacque Taylor, Sue Thorne

Guests

Cllr Jimmy Carroll (Town Mayor), Cllr Elaine Cooper (Deputy Town Mayor), Cllr Susan Goodchild

Apologies

Members (volunteers): Lucy Downs, Sarah Gelsthorp, Linda Johnson, Charlie & Coral Miller, Martha Nunes, Sofie Richards, James Stroebel, Paulette Tompkins, Anne & Paul White

Guests: Ismail Anilmis (Deputy L-L), Russell Beard (High Sheriff of Bedfordshire), Mike Fayers (BedsRCC), Vicky Harding (Titan PCN), Susan Lousada (Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire), Rob Oakley (Deputy L-L), Andrew Selous (MP), Roger Turner (Independent Scrutineer)

In the absence of a Chair, the Vice-Chair EG led the meeting.

1. Welcome and Apologies:

EG warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting, including the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor. Apologies received from several members and guests – as noted above.

2. Minutes of 11th AGM held 9th February 2023:

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

3. Matters Arising:

Item 5: Cost of Living Crisis Funding from HR Town Council was extended to March 2024.

Item 6: Chair, Terry Jones, elected at AGM 2023 resigned from the role in November 2023.

4. Presentation of Annual Report 2023:

A copy of the Annual Report is included with these Minutes in Houghton Regis Helpers AGM folder. JG summarised the **report**, starting with thanks and congratulations to all volunteers for help and support in achieving HM The King's Award for Voluntary Service. JG announced that the Award will be presented by HM The Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire on Thursday 18th April 2024.

Volunteers 2023: we welcomed two new volunteers during 2023 and welcomed back AK to the group. At the close of 2023 there were 42 volunteers signed up.

Job Summary 2023: JG referred to the quarterly reports we send to BedsRCC, summarising the number of jobs completed during the year through the graph in the Report. The graph compares number of jobs completed in 2023 with 2022, with a new record total of 4072 jobs for 2023.

Befriending, gardening, and prescription collections were the main areas of increase. JG thanked the gardening team of volunteers for tackling 34 gardens during 2023, compared to 16 in 2022, with an average of three visits per garden.

Clients 2023: JG reported that during 2023 volunteers helped 375 residents, 119 of whom requested help for the first time. Requests for support was received across all wards, including Bidwell West and the village of Chalton.

The group continues to work in partnership with other professionals and other organisations – more than 60 during 2023.

Cost of Living: with the extension of the funding from Houghton Regis Town Council we were able to continue to support struggling families and individuals. JG reported that this support included

emergency food supplies; store vouchers for essential provisions; top-ups for pre-paid meters; Christmas gifts for children; and help for refugee children in local hotels.

Warm in Winter bags: during 2023 volunteers worked in partnership with the charity Small Acts of Kindness and delivered 30 Warm in Winter bags at the beginning of the year and a further 40 bags by the end of 2023.

Food Bank collecting: JG reported that partnership working with Dunstable Food Bank continued, helping deliver food parcels on more than 60 occasions during 2023 to clients who cannot get to the Food Bank themselves.

Highlights of 2023: highlights of the year included volunteers attending the Pride of Houghton Awards and Cheering Volunteering coffee morning.

Training for volunteers included in-house Safeguarding Awareness and ten volunteers attended Basic Life Support and Defibrillator training. The Chair laid a wreath on Armistice Day and volunteers served refreshments at the Memorial Hall on Remembrance Sunday.

Forty residents enjoyed the Festive Afternoon Tea in November 2023 and the sing-along. JG thanked the 20 volunteers who helped to make it a great afternoon.

Committee Report 2023: JG summarised the work of the committee during the year – meetings; review of policies, including the Constitution; and 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 and colleagues with special reference to the organisations and individuals who have provided venues for meetings and events and awarded grants and donations during 2023. JG especially thanked the team of volunteers who raised over £2500 by delivering the Town Crier, Carnival programmes and Fireworks event letters to households across Houghton Regis during 2023.

5. Financial Report and Approval of End of Year Accounts 2023:

BM presented the end of year accounts, examined and confirmed as fairly stated by Independent Scrutineer, Roger Turner.

JG thanked BM for taking on role of Treasurer during 2023.

BM commented on slightly higher income than 2022, with generous donation from Linmere Estates of £1000 and a bequest of £550 from family of client George Townsend, who sadly passed away during the year. These donations supported the cost of the First Aid training and purchase of a new laptop.

Restricted funds are the Cost of Living Crisis Fund which is being well spent, and Later Living Group fund towards transport for members of that group.

Total Income for 2023: £5471.64

Total expenditure in 2023: £4549.49

Balance b/f at end of 2022: £3352.99

Surplus 2023: £ 922.15

Balance c/f at end of 2023: £4275.14

Members approved the accounts for 2023.

6. Election of Honorary Officer - Chair

EG informed the meeting of two nominations for the role of Chair: *Yvonne Farrell and Sue Thorne*. EG invited each candidate to read a short statement outlining their interest in the role. Members voted by secret ballot and two independent guests carried the count.

Result: Yvonne Farrell elected as Chair by majority vote and will remain in post until AGM 2026.

7. Election of Honorary Officer – Treasurer

EG informed meeting that *Brian Mew* has expressed willingness to stand as Treasurer.

Members unanimously elected BM as Treasurer and he will remain in post until AGM 2026.

8. Election of Committee:

EG announced the nominees for committee and invited EC and JT, who have been nominated for the first time, to say a few words about their interest in the role.

CL and ST nominated for re-election.

Members unanimously elected the following members to the Committee for 2024:

Edward Costello, Christine Lyus, Jacqueline Taylor, Sue Thorne

Committee members remain in post until AGM 2025.

9. Introductions and comments:

Three recently recruited volunteers, MC, JT and NR, attending the AGM were invited to introduce themselves and say a few words about their interest in becoming a volunteer.

TO'S thanked MC, as a younger volunteer, for signing up and the need we have for recruiting younger people and how he may be able to help with promoting the group via social media.

NR asked if there is any conflict with Dunstable Good Neighbours group when our volunteers support residents in Dunstable. JG explained that we only support residents in Dunstable when they are unable to help them. Referrals go both ways.

NR enquired about procedure for volunteer drivers dropping residents off at L&D, is there a ten-minute concession. JG explained this used to be the case but changes at the hospital where parking or waiting in the drop off zone is very restricted. Drivers now usually just drop off and return later when appointment is finished. Often a second volunteer will accompany the resident to their appointment and contact the driver for picking up.

10. Appointment of Independent Scrutineer of Accounts for 2024:

EG expressed thanks to Roger Turner for the independent scrutiny of the end of year accounts for 2023. BM confirmed that RT is willing to be proposed as independent scrutineer for 2024. Members unanimously approved the appointment.

11. Proposed changes to Constitution:

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

Members were asked to consider and vote on proposed changes to the Constitution following lengthy consideration by the Committee.

JG outlined the proposed changes, and reason for the changes, to clauses 3, 5, 13, 15 and 16. The change in clause 5[b] complies with the protected characteristics as defined by Equality Act 2010 and an additional clause following 13 [c] relates to voting procedures if there is more than one nominee for an Honorary Officer role.

Members voted unanimously to accept the proposed alterations and additions to the Constitution.

12. Thank You's:

JG read out a message from Andrew Selous (MP), 'please could you record my very grateful thanks for everything you do. I know what the big difference you make.'

Cllr Carroll thanked the group on behalf of the Town Council and congratulated us on the King's Award, 'the Council recognises the great work you do in the community.'

EG presented Thank you cards to Rae Bird, stepping down as committee member after 12 years, and to Susan Goodchild, recently resigned as a volunteer. Susan was a founder member and served on the committee for several years.

EG closed the meeting with a Thank you to all for attending.