



**Reading Advice Network (RAN)
Minutes of the Third Annual General Meeting
Wednesday 26th September 2018
The Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Bridge Street, Reading**

Attendees:

Richard Harrison, RAN Chair
Hazel Wright, RAN Vice-Chair
Francesca Yates, RAN Trustee
Mike Allen, RAN Trustee
Rob Walker, RAN Treasurer
Joy Neville, Age UK Berkshire
Matt Taylor, Age UK Reading
Jenny Newman, Age UK Reading
Arjun Malhotra, British Red Cross
David Harper, Citizens Advice Reading
Lynda Bolster, Dingley's Promise
Leslie Macdonald, Reading Mencap
Kate Stonehouse, Reading Mencap
Nick Harborne, Reading Refugee Support Group
Sarah del Tufo, Reading Community Learning Centre
Katherine Shepherd, The Mustard Tree
Olivia Rhodes, Launchpad
Graham Carpenter, Readifood
Sylvia Simmonds, Total Communication
Carl Borges, Healthwatch
Rebecca Curtayne, Healthwatch
Ruth Boys, PACT
Peter Kayes, RCWRU
Peter Huitson, RCWRU
Tony Goodchild, Autangel
James Carter, NHS England

Apologies

Mandeep Kaur Sira, Healthwatch
Ian Caren, Launchpad
Fiona Price, Age UK Berkshire

The AGM commenced at 09.30.

Welcome

Richard Harrison, RAN Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed all those present.

1. RAN 2017 AGM Minutes

Richard introduced the RAN 2017 AGM minutes. Mike Allen proposed that the minutes be approved. The proposal was seconded by David Harper and approved by all the member organisations present.

2. RAN Report and Accounts for 2017-2018

Richard then moved on to the RAN Report and Accounts for 2017-2018, which had been approved by the RAN Trustee Board and by the Independent Examiner, Julian Ansell. He thanked Julian for his work on this which he has carried out pro bono. He invited questions from the floor but none were forthcoming. Hazel Wright proposed that the Report and Accounts be approved by the AGM. The proposal was seconded by Matt Taylor and approved by all the member organisations present.

3. Election of Trustees

The Chairman reminded those present that RAN trustees serve as individuals, not as representatives of their organisations. Under the constitution one third of the Trustee Board has to retire each year but may stand for re-election. This year Hazel Wright, the Vice-Chair, and Richard Harrison, Chairman have to retire but wished to stand for re-election and a new Trustee, Peter Kayes, the new Chair of Reading Community Welfare Rights Unit, was also standing for election. The chair was handed over to Mike Allen, one of the other trustees for this part of the agenda.

The election of Richard Harrison as Chairman, Hazel Wright as Vice-Chair and Peter Kayes as a Trustee of RAN was proposed by David Harper and seconded by Matt Taylor. It was approved by all the member organisations present.

4. Quality Standard Awards

The Chairman spoke about three things asked of RAN members:

- * A modest membership fee - £100, which covers membership for three years
- * A commitment to achieve two standards - RVA's 'Safe and Sound' Governance Mark, and the RAN Quality Standard.

He was delighted to be able to award the Quality Standard to two more RAN members:

- * British Red Cross - Arjun Malhotra
- * Graft (Thames Valley) - Hazel Wright

He expressed RAN's thanks to Sarah del Tufo, the independent assessor for the Quality Standard, for her work, and for the skill and intelligence she brings to that role. For much of this last year she has been ably supported by Mike Ansell, who has been loaned to RAN, pro bono, by Reading Borough Council, but staffing pressures have meant that RBC has now had to bring that support to an end.

5. Closing remarks

The Chairman made the following closing remarks:

RAN has been going as a registered charity for just over two and a half years. It now has 14 member organisations - the 14th member, RVA, joined in the summer.

It is believed that RAN is one of only three advice networks in England, and according to Advice UK it is the only one with its own quality standard. RAN is at the very least an interesting experiment!

RAN's aims are simple - to raise the quality of information and advice, (and advocacy - which happens to be the focus of the following Forum) available to the people of Reading, to make that more accessible, and to be a focal point for those services in Reading. Nothing that has happened in the last two and a half years has made RAN want to change those aims.

The start-up funding received from the Earley Charity has enabled RAN to establish itself as an organisation and get a long way up the learning curve about how best to operate. RAN has done the groundwork - in July RVA awarded RAN their 'Safe and Sound' Governance Mark, a standard that is not awarded lightly - and RAN is beginning to be recognised as a useful strategic partner by Reading Borough Council.

RAN is a lean organisation, essentially just a Trustee Board of half a dozen individuals, and has learnt a lot about how to focus limited resources - money, time and effort - most efficiently.

It's clear that RAN Advice Forums meet a real need, for members and other organisations, and a wide range of issues have been covered - Homelessness, Universal Credit, Partnership and Networking, etc. RAN has got better at capturing the lessons from those Forums in reports and feeding them to decision makers in the Council and elsewhere.

RAN has looked hard at whether it could have a useful training role. One training event has been held, an excellent workshop on Quality Standard's which was run by RVA, but RAN has concluded that it should only do other courses where there is a clear shared need and demand.

RAN's Business Plan shows that there's more to be done. In particular:

- Bringing more organisations into membership. They will become stronger through their work to meet 'Safe and Sound' and the Quality Standard, and RAN will become stronger by being able to speak for a larger and more diverse group of organisations.
- Making it easier for people in Reading to get the information, advice and advocacy they need.
- Developing collective services that it would be sensible and cost-effective to provide for member organisations.

The Chairman emphasised that RAN belongs to its members and can enable them to get things done collectively that they cannot do on their own. He asked that over this coming year member organisations tell RAN what they want, what they think RAN needs to focus on and RAN will then do its best to respond.

Finally, the Chairman thanked his fellow trustees - Hazel, Fran, Mike and Rob - who have been an excellent group of colleagues, challenging and supportive. RAN owed them a real debt of gratitude for their work over the past year.

The AGM concluded at 09.45