



Reading Advice Network (RAN)

Minutes of the Fourth Annual General Meeting

Monday 7th October 2019

The Council Chamber, Civic Offices, Reading Borough Council, Bridge Street, Reading

Attendees;

Richard Harrison, RAN Chair
Hazel Wright, RAN Vice-Chair
Francesca Yates, RAN Trustee
Mike Allen, RAN Trustee
Peter Kayes, RAN Treasurer
Fiona Price, Age UK Berkshire
Helen Hart, Dingley's Promise
Mandeep Kaur Sira, Healthwatch
Nick Harborne, Reading Refugee Support Group
Claire Harris, Reading Refugee Support Group
Sarah Snow, Stepping Forward
Victor Koroma, ACRE
Louise Keane, Alzheimer's Society
Alison Peyton, Readifood
Gabrielle Watts, Reading Association for the Blind
George Mullen, Christians against Poverty
Ben Ralston, Reading Samaritans
Caroline Marsh, RBC
Selina Ahmed, RBC
Denise Howard, RBC
Karen Crossan, RBC

Apologies

Arjun Malhotra, British Red Cross
Matt Taylor, Age UK Reading

The AGM commenced at 09.35. Richard Harrison, RAN Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed all those present.

1 RAN 2018 AGM Minutes

Richard introduced the RAN 2018 AGM minutes. Nick Harborne proposed that the minutes be approved. The proposal was seconded by Fiona Price and approved by all the member organisations present.

2 RAN Report and Accounts for 2018-2019

Peter Kayes introduced the RAN Report and Accounts for 2018-2019, which had been approved by the RAN Trustee Board and by the Independent Examiner, Julian Ansell. Peter explained that he had only taken over as Treasurer at the end of the 2018-2019 financial year. He thanked the previous Treasurer, Rob Walker, for his preparation of the accounts, and Julian for his independent examination, which he had carried out pro bono. He explained the background to the loss sustained during the year and the actions the Trustee Board had since taken to reduce expenditure. He invited questions from the floor but none were forthcoming. Mike Allen proposed that the Report and Accounts be approved by the AGM. The proposal was seconded by Nick Harborne and approved by all the member organisations present.

3 Membership fees for 2020

Peter reminded those present that one of the conditions for membership had been that member organisations pay £100 which covered them for three years. The first members joined in 2016, so their initial three year period was coming to an end this year. The RAN Trustee Board was proposing that we now move to an annual membership fee of £30, payable each January, which would apply to member organisations once their initial three year period expired. This was approved by the member organisations present.

4 Election of Trustees

Richard 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 Francesca Yates and Mike Allen have to retire but wished to stand for re-election. Their re-election was proposed by Fiona Price and seconded by Sarah Snow. It was approved by all the member organisations present.

Richard explained that the RAN Constitution provided for up to 9 trustees. At the end of March 2019 Rob Walker, who had been a Trustee and RAN Treasurer for 3 years stood down, and Richard thanked him for all his work for RAN over that time. During the year another Trustee, Brian Fennelly, had been co-opted, but his personal circumstances had since changed and he had now also stood down. Richard thanked him for his contribution to RAN while he had been a Trustee. He asked those present to consider whether they could become a RAN Trustee. It was not an onerous task - the Trustee Board met

every 6 weeks for 2 hours - and it was important that new people with fresh perspectives joined it from time to time.

5 Closing remarks

The Chairman made the following closing remarks:

The decision of the Earley Charity to ask for the return of the unspent portion of their grant for 2017-2018 had forced us to review the way we had been running RAN, and move to an entirely volunteer-run organisation. Our expenditure was now at a level which, with our membership fees, meant that we had sufficient resources to sustain our work for several more years without needing any additional funding. We had, though, had to focus our available time and money on activities for which there was a clear and established demand - essentially our Advice Forums. Since the last AGM we had held three more Forums - on Advocacy, Debt and Supervision. All had been well attended and the reports we had subsequently produced had been well-received. Deciding the focus of the next Forum in the light of suggestions made at the end of each Forum had ensured that these all met a real current need.

In addition, within our available resources, we have been very willing to follow up suggestions for new activities or services. One suggestion that had come out of the last Forum had been a CEOs group, and we would be holding its first meeting in November. We had also been trying to find an Employee Assistance Programme that would be willing to open its services to RAN members. So far we had not been successful but we would keep trying.

Since the last AGM four more member organisations - Age UK Berkshire, Age UK Reading, Launchpad and the West Berkshire Carer's Hub - had achieved the RAN Quality Standard, so 10 member organisations now held the Quality Standard. He thanked Sarah del Tufo for her work as our assessor, and RVA for funding the costs of Sarah's work.

Over the summer we had welcomed another new member - Stepping Forward - and he was pleased to be able to welcome its CEO, Sarah Snow, to the AGM. RAN now had 15 members. We would continue to encourage other organisations who attended our Advice Forums to join RAN, since the more members we had the stronger our voice would be on their behalf.

He concluded by thanking his fellow trustees - Fran, Hazel, Mike and Peter - for all their help and support over the past year. Without them, RAN would not exist.

The AGM concluded at 09.50.