



Reading Advice Network (RAN) Minutes of the Seventh Annual General Meeting Wednesday 9th November 2022

Attendees;

The Mayor of Reading, Councillor Rachel Eden
Richard Harrison, RAN Chair
Francesca Yates, RAN Trustee and CommuniCare
Hazel Wright, RAN Trustee and Graft
Mike Allen, RAN Vice-Chair
Peter Kayes, RAN Treasurer
Adele Barnett-Ward, RAB Sightloss
Katherine Shepherd, The Mustard Tree
Phil Cook, PACT
Clare Lowe, RUSUAS
Richard Silcock, RVA
Tanya Spiers, Dingley's Promise
Leslie Macdonald, Reading Mencap
Kirsty Wilson, Launchpad
Joy Neville, Age UK Berkshire
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Fraser Gleave, Citizens Advice Reading
Jacqui Finn, TuVida
Matt Taylor, Age UK Reading
Matt Harrison, Reading Welfare Rights
Alyson Wylding, No 5
Alice Kunjappy-Clifton, Healthwatch
Lorna McArdle, SupportU
Jane Stanford-Beale, Autism Berkshire
Victoria Goodlad, Together-UK

Apologies

Tina Stevenson, Citizens Advice Reading
Andrea West, Berkshire Women's Aid

The AGM commenced at 09.35.

Opening remarks

Richard Harrison, RAN Chair, made the following opening remarks.

Can I welcome you all to our seventh AGM, with a particular welcome to the Mayor of Reading, Councillor Rachel Eden. Rachel has been a strong supporter of RAN for a number of years and we are honoured to have her with us today.

As you'll have seen from the Report and Accounts, 2021-2022 was a good year for RAN, despite the pandemic. Since the end of the financial year we have:

- held a particularly successful Advice Forum on 'Social Prescribers'
- produced an updated 'Booklet for Councillors' to help them direct constituents with problems to the RAN member organisation best able to help them
- and run two meetings for our CEOs.

We remain financially strong. And we are looking forward to another excellent Forum later this morning.

None of this would have been possible without the hard work and support of my fellow trustees - Fran, Hazel, Mike and Peter. I'm very grateful to them for all their help over the past year - please give them a round of applause.

Award of Certificates

Richard announced that PACT, one of RAN's most recent members, had achieved the RAN Quality Standard, and that Communicare, a founder member, had had its award of the Standard renewed for a further four years. He invited the Mayor to present Phil Cook from PACT and Francesca Yates from Communicare with their certificates, and she did so.

He also announced that RAN had had its award of RVA's 'Safe and Sound' Governance Standard renewed, and Richard Silcock from RVA presented him with their certificate.

RAN 2021 AGM Minutes

Richard introduced the RAN 2021 AGM minutes. The motion that the minutes be approved as an accurate record of the proceedings of the AGM was proposed by Hazel Wright, seconded by Francesca Yates, and carried unanimously.

RAN Report and Accounts for 2021-2022

Peter Kayes introduced the RAN Report and Accounts for 2021-2022, which had been approved by the RAN Trustee Board and by the Independent Examiner, Julian Ansell. Peter explained that it had been a quiet year financially, with RAN's reserves increasing by £9 over the year. There were no questions.

The motion that the Report and Accounts be approved was proposed by Phil Cook, seconded by Leslie Macdonald, and carried unanimously.

4 Election of Trustees

Richard reminded those present that under the RAN Constitution one third of the Trustee Board had to retire each year but could stand for re-election. This year he and Peter Kayes had to retire but wished to stand for re-election. In addition Andrea West, the CEO of Berkshire Women's Aid, was standing for election. As he was standing for re-election he handed the Chairmanship for this item to Mike Allen, the RAN Vice-Chair. The motion that all three be elected was proposed by Matt Harrison, seconded by Leslie Macdonald, and carried unanimously.

5 Closing remarks

The Mayor of Reading, Councillor Rachel Eden, made the following closing remarks:

I remember meeting Richard to discuss the formation of the Reading Advice Network a few years ago and feeling that if we could get this off the ground it would be of genuine value. I think the last few years have shown why we need RAN.

We're collectively, as a town, facing an extremely difficult situation. You don't need me to tell you that because you've come from the sharp end; you know exactly what people are facing. As Councillors we also know that it's really tough, and it's going to get tougher. It's really tempting in tough times, however much we try and avoid it, to retreat into our own little worlds and fight our corner. To some extent we have to fight our corners. You're very passionate about your work; I'm very passionate about Whitley. But it's also dangerous, because what we're facing we can only face and get through together. If people are going to get the advice they need to get them through the next 6 months, 12 months, 2 years, however long it's going to be, we're going to have to pool resources; we're going to have to pull together.

We're all going to make mistakes. The Council will, organisations will, individuals will. But by being together, by talking to each other, by learning from each other, I think we'll make fewer mistakes, and we'll have a bit of grace, a bit of

forgiveness when we do make mistakes, because we've got that underlying goodwill, that underlying knowledge that other organisations can help.

I don't know many other places which have an organisation like RAN - I think we're fairly unusual. It's a tribute to the vision of the trustees, and also the far-sightedness and co-operative nature of the voluntary sector in Reading.

There are difficult times ahead, but I'd rather face them in Reading than pretty much anywhere else. That's down in large part to our advice organisations. I'm really proud of you - thank you so much, you're a big part of what makes Reading Reading.

There will be people who look back in six months, twelve months, a couple of years' time and will be able to say "my life is better because I was able to get the advice I needed". I know that's been true for me. Some years ago my life was made much better by advice from one of the organisations in this room. It changed the trajectory for me and my family. That's something many hundreds, probably thousands, of people are able to say. If you can keep going like that we've got a really good chance of coming through this with people with us, protected and supported. Ultimately, what we want is for people to thrive and enjoy life, but if you haven't got the basics, if you haven't got the things that advice can give you, you've got no chance of thriving.

So thank you for everything you do. Reading would not be the same without RAN and without your organisations.

The AGM concluded at 09.50.