



Root & Branch
Westmill Farm
Watchfield
Oxfordshire
SN6 8TH

Minutes of Annual General Meeting for the year 2022-2023

Tuesday 10th October 2023 held at Root & Branch Westmill at 6:30 pm

Currently these minutes are unapproved. They will be reviewed and approved by members present at the 2024 AGM. In the meantime, if you were present at the AGM on the 10th of October 2023 and you would like to make any comments on the minutes, please do get in touch with Root & Branch.

Present

Tanya Parkinson Centre Manager
Nick Daisley, Chair of the Trustee Board
Emma Welch, Trustee and Member
David Atkins, Trustee and Member
Alistaire Knight, Trustee/ Treasurer and Member
Richard Taylor, Co-opted Trustee and Member
Colin Bell, Co-opted Trustee and Member
Adam Twine, Founder Member and Patron
Liz Rothschild, Member
Sue Blackie, Member and Volunteer
Janice Francis, Member and Volunteer
Brian Mildenhall, Founder Member
Selina Wilkes, Staff
Katie Andrews, Staff
Neil Griffiths, Member and Prospective Trustee
Marie Annick, Member
Alan Parnham, Member

Proxy Voting Form

Lorraine Needham, Member

Apologies

Ian Matheson, Trustee and Founder Member
Rosemary Wheeler, Co-opted Trustee
Svetlina Jeanneret, Trustee standing down.

1. Welcome and opening remarks

Nick Daisley welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. He explained that the AGM would focus on the financial year March 2022 – April 2023 and acknowledged Karen English, the staff team and the volunteer team, he thanked them for all their hard work and commitment during the year.

Karen English had left the organisation in March 2023 and Nick introduced the new Centre Manager Tanya Parkinson. He also introduced three co-opted trustees and one new prospective trustee. Richard Taylor and Colin Bell are all well-known at Root & Branch as they regularly volunteer at the Project, both had expressed an interest to join the board and had been co-opted on to the board during the year. Rosemary (Rosie) Wheeler, also well known to the Project as a past member of staff, similarly had become a co-opted trustee during the year. Nick also introduced Neil Griffiths to all members present. Neil had expressed an interest to join the board and had attended three previous trustee meetings. Already Neil has shown a huge amount of support for R&B both during the 2023 plant sale and by offering sound advice and useful knowledge of the charity sector during the board meetings. Nick explained that these individuals would be nominated for election to the board during the final part of the AGM.

Nick expressed his gratitude to all members of the board, we are lucky to have a knowledgeable and experienced board all of whom are hugely supportive of the Root & Branch community. We are also very fortunate to have a dedicated staff and volunteer team in place to support our participants and deliver the service.

2. Minutes of previous meeting (held October 11th 2022)

The minutes of last year's AGM were approved as a true record: proposed by Nick Daisley and seconded by Alistaire Knight. There were no matters arising.

3. General Report

Tanya Parkinson, the new Centre Manager, presented the general report. Karen English had prepared the slides before she had left at the end of March 2023.

Tanya started the presentation by talking about Beth. Beth had been the Employment Coach at Root and Branch up until she sadly passed away in September. Beth had made a positive impact on the lives of all our services users and will be remembered fondly by everyone at Root and Branch.

The slides of the general report are attached to the end of these minutes. Tanya talked through the slides which are a pictorial and testimonial lead representation of what had been a very productive year at Root & Branch. R&B remains a highly valued part of the recovery of our participants. The journey that our participants start when they arrive is led by their own personal goals. In the past year, staff and volunteers had proudly delivered a healthy hearts programme – with special attention on exercise and healthy eating. And, as well as the core activities of gardening, craft, woodwork and cooking, there is now an ongoing literacy programme being led by a teacher trained volunteer.

Root & Branch is, once again, hugely lucky to have a specialist therapeutic gardener on the staff team, so gardening and the outdoors remains an integral part of R&B. A huge amount of productivity had gone on during the early part of 2023, both inside the poly tunnel and in our raised vegetable beds and this led to a very successful plant sale in May.

Tanya thanked the previous staff team and a dedicated team of volunteers, for internal fundraising efforts that had generated £7,000 of core funds.

There had been challenges at Root & Branch during the year. The usual and expected challenges of providing a safe environment for our service users with complex needs had been ably met. However this was made more challenging with a background of low referral rates, staff shortages and staff transitions, and difficulties to generate funds.

All of the challenges have now been faced by Tanya and the staff team, who all look forward with a huge amount of positivity. Referral rates have increased, and recruitment of staff is being addressed. The social media presence of R&B is growing, and the IT provision has been improved immensely. Whilst fundraising is getting tougher, staff and trustees have a plan to recruit an internal fundraiser to join the staff team. Newly appointed members of staff have settled and are bringing lots of experience and enthusiasm to the Project, and we look ahead to celebrate the 20th birthday of Root & Branch.

Tanya answered a question regarding the capacity of Root & Branch, and she confirmed that we have returned to pre-covid levels of service provision and there is an aim to offer 45 sessions (15 sessions per day) each week. Marie Annick made contributions to the discussions about generating funds at Root & Branch and suggested a Christmas Wreath Making workshop. She has offered to collect details of interested people at this year's winter fayre with the purpose of making plans for this in 2024.

4. Financial Report

Alistaire Knight provided a summary of the official financial situation for the year 1st April 2022 – 31st March 2023, highlighting that Root & Branch continues to be in a good financial position. The Project ended the year with a healthy reserve. Alistaire thanked all our donors large and small.

The full annual accounts have been independently checked by an accountant and can be viewed on our website. They will be published with both Companies House and the Charity Commission. Brian Mildenhall asked a question about the accounts pertaining to our 'professional and legal fees' having increased, and Alistaire explained that this was due to the professional fees of engaging with a fundraising consultant.

Key challenge: This year a funding gap has opened up due to the Lloyds grant coming to an end. Cash in the bank remains high mainly due to cost cutting and good budgeting, however Alistaire stressed that this is not how we would ideally like to maintain the reserve and that it is not sustainable. The 2022 fundraising strategy of employing an external fundraising consultant was not as successful as had been hoped. Moving forward the board have decided to employ an internal fundraiser to the staff team. Members present at the meeting expressed that they felt this was good idea.

Adam Twine asked a question regarding our confidence in our current financial position and members were reassured because Tanya Parkinson is working incredibly hard to find and secure new funding opportunities. Alistaire thanked Tanya, who has done a fantastic job since being in post. Members present at the meeting suggested that R&B could look to Section106 money as a possible funding opportunity.

5. The Role of the Therapeutic Gardener

Katie Andrew gave the members a presentation on her role as Social and Therapeutic Horticultural Practitioner. R&B is incredible lucky to have Katie on the staff team. Katies' presentation is attached to the end of these minutes.

Nick thanked Tanya, Katie and Alistaire for their reports.

6. Election of trustees

Five trustees were put forward for election to the board at the 2022/23 AGM. One proxy voting form had been received from member Lorraine Needham.

Trustee Svetlina Jeanneret stood down by rotation at the meeting. Svetlina did not re-stand for election to the board due to work and study commitments. The board would like to thank Svetlina for her huge contribution.

Trustee Emma Welch stood down by rotation at the meeting. Emma was put forward for re-election. Emma was proposed by Alistaire Knight, seconded by David Atkins, and voted back to the board by the members present and by proxy vote.

Co-opted trustee Rosemary Wheeler was proposed by Nick Daisley, seconded by David Atkins, and voted to the board by the members present and by proxy vote.

Co-opted trustee Richard Taylor was proposed by Emma Welch, seconded by Nick Daisley, and voted to the board by the members present and by proxy vote.

Co-opted trustee Colin Bell was proposed by David Atkins, seconded by Alistaire Knight, and voted to the board by the members present and by proxy vote.

New member Neil Griffiths was nominated to join the board of trustees. This was proposed by Alistaire Knight, seconded by Nick Daisley, and Neil was voted to the board by the members present and by proxy vote.

Nick thanked everyone for coming to the AGM and for their very valuable support.

Meeting closed at 19.40

Minutes prepared by Emma Welch

19th October 2023