



Root & Branch
Westmill Farm
Watchfield
Oxfordshire
SN6 8TH

Minutes of Annual General Meeting – 2017

Thursday 19 January 2017 held at Watchfield Village Hall and starting at 6:30 pm

Present

Adam Twine	Joe Weller, Gardener	Pete Richardson, Member
Becky Brain, Garden Manager	John Hastings, Trustee	Stephen Coombs, Volunteer
Caroline Borchardt, Trustee	Jonathan DeWilton, Trustee	Sushila Mahto, Member
Chris Park, Volunteer	Karen English, Volunteer	Sue Hand, Gardener
Dave Breakspear, Gardener	Marie Annick Jube, Volunteer	Terrie Ollerenshaw, Trustee
Gary Boswell, Trustee	Mark Wild, Potential Trustee	Trace Collen, Potential Trustee
Ian Matheson, Chair	Melanie Breakspear, Member	Yvonne Castellano, Volunteer
Isabel Weller, Gardener	Pat Hand, Member	
Jeni Burchell, Centre Manager		

1. Welcome and introductions

Ian welcomed those present at the meeting, and invited everyone to introduce themselves.

Apologies received from Brian Mildenhall.

Ian apologised for the delay in holding this AGM, explaining this was due to some issues experienced within the organisation, with trustees wishing to postpone until we could give a more optimistic view.

Ian emphasised his confidence in Root & Branch, highlighting the good management we have in place, along with a good board of trustees.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The meeting approved these as a true record of the last meeting (proposed by Jonathan DeWilton and seconded by John Hastings).

3. General report

Becky gave an excellent report, which is summarised below:

Activities / Events:

- Both the physical environment of Root & Branch, and our staff and trustees, have been developing what we need in order to meet the needs of the people who come to us.
- We have helped 36 people in 2016, some of whom have moved on.
- 7 of these were new service users, with a range of different mental health diagnoses.
- We were previously open for 4 days a week, and we have now consolidated this to 3 days a week, extending the 3 days to compensate for the lost day.
- We have expanded the number of activities available each day, up to 6 activities, which have included new floristry and walking.
- The core of what we do at Root & Branch is therapeutic gardening, and we are keen to keep an emphasis on this. The fresh air and exercise really help to improve mental health.
- Our new greenhouse has proved very successful in improving engagement with gardening, and has allowed a warmer environment and an emphasis on seed sowing and potting on, which is a physically more accessible activity. We also now have a more ergonomic workbench, which has made a difference. Becky thanked one of our previous gardeners for raising the money for this, and Trevor for building it.
- The greenhouse allowed us to have two plant sales rather than one last year, which allowed us to sell twice as many plants, with an estimated total of £4,000 from baby plants.
- Becky thanked one of our volunteers, Stephen Coombs, for providing planters which helped the sales of plants, and generally thanks Woodwork for their help in support of the garden activities.

- There have been a number of items created, such as turned bowls, a magazine rack, an iconic carrot statue, paper mache projects, and a log for Westmill Organics.
- In addition to this, we have finished off the restoration of a rocking horse, which was the main project for one of our gardeners. Becky thanked Ian and Peter for their help in supporting her with this.
- In terms of courses, we have offered an accredited gardening course, floristry, and a 6 week basket weaving course, along with ongoing photography work.
- The forge is flourishing, with three different blacksmiths for the three different days, with one of the volunteers teaching welding.
- Becky thanks all volunteers for their time, enthusiasm and support for the Christmas Fayre, which raised a record breaking £2,000, in particular thanks Yvonne for all her hard work setting up the week before the Fayre, baking all weekend, and then volunteering at the event itself.

Day-to-Day running of the project:

- It became evident that pressure was increasing for staff, with activities, events and the number of service users. The outcome of this is the recruitment of a new Centre Manager, Jeni Burchell, with Becky Brain moving to a Garden Manager role, with transition progressing well.
- We applied to the Vale of the White Horse for a grant to put in a 3m glazed door in the craft room, which will transform the room into something more like an art studio, and will let in more light. We're also taking the opportunity to upgrade the stove.
- This grant also covered the building of a straw bale building, construction of which started in July. We have had support from various challenge teams from both Nationwide and Vodafone, along with our volunteers at Root & Branch, all co-ordinated and support by Chris Park. The building is mostly complete, with the floor put down yesterday, and it should only be a matter of weeks before the building is finished.
- Becky thanked Chris for his absolutely fantastic work on this, not just in the building of the structure, but in providing therapeutic support for gardeners helping out.

Recovery Outcomes:

- 3 people left Root & Branch to go back to work.
- 4 people started a part time job.
- 5 people completed a training course.
- 5 people are currently enrolled on the essential gardening skills course.
- 1 person started volunteering.
- 4 people felt well enough to move on from Root & Branch.
- 11 people started a new activity with our support.
- Becky noted that people starting a new activity is very important to Root & Branch as it's a crucial step in people's recovery and is something we want to focus on in the future.
- Becky gave an overview of the Recovery Star model, which we started working with in 2016, highlighting the following aims:
 - Improved management of mental health
 - Improve physical health and self care
 - Improved living skills
 - Improved social networks
 - Improved relationships
 - Improvement in addictive behaviour
 - Improved ability to deal with responsibilities
 - Improved self esteem,
 - Improved hope for the future
 - Improved ability to work, volunteer or study

Challenges of 2016:

- Becky highlighted the following key challenges that Root & Branch faced in 2016:
 - Meeting the high demand for the service.
 - Meeting the demands of the new contract with the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership.
 - Pressure on one manager to run the project resulted in a build up of stress.

- Key trustees resigned, which resulted in less trustee involvement than usual.
- Pressure on indoor space, especially in the winter.
- The following actions were taken to overcome these challenges:
 - Centre Manager appointed in December.
 - Major grant application in progress to meet increased staff costs.
 - Craft room improvements and straw bale building to give more indoor space and comfort.
 - New trustees have joined over the last few months with the skills and commitment we needed.
- Becky noted that going forwards we have many successes to celebrate, with the amazing good will and support of brilliant staff and volunteers, and extended her thanks.

Plans for the future:

- We have a new website which went live last week. This provides us with a fantastic, updated website which will be easier to maintain in-house, including by staff and gardeners. Becky invited feedback directly to her on the website.
- Becky highlighted the key plans for the future:
 - Develop the board of trustees, and reduce the dependence on specific trustees for key tasks.
 - Increase the income generated through our own efforts.
 - Offer short courses and training in addition to our usual activities.
 - Work closer with partner organisations, carers and support services.
 - Develop 1:1 coaching to help gardeners join mainstream activities, study, employment, volunteering, or joining a new group that you may not have had confidence to do in the past, but feel confident enough to do now.

Ian thanked Becky for her comprehensive coverage of the year.

Ian extended thanks on behalf of the trustees to all volunteers, noting their depth of knowledge, skills and commitment commenting that he hasn't been in an organisation with such good volunteers.

Jeni, as new Centre Manager, gave an overview of herself and her experience. She noted the independence at Root & Branch, and how important this is for charities. She called out how blown away she is by the good service provided at Root & Branch, and the gardeners who are just fantastic, offering a family-like environment. Ian thanked Jeni for her overview.

4. Financial Report

Jonathan DeWilton provided a summary of the official financial statement in Brian's absence, highlighting:

- We had a successful year, raising lots of money, along with the £31,000 from Restore, which has been confirmed for the next 5 years.
- We have a target to raise £40-50,000 per year, which trustees are cautiously optimistic we can achieve.
- Our income for the year was c.£75,000, slightly higher than the previous year. This included the efforts of our external Professional Fundraisers (£30,000), and our own efforts of c.£3,000.
- The core cost of the service is c.£60,000, which works out at about £31 per person per place. Jonathan reiterated that this value is achieved due to the huge contribution of our very committed volunteers, and the excellent staff that we have had, and continue to have.
- Jonathan highlighted the success of our craft days.
- With our contract with Restore now signed for the next 4 years, we're cautiously optimistic about the financial outlook for the future.

Ian thanked Jonathan for his report.

5. Election of trustees

Our constitution requires that one third of the trustees stand for election in rotation each year. Those due for election this year are Ian Matheson and Terrie Ollerenshaw.

Ian was proposed for re-election by Gary Boswell, seconded by Melanie Breakspear, and Ian was elected by a unanimous vote of those present.

Terrie was proposed for re-election by Jonathan DeWilton, seconded by John Hastings, and was elected by a unanimous vote of those present.

Caroline Borchardt, John Hastings, and Jonathan DeWilton were previously co-opted as trustees, but need to be formally elected.

Caroline was proposed for election by Ian Matheson, seconded by Peter Richardson, and was elected by a unanimous vote of those present.

John was proposed for election by Chris Park, seconded by Ian Matheson, and was elected by a unanimous vote of those present.

Jonathan was proposed for election by Sue Hand, seconded by Dave Breakspear, and was elected by a unanimous vote of those present.

A.O.B.:

- Ian thanked everyone for coming, noting the good turnout and fun atmosphere.
- Meeting closed at 19:20.

6. Any other business

Ian thanked everyone for coming, noting the good turnout and fun atmosphere.

Meeting closed at 19:20

Terrie Ollerenshaw (Secretary)

5 February 2017