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# Brighton & Hove Social Welfare and Educational Trust Ltd

Minutes of Annual General Meeting  
held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021  
online using Zoom at 7pm

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***There were 16 organisational members of the company present (represented by 18 people)***

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|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Albion Life                        | 9. Ingram Crescent Residents' Association |
| 2. Alnoure Academy                    | 10. On Your Way                           |
| 3. Brighton & Hove First Ladies       | 11. Robert Lodge Residents' Association   |
| 4. Chattri Memorial Group             | 12. Salaam Football Club                  |
| 5. Christian Arabic Club              | 13. Sudan Club                            |
| 6. Coldean Residents' Association     | 14. Sussex Syrian Community Group         |
| 7. Craven Vale Community Association  | 15. Sylvan Hall Residents' Association    |
| 8. Hollingdean Residents' Association | 16. Warwick Mount Tenants' Association    |

## Individual members of the Company present

*Directors:* Robin Berry, Barry Hughes, Ann Packham, Christine El-Shabba, Sohna Sosseh

*Staff:* Dani Ahrens, Kate Chapman, Mireille Shimoda, Rebecca Luton

*Chair:* Kate Chapman; *Minutes:* Mireille Shimoda

## 1. Chair's introduction

Kate welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming.

She introduced the Resource Centre staff.

## 2. Apologies

**Apologies were received from 6 organisational members:**

1. Coldean Independents
2. Highcroft Lodge Tenant Association
3. Leach Court Social Club
4. North Portslade Residents Association
5. Parents Unlimited
6. St Richard's Church and Community Centre

**Apologies were received from 1 director:**

Muriel Briault – North Portslade Residents Association

**Apologies were received from 3 Resource Centre workers:**

Alan Gray, Kate Page, Judy Goss

**There were no individual apologies.**

### 3. Welcome from Chair of Trustees/Directors

Robin welcomed everyone. He said it was a difficult and extraordinary year, difficult for all groups as well as the Resource Centre.

He thanked everyone for their support and continuing to use the Centre's services, and also thanked staff for keeping the Centre running.

He expressed hope for the possibility of a better 2022 with a cautious approach.

### 4. Minutes of B&H SWET Ltd Company AGM 22nd October 2020, and matters arising

There were no matters arising. The meeting approved the minutes of last year's AGM. There was one abstention and no objections.

### 5. Finance and Fundraising Report (Annual Report and Financial Statements year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 and financial position)

Dani gave the following report on the Centre's financial position:

#### **Finance Report 2020-21**

Total income in 2020-21 was £276,540

Total expenditure was £219,908

Net income was £56,632

At the end of the year (31<sup>st</sup> March 2021) the bank balance was £81,764.

In addition, just under £21,000 worth of assets were added during the year—mainly new print machines. In the accounts, the sum of those two figures is shown as the closing balance of £102,734.

This is a good position to be in, but it was the result of a complicated picture.

In 2020-21, all these things were going on at once:

- A dramatic drop in income from print and equipment hire services. Over the whole year, services income was about halved, compared with 2019-20.
- As a result, the Centre had some staff on furlough throughout the year, with their wages mostly covered by the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.
- The Centre was lucky enough to receive emergency funding from Sussex Community Foundation, Business Support funding from Brighton & Hove Council, and a large emergency grant—more than actually applied for—from the National Lottery. This enabled the Centre to put aside the service income it did make and carry it forward into the current year

#### **Finance Report 2021-22 (current year)**

We are now over 18 months into the pandemic and it is still having a major impact on the way we work, and therefore on the income we can bring in from our own services. We're currently expecting that to end up at about 70% of the 2019-20 level.

We have brought staff back from furlough gradually, so we have had some income from that scheme right up until it was finally ended in September this year.

We have also had other exceptional income this year related to the crisis—further business support funding from the Council, and a grant specifically to support groups restarting

their activities.

We thank the Council for their support and flexibility throughout the crisis. Their funding has been absolutely vital in enabling the Centre to keep going.

Overall, we are expecting to break even this year, or possibly end the year with a small surplus.

### **The future**

It's very hard to know what next year will bring.

A lot depends on factors that are outside our control, such as the course of the pandemic and the government's response to that.

We will continue to make the safety of our staff and users a priority, while at the same time working on ways to support groups as effectively as we can.

We are looking at ways to improve the Centre: we've been able to add some new services in the last year and we're taking the opportunity to have a fresh look at the Centre itself and the way we use that space.

Financially, we are in a good position to cope with whatever happens next.

Our main funding from the Council is in place until the end of March 2023, so next financial year is the final year of that funding period.

We continue to receive funding each year to support Council tenants to participate in Housing Services' consultation processes, and to organise their own associations on estates. Again, that is a key factor in our financial survival.

We are always grateful for any good word you can put in for us with your councillors or Council officers when you talk to them—it really helps them to understand why we are worth funding.

**The meeting approved the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. There were no objections or abstentions.**

### **Questions from members**

Davinder (Chattri Memorial Group) asked what "expenditure on charitable activities" meant.

Dani responded that this is spending on most of the work the Centre does. There is a breakdown of expenditure on page 15 of the accounts. A small percentage of expenditure is on fundraising.

## **6. New Members**

4 new membership applications had been approved by the management committee at meetings during the past year:

- Alder Community CIC
- Moulsecoomb Community Market
- FABS (Bevendean Primary PTA)
- Brighton and Hove Racial Harassment Forum

Since the committee's last meeting, a further 2 applications had been made by:

1. BELTA (Bristol Estate Leaseholders and Tenants Association)

2. Indian Friends of Brighton

Both groups meet the criteria for membership.

**The meeting approved all new applications.**

Kate welcomed all new members.

## 7. Election of Trustees/Directors for 2021-22

Kate thanked outgoing trustees and directors Sohna Sosseh (Brighton and Hove First Ladies) and Jason Williams (Hereford Court Community Association) for having served on the committee for several years.

She asked this year's nominees to introduce themselves and say a few words about how they have worked with the Resource Centre:

1. **Awel Abdo**

(Oromo Community in Brighton and Hove) – *in his absence, Kate C introduced him as a valuable existing member of the committee*

2. **Robin Berry**

(Chair of Committee in 2020/21, treasurer of Coldean Residents Association)

3. **Muriel Briault**

(North Portsade RA, existing member of committee) – *in her absence, Kate C read out her written statement*

4. **Chris El Shabba**

(Robert Lodge RA, existing member of committee)

5. **Aisha El-Turki**

(Alnoure Academy – standing for the first time)

6. **Barry Hughes**

(Sylvan Hall RA, existing member of committee)

7. **Ann Packham**

(Ingram Crescent RA, existing member of committee)

8. **Jon White**

(On Your Way - standing for the first time)

9. **Ahmad Yabroudi**

(Sussex Syrian Community - standing for the first time)

*Awa, from Brighton & Hove First Ladies thanked the Resource Centre for their help and support.*

The voting system was explained, and took place via the Zoom poll system.

## 8. The work of groups that use the Resource Centre

*Rebecca gave a report on the work and activities of community groups that use the Resource Centre.*

All the groups that use the Resource Centre have had to change and adapt a lot over the last 18 months.

Some groups have shifted their focus entirely - often to support people who are struggling to meet their basic needs, while other groups have found new ways to do the same things

they have been doing for years – those things that years of experience have shown to work.

Some groups, sadly, found the shift to online working so difficult that they've closed down, but there are also a lot of new groups that have sprung up doing amazing things.

One lesson this pandemic has really reinforced is that community activity – by groups like yours – is crucial for people to maintain their physical and mental wellbeing, and to survive.

Over the last 18 months we have provided direct support to 131 different member groups.

We'd like to share some of their stories:

- East Brighton Food Coop rapidly changed direction in March 2020 and has delivered thousands of cooked meals ever since. They are currently delivering 230 cooked meals every day, and also planning their new community café, local training kitchen in north Whitehawk, and veg box service.
- The Oromo Community moved their Saturday children's club onto zoom, and delivered food to all the children participating. They met in the park when the weather was good enough, and are now returning to their indoor venue using new covid-safe guidelines. Their women's sewing project has split into smaller groups so they can continue with their classes
- Craven Vale redirected their focus to support local residents by expanding their food bank, and are now aiming to rebuild their community activity – in early September they held an activity week with arts and crafts, an outing for the over-50s, community meals, a BBQ and demonstrations of their community bee hives.
- Knoll Residents Association is looking at ways to re-engage local people and they're planning a door knocking exercise to talk to people about what they do.
- Hollingdean Residents Association have started to have a stall at their local shops to tell people about what they do.
- Essex Place is re-launching their community room with covid-safe guidelines and new policies to encourage everyone to use the room.
- Bristol Estate Leaseholders and Tenants Association have had a mobile vaccination centre on the estate for covid vaccinations.
- As outdoor spaces have become more important, through the pandemic, residents have been focussing on how to get improvements to their local parks. In Whitehawk, local mums from Park Life have successfully got some new play equipment in the Middle Park and are now fundraising for landscaping and benches. In Woodingdean, the Residents Association has helped get some new gym equipment and table tennis tables in Central Park and they're now involved in a consultation about new children's play equipment.

At this point in time, we're all looking at how our world is going to move forward. A lot of groups we support are looking for ways to re-engage with their members and communities, and ways to return safely to holding meetings, gatherings and events. And, of course, they all want to continue to be flexible and able to adapt their activities as circumstances continue to change.

As the Resource Centre, our focus is now on how we can support everyone to do these things. Every time we talk to members of your groups, we learn something new that helps us with our support for other groups. We complement this with careful research into things

like legal requirements, the technology available, and good practice. And we bring all of this together in our information sheets and our one-to-one support with groups.

We hope we can continue to be as useful and flexible as we have always been, in all the information and support we provide.

## 9. Election results

All 9 nominees were elected as trustees and directors to sit on the Resource Centre Management Committee for 2020-21.

Kate congratulated the new committee, and thanked candidates for standing.

## 10. The work of the Resource Centre

*Mireille gave a report on the work of the Centre over the last year, and plans for the near future.*

### **Year of Covid:**

This past year has been dominated by the COVID pandemic and there have been huge challenges for everyone – including the Resource Centre.

Like many other organisations, we had to adapt very quickly to the sudden changes that came about at the end of March 2020. From one day to the next, we had to close our doors, make sure that all of us were able to work from home, adapt the way we communicated with one another, and with the outside world.

We also had to figure out and put in place Covid-safety procedures, and make sure we could keep everyone safe. It was tough, but we've managed to get through it and all of us have had to be imaginative, resourceful and adaptable.

We felt it was important to continue to support groups, so we put in place as much as we could to prioritise this. The work we have done in the past year has been a little different from usual but we've continued to support groups across the city, and helped groups negotiate their way through COVID and keep going in difficult circumstances.

### **Continuing our print service & reopening our equipment**

One of our achievements of the last year has been to keep our community print service up and running, and through two lockdowns.

Our doors had to close, but our phone line and emails stayed open. We carried on printing for groups, and people came and collected their printing from our doorstep.

At the start of lockdown, we printed tens of thousands of newsletters and leaflets that were distributed across the city. Many new groups popped up to deal with the crisis and provide support within their communities.

People were isolated, and printed community news and information became vital. It helped people to access essential support, connect with their neighbours and survive through COVID.

We successfully raised funds from the Big Lottery at the end of last year and were able to purchase some beautiful new print equipment to allow us to expand our print service – we now have a great large format printer and can produce vinyl banners, and up to A0 posters.

The large format printing has been really popular and we've now made quite a few vinyl banners for various groups and various events.

In general, our print service has continued to be in high demand, and we've been incredibly busy in the past few weeks!

It's also good to know that some groups are starting to get active again, and going back to running their activities and events.

### **Equipment hire**

Of course, during lockdown we had to completely close our equipment hire service.

We re-opened it at the end of May this year, after putting in place Covid safety measures and restrictions to protect both staff and members of the public coming to collect equipment.

We had quite a few bookings for events in July, which then got cancelled due to an extension of Covid restrictions, but equipment hire picked up again in the later months.

We had 121 bookings between May and the start of October, by 98 different groups.

We also bought some new pieces of equipment like new marquees thanks to Lottery funding, and these have been popular too.

### **Continuing support sessions**

We carried on doing support sessions with groups in the past year.

Of course, out of necessity, we had to replace our usual in-person sessions with Zoom, Whatsapp, phone and email.

It's not quite the same, but we've managed to continue to support our member groups this way – and help with fundraising, accounts, newsletters etc

We have reintroduced one-to-one, face to face sessions back in the Centre from June this year, for those who prefer it.

### **Future**

The pandemic has provided opportunities to look at new and different ways of doing things, to reassess and improve. And we've all definitely learned a lot!

Having said this, it's important to keep in mind what DID work well – and one of those things is having an open-door Centre, where people could just pop in.

We all feel the loss of this.

Staff have missed the regular contact with individuals from groups and the conversations that develop over equipment hire or printing.

Groups miss being able to pop by when it's convenient for them, and being able to have a chat with staff, access support as & when needed, and meet other groups in the Centre.

While we would love to re-open our doors, we're currently carrying on with our print & collect service for groups and limiting the equipment hire to 2 days a week.

This feels like the most sensible and safest thing to do as we head into winter and the local infection rate is high and people are still getting quite ill. The situation is generally still full of uncertainty.

We think it's important to protect staff and protect the Resource Centre. We want to make sure we can still run a consistent and reliable service – and if the staff get ill, we can't do that.

Hopefully, the country will gradually come out of the COVID pandemic and 2022 will see more of a return to normality. And we hope that we will be able to re-open our doors safely in the next year.

## **11. Close of meeting**

Kate thanked everyone for their support and contributions to the meeting.

*Elias (Salaam FC, Oromo Community in Brighton and Hove), and Ian (Hollingdean RA) thanked the Resource Centre for their support.*

Kate reminded everyone that the Resource Centre is still open for phone calls and emails on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays between 9am and 4pm, and that if groups need any help or support to get in touch.

The meeting closed at 8pm.

**These minutes were approved by the Annual General Meeting of Brighton and Hove Social Welfare and Educational Trust Ltd on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)**

***Signed***

***on behalf of the Management Committee***

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