



Leicester City of Sanctuary

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting Held on Saturday 26th October 2024 10.00am at St Martins House, Leicester

In Attendance:

Pete Hobson (Chair)
Noel Singh (Secretary)
Anne Senior (Co-Vice Chair)
Peter Williamson (LCoS Trustee)
Jessamyn Witthaus (LCoS Trustee)
Sherri Wong (LCoS Trustee)
Maggie Edgington (LCoS Volunteer Interim Operations Lead)
Alex Jakeman (LCoS Finance & Admin Officer)
Omid Lohoni (LCoS Project Officer)
Colleen Molloy (Supporter)
Phil Hardy (Volunteer)
John Lessells (Volunteer)
Steven Moses (Chair of Loughborough Town of Sanctuary)
Phil Harvey (Volunteer)
Nida Qasami (Volunteer)
Mohammad Irfan (Volunteer)
Allan Desmond (Volunteer – NEST Lead)
Chandresh Patel (Volunteer)

1. Apologies for absence

Sarah Jones (LCoS Trustee)
Danny Myers (LCoS Trustee)
Tess Robson (Volunteer)
Carol Fray (Volunteer)
Marijke van der Veen (Volunteer)
Angus Dodds (Volunteer)
Margaret Leach (Volunteer)

2. Minutes of the 2023 AGM held on 28th October 2023

- Colleen Molloy requested her name to be corrected in the previous minutes
- The minutes of the AGM held on 28th October 2023 were otherwise agreed as a true record.

Matters Arising

- Phil Hardy raised number of concerns around how the minutes from the previous AGM regarding the football activity, at which he had been unable to be present. His concerns were as follows:
 - the football activity was a valuable and well-run activity and he was disappointed by the picture the previous AGM minutes were presented
 - in his view the football participants were known to LCoS as refugees/asylum seekers, contrary to implication in the previous AGM minutes

- Colleen Molloy, speaking as Phil's wife, commented on the highly positive work done by Phil to support the football activity and that this does not appear to have been recognised
- John Lessells made reference to a publication from Freedom from Torture, which mentions the importance of sport for people seeking asylum
- In response from the chair, PH noted that the matter had been discussed at length at the previous AGM which he did not intend to revisit. He did very much wish to thank Phil for his role in supporting the work of the currently discontinued football activity over many years in a manner which had not been possible in his absence the previous AGM.
- ME reiterated the LCoS position around our work being focussed on supporting asylum seekers, and that the work of the charity had to be based on our existing capacity

3. Appointment of Trustees for coming year

- Four new trustees were co-opted by the Trustee board in April 2022 (Noel Singh, Annabel Mwagalanyi, Sarah Jones and Anne Senior)
- NS has come to the end of his three-year term as a trustee and has opted to step down as a trustee. Danny Myers has also opted to step down as a trustee.
- PH thanked both NS and DM for their contributions to the work of the charity over the last three years
- current trustees had coopted a further 3 trustees in April 2024: Peter Williamson, Sherri Wong and Jessamyn Witthaus.
- PW, SW and JW all briefly introduced themselves to those attending the AGM and were formally confirmed in post by members.

4. Annual Report 2023-24

PH addressed the AGHM with his summary of highlights of the past year – which will be available in printed version in due course. Some key elements were as follows:

Trustees

PH mentioned that a former/founder trustee, Bessie Hayes, sadly passed away recently. Colleen Molloy also paid tribute to Bessie and her role in inspiring Colleen to become involved in supporting the work of the charity

Staff

Shali Bullough also stepped down from her role as Strategic Lead for the charity last year and in March 2024, Anna Goodman also left her role at the Charity in February. ME received an award from Leicester City in the Community, which was a fantastic achievement. ME has been filling the Operations Lead role on an interim basis, and PH reiterated the charity's gratitude to Maggie for going above and beyond in her role. Omid and Alex were also thanked for their work. The charity are currently in the process of recruiting a new Chief Officer, which is a key and immediate priority for the trustees

Finance

The good news on funding received this year is that our application to the National Lottery's Reaching Communities grant application (titled 'From Seeking Sanctuary to Settlement') was successful. We are also grateful to a range of other grant funders, who have supported our work with funding in the last year.

However, there is still a gap of approx. £30,000 a year to find to support the work of the charity

Activities

A number of activities continue to be delivered, including NEST and ESOL classes, along with an energy conservation project. Partnerships are ongoing with the NHS and also with the Universities. Trips and activities remain popular with our service users

Our service users and volunteers have also contributed to an impressive 'Everyone's Welcome' display at Leicester Museum

Our work to deliver the objectives and aspirations of both our strategic plan and the plans outlined in our National Lottery bid remain our key drivers. ME read out a powerful testimony from a recent volunteer, who was a student at Leicester University and has now returned to her home country

In general discussion,

- Chandresh (Volunteer) also gave a positive report of his recent involvement as a volunteer, how welcoming the Hub is and how it clearly has a positive impact on those who attend
- AS also reaffirmed the amazing work of the charity, whilst reflecting that whilst there are always areas to improve upon, overall we should be proud of the work we do
- Alex expressed his thanks to Maggie for all of her work and support particularly over the last year
- Colleen commented on the impressive range of activities undertaken and also queried about any further work around places of sanctuary in Leicester, as well as how we engage with Leicester City Council

In response to a question, PH explained that some work has been done around Schools of Sanctuary. There is currently one school in Leicester with School of Sanctuary status, but two more are also interested. Universities of Sanctuary is an area the Charity are also working on

ME made a statement around her work in the last year and whilst it has been a challenging time, she is proud of what has been achieved. A new strand of the charity's work has been around developing networks of support for people who have moved out of Leicester. Funding has continued to be a challenge, although we have recently been successful in securing £14,000 over the next two years via the Hilden Charitable Trust. ME wanted to place on record her thanks to the staff team (Omid and Alex), the charity volunteers and the trustees for their ongoing support

Anne also wanted to record her thanks to Pete as Chair, for his ongoing leadership of the charity

5. Financial Statement for the year ending 31st March 2024 and independent examiner's report

- Peter Williamson (as lead Finance trustee) went through the key points regarding the charity's finances up to the end of the financial year 2023-24

- PW stated that the finance controls, policies and governance appear to be effective, appropriate and proportionate, reflecting the size of the charity
- PW also thanked the funders, donors and supporters who have provided funds to the charity in the last year
- The starting financial position for the year was £50,623, which included £33,000 reserves
- Income in 2023-24 was £87,589 (mainly via grant funding), and expenditure was £100,639
- **£37,573** was carried forward into the 2024-25 financial year
- This consisted of **£22,051** in restricted funds and **£15,522** in unrestricted funds
- CM queried why only £87 has been spent to date in the Emergency Fund. ME clarified that Red Cross were originally administering the fund on our behalf, which was a decision made in the pandemic. However there has been limited capacity to administer the fund. PH confirmed that the trustees continue to consider the usage of and criteria for the Emergency Fund. ME stated that one of the suggested uses is around supporting those who have a delay in receiving Universal Credit payments
- CM also queried travel costs. ME and AJ clarified that bus fare/travel is reimbursed in all cases for those who require this.

Those in attendance indicated that they accepted the Finance Report.

6. Loughborough Town of Sanctuary

A motion had been passed at Loughborough Town of Sanctuary (LToS)'s AGM on 24 September, to work actively for closer ties with Leicester City of Sanctuary.

LToS's newly appointed chair, Steven Moses, was present at this AGM and gave a brief introduction around the work of LToS

- Loughborough operates as the location for the reporting centre for refugees and asylum seekers from across the East Midlands
- LToS provide a volunteer presence outside the reporting centre, providing information, signposting and hot drinks
- There are also two hotels for refugees and asylum seekers in Loughborough
- A range of other support/activities are provided, including language classes, cooking sessions, coffee mornings, football and exercise/gym sessions
- LToS has a large volunteer base and a committee consisting of nine people
- The previous chair (Mo Murray) has stepped down, and SM has taken over as Chair
- LToS are keen to work more closely with Leicester City of Sanctuary. PH and AS both stated that LCoS are indeed keen to explore this partnership further
- CM also commented that this sounds like a positive opportunity, and also suggested there could be opportunities for other East Midlands to connect more frequently
- PH commented that we need to consider LCoS's realistic capacity to support/explore any collaborative working with LToS, along with the pros and cons of such an approach, which both AS and PW supported and he clarified that we are not currently considering a formal merger with LToS as such

- PW reiterated the fact the LCoS are currently prioritising the recruitment of the Chief Officer post
- Mohammed Irfan (MI) stated that he is currently involved in exploring cultural heritage funding, along with international development funding and stated that it might be worth pursuing collaborative approaches to fundraising with LCoS

The AGM formally welcomed the decision by Loughborough Town of Sanctuary to work actively for closer ties with LCoS and agreed to encourage trustees to explore working for that.

7. Members' Issues

- None raised

The formal AGM was closed at 11.35am