



Leicester City of Sanctuary^{ry}

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
Held on Saturday 25th October 2025
10.00am at St Martins House, Leicester**

In Attendance:

Pete Hobson (Chair)
Jess Witthaus (LCoS Trustee)
Phil Harvey
John Lessells
Zalfa Feghali (Facilitator)
Yan Ying (Facilitator)
Sarah Hunt (Facilitator)
Jill Hay
Hafsa Mitha (Chief Officer)
Alison Adams (Facilitator)
Barbara Graham
Steve Moses (chair, Loughborough Town of Sanctuary)
Mick Walker
Angela Walker
Mandy Beech
Carol Fray
Anne Senior (Vice Chair)
Dalvir Kandola
Lynn Cunningham
Pooja Shah (LCoS Trustee)
Sultana Taib (LCoS Trustee)
Sherri Wong (LCoS Trustee)
Mark Charlton
Dickson Chikwizo
Tracy Chikwizo
Razzaq Ul haq
Peter Williamson (LCoS Trustee)
Alex Jakeman (Minutes)

1. Apologies for absence

Sarah Jones
John Twiddel
Roz Burch
Linda Higginson
Mohammad Alsayed

2. Minutes of AGM 2024

- The minutes of the AGM held on 26th October 2024 were agreed as a true record.
- There were no matters arising.

3. Trustees for the coming year

Continuing Trustees

- Pete Hobson
- Peter Williamson
- Jess Witthaus
- Sherri Wong

Trustees for Reappointment

- Sarah Jones (voted in unanimously)
- Anne Senior (voted in unanimously)

New Trustees

- Sultana Taib (voted in unanimously)
- Pooja Shah (voted in unanimously)

The new trustees provided a little background on themselves prior to the vote.

Sultana Taib – From Afghanistan, Sultana left when the government collapsed and has been through the asylum process herself. She has learned a lot from the process, and would be glad for the opportunity to become a trustee and serve others who are in need. She wants to make positive changes.

Pooja Shah – Pooja came to the UK in 2013 for education. She has lived as a migrant. She has lived with different people and believes that while we have different backgrounds there are always things that unite us. Associated with CoS in Portsmouth, and found that even simple practices can bring people together.

4. Financial Report

Alex Jakeman provided an overview of the financial year for the charity.

- We started the year with £37,573 and ended with £46,977
- Total income of £87,300
- Total expenditure of £77,876



Question - Phil Harvey and Carol Fray asked about the nature of the consultancy work. Alex Jakeman answered that it was a stipulation as part of the lottery grant that we would need to have an external examiner look at our processes, and this was funding 40% of that.

Hafsa Mitha clarified that the work was as part of the lottery funding to provide independent impact evaluation on the work of the charity. Pete noted that the report is yet to be finalised, noting that it is a new process for us as a charity.

Dalvir Kandola added that her charity can help provide commentary, because while Grants often want the figures, the commentary is extremely important. Pete added thanks for her offer of assistance.

Question - Steve Moses asked about the nature and structure of the Lottery Grant. Alex Jakeman responded that the lottery funds 40% of our expenses, and that we are required to raise the rest as part of the grant itself. Steve added that data collection and analysis is something that Loughborough Town of Sanctuary is very interested in.

5. Summary of Year

Pete Hobson provided a Chair's summary of the year

Trustees

- Trustees following last year's AGM were Pete Hobson, Anne Senior, Sarah Jones, Peter Williamson, Jessamyn Witthaus and Sherri Wong.
- Two further names to put forward: Sultana Taib (co-opted during the year) and Pooja Shah (new name).
- under our CIO constitution no trustee can serve more than 3 consecutive 3-year terms without at least a one-year break. By next AGM Pete will have served three terms as chair and will not be eligible to continue.

Staffing

- A year ago we had just taken payment of the initial tranche of our 5-year Reaching Communities Lottery grant and were anticipating the new possibilities it raised for us in securing a clear staff team to lead the work done by our many and crucial volunteers.
- We were successful in recruiting Hafsa Mitha to our first ever full-time Chief Officer post. She started in January and has already brought her own distinctive gifts and talents and experience to bear on the work
- Omid Lohoni left us as project officer, but we recruited Mohammad Alsayed in his place, starting in April and he too has settled in well, with a distinctive contribution, not least borne of his own lived experience.
- Alex Jakeman remains in post as our ever-reliable Finance and Admin officer as he has for the past 7 years.
- Last year I thanked Maggie Edgington, who had covered a key staffing gap as one-day a week interim Operations Lead for longer than any of us had anticipated,



alongside her role as volunteer for work with families and children. Maggie decided it was also the time for her to move on, which she did after the summer families activity programme completed, and I'd like to thank her again for all she has given to LCoS in various capacities over at least the past 9 years.

Funding our work

- Pete highlighted key elements from the 2023/24 financial year report on the income side. In addition, drew attention to our Year One report to the Lottery. This report highlights what has been achieved to date (funding began in October 2024). The bid was calculated to cover 40% of anticipated costs and requires us to raise the remaining balance, which we have achieved, bringing in some £42k of new grant money against a target of £30k
- From our annual accounts to 31 March presented to the AGM, Pete informed that we had a net gain on assets of £9k over the 12-month period. In addition, at a little over £5k, regular committed giving from members and supporters remains a relatively small element of our finances – although one-off donations of various sorts are holding up well.
- Attendees were informed about the upcoming Big Give Christmas Challenge which takes place online in the first week of December, and where every £ given up to the first £4k is match-funded.

What have we done?

- The Lottery Year One report paints a comprehensive picture of what has been achieved in the past 12 months and is available to any member on request. A summary of this report will be available on the website, and circulated to members and attendees.
- Part of our Lottery bid was to enable us to bring in independent external assessment of our work and we have just received the first report of that nature which itself helps inform our Lottery report.

What does the future hold?

This AGM marks the beginning of the process which will help form our Strategic Plan, which we are targeting to take us to the end of the decade - just beyond the point the Lottery funding ends.

- Pete highlighted the Strategic Aims with a focus on the aim "to educate and encourage people in and around Leicester to welcome asylum seekers and refugees into their communities and to support our work". The 'commentary' on it says "we recognise that many other groups have similar aims and expertise that can help asylum seekers and refugees and are keen to work with others, avoiding duplication, adding synergy and improving/co-ordinating support available."
- Pete also highlighted a recent initiative we've been part of, along with other groups, but led by the St Philip's Centre, under the title 'Living Well together in Leicester'. A



recent event at King Power Stadium brought together representatives of many local groups to see if we can identify key questions that might energise us as ordinary citizens in that direction. We are being asked to reply to these, if possible as an organisation, by the end of January – to lead into a larger gathering at the Cathedral at the end of March to review what's been said and what it says to us and others.

Pete shared the questions and requested responses.

1. *What is one thing you like about Leicester? Why did you choose this?*
2. *What worries, fears and misunderstandings make it harder for people from different cultures or communities to engage and live well together?*
3. *How do you think people in Leicester can be supported to meet, connect, and learn from those with different backgrounds or experiences?*
4. *What do you think ordinary people can do to help people live well together in Leicester? What do you think leaders should do?*

Hafsa Mitha provided the Chief Officer's Report

- Hafsa introduced herself, her background and the reason she applied to work for Leicester City of Sanctuary
- She highlighted the importance of our work in creating not just a beacon of hope, safely, welcome but Leicester becoming a beacon of good practice
- It is key that every person should feel seen, heard, supported and included as part of our community and that we valuing the richness of culture, language, skills and diversity that everyone brings
- Our work supports people to start fresh in a new place, and to rebuild confidence, dignity and belonging
- Our role as a charity is so important in building the world we want to live in – “be the change”
- Welcoming newcomers means we all thrive – adding to Leicester's richness and diversity

The way forward

- Voice and representation of our community is central to the charity meeting the needs of Sanctuary Seekers
- Sanctuary Ambassadors – will be key to shaping “how” we deliver our services through the lens of lived experience
- The vision is to create more safe spaces – changing demographics, eg more women attending and changing needs (through new projects)
- Growing funding and resources is essential to deliver our services and meet needs
- Inclusion – working together with honesty, integrity and purpose

Our next Strategic Plan 2025-2030



- Continuously improve what we provide, building on the past and adapting for the future
- Listening and understanding the voice of our community
- Create opportunities for all to contribute and valuing contribution through meaningful changes
- Deepen our impact by aligning what we do with needs evidenced from our community
- Empowering lived experience to shape the “way”that we do things
- Securing our future through funding
- Building effective partnerships

6. Any Other Business - there were no matters raised.

7. Workshop Activities building for the Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Dr. Sarah Hunt led a workshop activity asking the attendees to discuss and share ideas on the following topics: -

- “What is our Vision?”
- “What is our Mission?”
- Support and Challenges

The workshop groups were facilitated by Zalfa Feghali, Yan Ying, Sarah Hunt and Alison Adams.