

The Othona Community Annual General Meeting

24th September 2016 at the Fan Makers Hall, St Botolphs, London

Present: approximately 90 friends of the Community

MINUTES

1. Welcome and opening remarks

Colin Hodgetts, chair of Trustees, welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Rosie Sinden-Evans for organising the wonderful 70th anniversary service which had just been held at St Michael's Cornhill. Apologies were received from: Kate Miller, Flavia Miller, Vera Higginson, Graham Albright, Norma Albright, Sue Theobald, Jean Ling, Rev. Pat Hames

2. Minutes of the AGM 2015

The minutes were circulated and signed as a true record by the Chair of Trustees.

3. The Annual Accounts for 2015-16

Colin Hodgetts explained that under the Community's new governance structure the annual accounts are approved by the Trustees rather than by the members. However copies of the accounts were made available and members were invited to review them after the meeting and ask questions of the Treasurer, Roger Neville.

4. Election of Officers

Colin Hodgetts reported that the following appointments had been made by the Trustees for the next twelve months:

- Roo Bull as Community Secretary
- Roger Neville as Treasurer
- Tiffin Green as Independent Examiners

Colin was also appointed as Chair of Trustees for a further twelve months.

5. Update on community year.

Colin Hodgetts updated members that during the year Pat Price-Tomes had come to the end of her most recent term as a Trustee. Pat served as a Trustee for ten years and Colin expressed thanks to Pat for her contribution on behalf of the Trustees and wider community. Colin welcomed Caroline Walker who has recently joined the Trustees and will join the West Dorset Centre Committee.

6. Verbal financial update

Roger Neville provided a summary of the Community's finances and described a positive picture. At the end of March 2016 the Community's 'unrestricted funds' were in surplus by £95,000 mainly due to successful application to HMRC to exempt the Community from VAT. This status enabled the Community to claim back VAT payments from the previous three years which resulted in a payment of £50,000 from HMRC during the year. During the year the Community also received £16,000 in bequests. Because of the connections of these individuals to West Dorset these monies have been paid into that Centre's funds.

During the year the Community made a surplus of £11,000 from the operations at the two Centres. West Dorset ended the year with a surplus of £10,000 and Bradwell £1400. The Bradwell position at the end of the year reflected a programme of investment in refurbishment of the site and accommodation.

The funds invested by the Community lost £63,000 in value as a result of stock market losses towards the end of the financial year. However since the end of March almost all of this has been regained. The Community has maintained its income of £40,000 per year from these investments. This money is used to fund central Community activities and any surplus split between the two Centres.

A special thanks were expressed to Roger for the all work he does to ensure financial information is available and we keep up to date with changing regulations. Colin Hodgetts highlighted the value of bequests for the Community and encouraged members to consider this.

7. Centre reports

Tony Jacques from West Dorset and Tim Fox from Bradwell treated those present to photo presentations of the year at the centres. Key updates included:

West Dorset

The Community took part in Dorset Art Week again, turning the chapel and library into an exhibition space for five Othona artists. Approx. 800 people came to see the exhibition, for many their first encounter with the Community. In addition the Community took part in the West Dorset Open Eco-homes event which attracted a number of people who were really interested and inspired by the work the Community is doing, particularly in relation to stewardship of biodiversity in the site.

The Core Community includes: Aidan (who is currently at Taize where he is spending 3 weeks), Antje who is housekeeper, Caroline who runs the office, Louise (former trustee), Robin, Tony, Sally who has been the cook for the last few months, Vince (who looks after IT), Noel (who looks after the Community's bees and poly tunnel), Ali (also a Trustee) who provides support on personnel matters and coordinates the community database, Mart who has been groundsman for 14 years and Pat Osborne who is a frequent volunteer in the kitchen and cream tea maestro!

Tony highlighted a number of projects that have been completed during the year including a new shed. He also explained that the Community are looking to replace the current Art Room with a 'Four Seasons Studio' which will be larger, with full disabled access, a toilet and kitchenette.

In his presentation Tony showed photographs from some of the year's events including Families Bargain Break in spring, Art Week in the summer, Fun with Science and a singing event. He finished with a photograph of swallow fledglings who returned to the Community this summer.

Bradwell

In his presentation Tim highlighted investment in refurbishment of the site and a number of new site and building projects and expressed massive thanks to Pete Baird for leading much of that work. He also described the development of the Othona Coastal Park which has involved the redevelopment of the lower field and pig sty. The Community secured a large grant to support this work which is a great resource for the Community and local people. Tim also expressed special thanks to Amanda for her great work in the garden and grounds.

Tim showed a video about the Community that was made during Media Week which is on the Centre facebook page. He explained that the current Core Community model involves people joining Tim, Dave and Sandra and volunteering for short periods of time.

During the year the Community have worked closely with groups who come to the centre and run their own activities. This has included AA who come three times a year for weekends; a church in West Ham which is working with women from a number of faiths who have experienced abuse and a group from Palestine/Israel called Together Beyond Words. The Community has been able to offer bursaries to enable these groups to come to the Centre. Tim presented slides from the Together Beyond Words event.

8. Reflections from the Chair

Colin Hodgetts talked about the difficulties that society is facing and highlighted the negative impact of Brexit for the Community given that reconciliation between people from different European countries was an initiating principle. He noted how important relationship with those in Europe has been to the Community and that some people from European communities living in the UK are feeling pressure. He called on the community to welcome them and find practical ways to express our belief in peace, non-violence and reconciliation. He highlighted the Together Beyond Words event at Bradwell but noted that supporting this kind of activity requires subsidy from the Community and called on people who would like to contribute financially to do so so that we can do more. He closed by emphasising the key role that the wardens and core communities play in initiating these activities and asked all members to keep them in prayers and thoughts in coming months.

9. AOB

- Kate Portal asked if there are ever open Committee meetings that members could attend and if there is any information on the internet about the Community's current Committee structure. Colin noted that the Trustee names are on the 'Othonawide' section of the website and said he would check that all the most recent AGM minutes are uploaded.
- Jan Marshall has copies of her book about Norman Motley and his life for £6.99 and Colin Hodgetts has copies of his autobiography for £9.99.