

**Minutes of 2018 Annual General Meeting
of the Beds/Northants MS Therapy Centre Ltd.
Monday 11th June, 2018**

Kay welcomed guests and our patrons – Helen Nellis, Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire and Roger Jefcoate CBE

1. **Apologies:** Clifton Ibbett (Patron). Melanie Hawman (trustee)

2. Approval of Minutes of AGM 2017

The minutes were approved as a true record.
Proposed Frank Sudlow, Seconded Karen Lathaen

2. Treasurer's Report – Frank Sudlow

It's my privilege to present the accounts which have been prepared and audited by Collett Hulance in accordance with the relevant Charity Commission requirements and Company Law.

Our Mission is to be a Centre of excellence providing professional specialist therapies and support for people with MS in a self-help environment that inspires and empowers. It's an ambitious mission but one we measure all our activities against as you will hear later from our Chair, Kay Taylor, when she comments on the Trustees' Report. This is given in detail in pages 1-10 and I want to draw out just a few points and leave the detail to Kay.

In the report we make clear that our therapies are provided free of charge to any individual accessing the Therapy Centre.

We are a self-help charity, so we request donations to running costs from all members and raise further funds from charitable trusts, companies, local groups and other individuals.

Last year we directly employed 13 staff. We also contracted services from a further 7 specialist therapists and engaged a range of volunteers in our charity shops and fundraising ventures but also in delivering Oxygen Therapy, supporting the Physiotherapists in the Gym and carrying out a range of caring and administrative tasks.

The staff needs to be supported with good management and effective administrative systems and we will be strengthening these during the coming year.

I am pleased to note that our Auditors have given us a clean bill of health, finding our accounts to have been properly prepared and give a true and fair view of the state of our affairs to date.

Full copies of the audited accounts are available.

Pages 1 – 10: cover the Trustees' annual report and information about the Centre.

The Independent Auditors' report has found our accounts to be in good order. Collett Hulance know us well and I can assure you that they check everything we have done over the year.

The Balance Sheet shows the Statement of financial activities with breakdown of restricted and unrestricted funds. This shows that our net assets have risen to £655,639 from £543,636. Our aim is to hold one year's expenditure in reserve, as has been our policy for some time, and we have achieved this. However, we only

hold £371,393 in Current Assets – funds we could turn to cash relatively quickly – which is a little less than one year's expenditure. This is because £109,528 is represented by fixed assets (ie our equipment), and £181,421 is held as investments in the stock market.

Furthermore, £78,390 of our current assets are restricted to particular projects, in particular the refurbishment of the Hydro-pool. We are most grateful to the Masonic Charitable Foundation, The Sobell Foundation and others who have made this refurbishment possible.

These restricted funds, which contribute to the surplus for 2017 will have been spent on the pool refurbishment in 2018.

Page 28, also in your pack, summarises our activities for the year 2017. You will see that income of £500,755 (up from £439,723 in 2016) and expenditure £388,752 (down from £394,979).

This means that after depreciation and other adjustments we are again in credit for the year. This is due in no small part to the work of our volunteer fundraisers and the commitment of members who support the Centre through their own regular donations as well as the generous support from Trusts and others.

I feel we can confidently say we have turned a corner after our few turbulent years, but we need to remain vigilant and I will come back to that shortly.

The auditors' report highlighted a few points that I would like to draw to your attention.

First, that 90% of all our funds are spent on the Therapies we offer. This demonstrates the value for money offered to funders.

Last year I reported that donations and gifts (first line on page 28) had fallen by £23,511. In 2017 they rose by £95,548 and while this includes £69K of restricted funds (mainly for the pool) it still demonstrates the volatility of donations. It is good to see representatives of the Lions and The Ship here tonight and I want to thank them for their generous donations.

In 2016 our funds were rescued by a generous legacy but no such rescue was needed in 2017. We did however receive a legacy of £1000 for which we are always very thankful. Legacies and In Memoriam Donations are a great support to our continuing work.

Members' donations further down the income list continue to increase, and rose in 2017 from £106,464 to £118,294. These are the most reliable source of income and increasingly come from members taking out a standing order in favour of the Centre. We now have over 240 members contributing in this way, donating an average of £39 per month, though the range runs from £2 to £150 per month.

Members are asked to donate what they can afford, and we aim to deliver the therapies and services they need. They now contribute over 27% of unrestricted income.

Our fundraising events continue to provide a valuable and reliable source of income. This year, events raised £63,469 or almost 15% of our income.

Expenditure

Our major costs are, of course, the salaries of our staff and contracted therapists. They represent 70% of expenditure. We try to increase salaries in line with inflation but last year, with inflation so low, we did not increase salaries, rather we amended

some contracts and began to provide a pension for staff, increasing our salaries costs by just 1%.

The pension provision is a legal requirement but one we are pleased to pay and will rise each year over the next few years.

The cost of gas and electricity continues to rise, but our Solar Panels have not only reduced the amount of electricity we have to buy, they have also provided income of £7,603 for the surplus electricity the panels generated. In effect, we have covered the cost of all our electricity and a bit more.

Our repair and maintenance costs remain a significant part of our indirect costs. This year the costs cover a range of minor repairs – just a lot of them! (Lift x 3; Oxygen Chamber Repairs; Fire Safety Equipment repairs).

Following a general Rate Review we have received a significant Rates Reduction as we are now recognised as providing Clinical Care.

The most significant note to make with regard to our Expenditure is that we were well within budget this year, a testament to our staff for getting the most out of our equipment and to our Trust Fundraiser for being able to attract funds for those items we had to purchase.

We are blessed with some excellent staff, who are frugal in their spending and persuasive in their fundraising. Our thanks to them all.

I have deliberately not mentioned anyone in particular this year, since it has been a real team effort with both staff and members ensuring we raised the funds we needed and only spent what we had raised.

Questions: It was asked whether we claim Gift Aid on donations from members. This is indeed the case, where the donor is eligible.

It was proposed by Paula Priestly that the accounts be adopted, seconded by Peter Kimber.

4. Chair's Report –Kay Taylor

2017 has been a good year, not only financially, but also in terms of consolidating the improvements started in 2016.

Last year I mentioned the survey that was to be undertaken by the MS society, called Generating Evidence in Multiple Sclerosis Services (or GEMSS). This took place in summer 2017, with interesting responses from 108 service users.

Two thirds of the respondents were diagnosed more than 10 years ago, and 80% of the respondents have moderate to severe disability. This data shows that we are catering mostly for the people who are further along in their disease journey, and have accumulated a significant amount of disability.

We have found that people who are recently diagnosed, on the other hand, like to know that we are here, but do not necessarily wish to attend the Centre at this time. To cater for these people, we have started a group for younger people. This is mostly a social group, but we are also increasing the range of therapies that are available on Thursday evenings to make sure that people who are still at work can use our services.

Most respondents to the GEMSS survey have been visiting the Centre for 5 years or more, and most attend at least once per week. This shows that, for those people who

wish to attend, we provide long-term continuous support. For those who attend more than once a week, we are providing intensive support. Neither of these would be available via the NHS.

Three quarters of respondents travel a significant distance to visit the Centre, demonstrating that comparable services are not available nearer to them, and that the benefits of the Centre are worth making a journey for.

Data from the GEMSS survey showed that our MS nurses, physiotherapy and gym are our most highly used services, enabling respondents to state that they got help with staying healthy and avoiding falls.

The Centre delivered very well on important measures of patient experience, such as ease of getting an appointment, having trust in the experience of the staff, and staff having time to spend listening and explaining things.

99% of respondents said that the Centre had made a difference to their quality of life. This included aspects of both physical and emotional wellbeing, for example: Ability to cope, ability to take care of yourself and disease self-management techniques.

Respondents stated that if they hadn't had access to the MS Therapy Centre they would have made more visits to GPs, neurologists and A&E, or would have struggled on on their own.

From the people who said that they would have made more visits to the NHS services, the MS Trust calculated that the MS Therapy Centre had saved the NHS over £41,000 over the year. Of course, not all of our service users responded to the survey, so the money saved by the NHS is likely to be far greater than this.

In order to deliver our services to the highest quality, we have made more changes to the structure of the Centre. We have combined the physiotherapy department and the adapted gym to make the best use of the skills of our staff, and now have a busy and uplifting, yet professional facility.

We employed two new physiotherapists this year, and now have 3 fully qualified physiotherapists working as a team to provide one and a half full time equivalents. In addition, we have a physiotherapy assistant a gym assistant, and volunteer helpers.

As well as the physiotherapy on land, we offer water-based hydrotherapy. The filtration system of our hydrotherapy pool needed to be upgraded in order to provide a safe environment for the number of people using it, and we required an additional changing room that could also be used by people requiring a hoist. This involved a cost of over £65,000 and has been achieved with the generous support of donors including the Masonic Charitable Foundation, Clifton Ibbett Trust and other Trusts and fundraising activities.

Earlier this year we carried out a review of our performance against our strategic plan. We noted that in most of the key areas of work we had achieved well, and particularly in the area of quality. However, there are some areas that we feel need more work, and these will form the basis of our further development this year.

We have recently adopted a database, used by other MS Therapy Centres, to record members' details and set up appointments. This, along with dealing with the Data Protection Regulations has been an arduous task, but we hope it will ultimately lead to more efficiency and accuracy.

We have a fantastic facility here, and we want to make sure that we are using our building and amenities as much as possible. As mentioned earlier, we are open on a Thursday evening, and we would like to make sure that we are open at times to suit all of the people who need our therapies.

We would like to work in partnership with other organisations more often in order to deliver a more varied range of services and new ventures. An example of this is the workshop called Digesting Science. This workshop was designed by Barts MS research team to be a fun way of helping younger children learn about the symptoms of MS that affect their family members.

We ran a very successful interactive workshop in September, with games and activities about symptoms of MS. It was noisy and fun, yet very informative. The children, and parents all gained a great deal of knowledge and understanding.

We would like to be better known in the health sector. Although we have good links with neurologists, and regularly receive referrals from GPs, we seem to be largely unrecognised by the Clinical Commissioning Group.

We have, however, recently gained funding from Central Bedfordshire Council under their community grant scheme. Our MS nurse will deliver workshops to people with MS, and specific workshops for carers of people living with MS to alert them to recognise complications in the symptoms of MS that could be avoided. This could make the difference between someone going into hospital, or remaining at home, and would have a great effect on wellbeing as well.

Today is the first day of Carers week, and it is appropriate to recognise the huge role that is played by carers of people with MS, whether they are paid or informal carers. By attending the Therapy Centre, the carers gain informal support, but we aim to formalise this by setting up a contact group so that informal carers can arrange to meet up with a like-minded person for a chat or a coffee.

So, to summarise, we feel that we have good evidence from the GEMSS survey that we are providing a valuable service to the people who attend the Centre. We feel that we are delivering against our strategic plan, and we have some clear goals for continuous improvement this year.

We would not be able to achieve any of our goals without the dedication of our wonderful members of staff, including the many Volunteers who help us to keep the Centre running.

We also have an incredibly hard-working team of volunteer fundraisers who turn out without fail to make our events a success.

We are extremely grateful to all of the members, Donors, Trusts, Charity groups and businesses that support us.

I would like to thank them all on behalf of the Trustees and the Members alike.

5. Election of Trustees:

Retiring Trustees - Kay reported that Dominic Quirke had retired as Trustee.

We are very sad to lose Dominic as a trustee and chair of the fundraising committee, but he is a very busy man with other commitments at present.

Dominic has made a huge contribution to the Centre over the last few years. We have benefitted from both Dominic's business knowledge and his incredible fundraising efforts. Dominic has arranged our charity ball for the past 5 years, alongside several other successful events, and raised over £50,000 for the Centre.

Election of Returning Trustees - Kay Taylor, Frank Sudlow, Susan Napper, J. P. Brown, Alex Scott, Melanie Hawman and Karen Lathaen were elected 'on bloc'.

This motion was proposed by Tracy Mckenzie and seconded by Rita Lewis.

6. Election of Prospective Trustees – There were no prospective trustees standing for election.

7. Election of Auditors

Kay recommended that Collett Hulance be asked to audit the accounts once again and explained that they are always very helpful and know our business in great detail;

This was proposed by Sue Napper and seconded by Alex Scott.

8. Any other business No other business.

Kay then closed the Annual General Meeting.

A cheque for £1000 was presented to Tracy Mckenzie by the Bedford Lions Group. This was partly to thank the Therapy Centre for the use of a meeting room over the year.

Helen Nellis then presented a notebook and pen to some recent fundraisers and volunteers who had been invited as representatives of all of the members and supporters who raise funds for the Centre or who help out in many ways.

Lyn Bradshaw – For over 18 years, Lyn has provided shiatsu therapy to members. Lyn is now retiring and will be very much missed.

Lorna Spicer – Lorna has been a physiotherapy assistant and reflexologist at the MS Therapy Centre for 20 years. She was thanked for all of her work over the years and wished well in her move to Devon.

Roger Prettyman – Oxygen operator for 13 years decided that it was time to retire. Our Thursday members will miss his friendly banter.

The Ship Inn – The landlady and team from the Ship Inn, Bedford, were thanked for their fundraising efforts over the year.

Kay thanked members and friends of the MS Therapy Centre for voting in the Masonic Charitable Foundation Awards The donation of £25,000 had allowed the Therapy Centre to refurbish the hydrotherapy pool, which Kay invited visitors to view.

Refreshments were then available.

Signed as a true record of proceedings: _____

Date: _____