

**Minutes of 2019 Annual General Meeting  
of the Beds & Northants MS Therapy Centre  
Monday 10th June, 2019**

Kay Taylor welcomed guests and our patrons – Professor Alastair Compston CBE FRS and Roger Jefcoate CBE DL

**Apologies:** Clifton Ibbett (Patron), Helen Nellis HM Lord-Lieutenant (Patron).  
Melanie Hawman (Trustee)

**1. Approval of Minutes of AGM 2019**

The minutes were approved as a true record.  
Proposed Laurence Culhane, 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, when she delivers the Trustees' Report.

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. Our principle is clear, we ask you to pay what you can and in return we aim to provide what you, our members, need.

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 17 staff. We also contracted services from a further 9 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 strengthened these during the year employing a receptionist.

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 the our affairs to date.

Full copies of the audited accounts are available, but to save paper, we have provided you with the key pages. I will refer to the summary page.

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 fallen to £633,978 from

£655,639 (in 2016 they were only £543,636). The large fluctuation was due to the fact that we had raised funds to refurbish the Hydro-pool in 2017 but did not spend this until 2018.

Our aim is to hold one year's expenditure in reserve, as has been our policy for some time, and we have maintained this. However, we only hold £388,620 in Current Assets – funds we could turn to cash relatively quickly – against an annual expenditure of £443,619, so a little less than one year's expenditure. This is because the rest of our assets are our building, equipment and investments.

Furthermore, £68,029 of our current assets are restricted to particular projects, mainly new equipment.

From the summary you will see that our income last year was down to £421,970 having been up at £500,755. This is in part due to a fall in contributions from members but mainly due to a fall in the value of our investments and the challenges we face in raising funds from Trusts and other charitable bodies.

Last year we received £272,581 from Donations and Gifts from Trusts, Clubs and organisations who supported us. However, £69K was for the Hydro-pool. Hence, these donations are holding up, but not improving at the rate we need.

After two years of generous legacies, we had no such gifts this year. Legacies and In Memoriam Donations are a great support to our continuing work.

I have mentioned the fall in Member Donations. Last year an average of 238 people made monthly donations by Standing order. This is our most reliable source of income and I want to thank all those who helped in this way. If you are able to make out a Standing Order for the centre, please do. It is not only an efficient way of donating, it is also the best way for us to increase those donations through Gift Aid where that is claimable. Donations averaged £45 but ranged between £20 and £150 with members paying what they could afford. Members' donations now represent 27% of our overall income.

The shop sales were down a little this year but our fundraisers, which include the Emporium, Deja Vu, Charity Sales, Store collections and the many other events we hold had their best year in a long time raising over £70K. Whether you can take out a Standing Order or not, please do consider how you can help our fundraising team. 17% of our overall income comes from these fundraising activities.

### **Turning to our Expenditure.**

I would like to note first, that 87% of all our funds are spent on the therapies we offer. This demonstrates the value for money offered to members and funders. We continue to increase staff wages in line with inflation as is reflected in the figures here, but you may wish to note that we have now carried out a full salary review to ensure staff are paid at the appropriate level, linking our salaries to NHS or Administrative scales. Our staff members are of course our greatest asset and we are all grateful for the great work they do for us.

We have managed to contain our expenditure so that there are only a few other items worth highlighting.

The minibus has been dying and with this the costs have been rising but we are expecting our new minibus shortly. Ensuring access to the Centre is part of our mission and we have been fortunate in gaining the funds necessary to purchase a new bus.

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 £7,173 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 but this year they also cover the cost of the refurbishment of the Hydro-pool.

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 Fundraisers for being able to attract funds for those items we had to purchase.

The net loss was anticipated in that we had to cover the cost of the Hydro-pool refurbishment.

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

#### **4. Chair's Report –Kay Taylor**

##### **Chair's report for AGM 10<sup>th</sup> June 2019**

As Frank has explained, 2018 was a good year for our finances, with major donations enabling us to carry out work to refurbish the hydrotherapy pool and create a modern and accessible environment. There was disruption to some therapies along the way, and issues with getting the system running smoothly, but we are now providing hydrotherapy sessions, both with a therapist and self-managed, every day of the week.

This work fitted in to our strategic plan under the heading 'enhanced facilities'. We are constantly striving to make sure that the facilities at the Centre are as good as they can be. Other work carried out in 2018 included new flooring in the gym and new garden furniture, both donated. In 2018 we obtained donations to allow us to replace the minibus, which as you know is now on its last legs. It is a constant battle to keep on top of issues that arise such as toilet cisterns spontaneously cracking into several pieces, but Tracy does a great job to react as quickly as possible to keep things running.

A team of volunteers have been selling items on Ebay to raise funds for specific things around the building that would otherwise be difficult to fund – for example the shop fittings in the newly revamped clothes shop, Déjà vu.

In general, our financial strength is good. We have supplemented donations by renting out our spare rooms occasionally to our self-employed therapists and to The Disability Resource Centre, who have run courses in this building that our members are welcome to attend.

We obtained funding from Central Bedfordshire Council to run a series of workshops aimed at Carers of people with progressive MS, to enable them to spot symptoms early and hopefully avoid hospital admissions. Miranda ran a number of very well received sessions with great feedback.

Within this project, our MS Specialist nurses also worked on a pathway of care for people with MS who have a stay in hospital. Often, general nurses are not equipped with the knowledge to manage MS symptoms. The pathway is a practical way to ensure that people with MS are looked after as best as they can be in hospital, and return home as soon as possible.

In order to ensure a team with leading knowledge, in 2018 we ran a first aid course for all members of staff. This was well attended and has helped our therapists to feel more confident should an issue arise. Other therapists attended training courses

specific to their discipline, for example, we held a moving and handling course for anyone who is likely to help clients manoeuvre.

Sarah and Linda attended a hydrotherapy course and gained a Hydrotherapy Pool Operators' certificate.

Sarah also attended an Ai Chi course specifically designed for exercises in the water.

Linda attended a postural care and seating workshop, and Ros and Louise attended a spasticity course at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery.

Our MS specialist nurses, Miranda and Emma, attended the MS Trust Conference and Miranda has attended additional courses including 'Research Methodology', 'Good Clinical Practice', and other Mandatory training including safeguarding.

Miranda and Emma will both be speaking at a conference for MS professionals this June, and Miranda is involved in other projects where her knowledge of MS is sought after.

The Trustees and Tracy spent a lot of time in 2018 working on policies and Governance of the Centre. The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) have created a lot of work, but have encouraged us to make sure that the contact details for Centre users are up to date.

The new appointment system 'Northwood' came into use at the end of 2018. This system allows us to record everyone's contact details and to make sure that appointments don't clash. From a central point, members can be informed when their therapies will take place. We are also able to monitor accurately how many therapies are being provided.

In 2018 we provided, amongst others, 3,929 sessions of physiotherapy or hydrotherapy, 3,270 sessions of oxygen therapy, 2,879 sessions of complementary therapies, 2,530 sessions of APS therapy, and 520 appointments with a Nurse Specialist in MS.

Although we are providing many therapies during our core hours, we felt that we needed to increase options for people who are working. We started to provide physiotherapy, oxygen, Bowen and reflexology until 6.30 on Thursday evenings. We have now expanded this to include nursing appointments, APS, pilates and the gym until 7.30pm.

Some people who are newly diagnosed are now able to access disease modifying treatments that keep them more mobile, and we need to be aware of the changing needs of people living with MS.

In 2018 we had 57 new people come to the Centre for an initial assessment, 25 of those are now attending regularly, and we hope that the extended hours will enable some more people to attend regularly.

We held our second programme called 'Digesting Science' aimed at families with children between the ages of 6 and 12. This was a fun, interactive and informative workshop where children learnt about the effects of MS on their family member. It was enthusiastically received and another date is planned.

From our annual survey in 2018 a number of people said that they would like us to sell more disability equipment. As a response to this we have organised an information day with trained advisors from the Disability Resource Centre. This was very successful and will be repeated at the end of June. We also ran a seating assessment day where members were able to experience innovative forms of seating and riser-recliner chairs.

Another area that we would like to develop is to be known as a key health provider. We find that newly diagnosed people with MS, and people moving in to the area are not made aware of what we have to offer, and we will try to make sure that the community navigators, who are based in GP practices, know about us and what we do.

We continuously strive to make sure that people with MS in general can find out about us. Our press releases sent out during the recent MS awareness week in April were successful in securing a Radio interview in Northampton and a TV appearance on Look East. As a result of this, we know of at least 2 people who have started attending the Centre.

It makes us very proud to see the MS Therapy Centre on TV, to see what is achieved here.

In our survey, 100% of respondents said that they found the staff helpful, and 94% gave us 4 or 5 out of 5 stars for general satisfaction.

None of our work could be done without the dedication of our wonderful members of staff who work extremely hard to provide the therapies on offer. We have had several new members of staff join us this year, and we welcome Guy as lead physiotherapist, Karen on reception, Jane our new Trust fundraiser and Swarupa our events and community fundraiser.

We have lots of new fundraising activities taking place this year, including an art exhibition and a swishing event, along with our regular events, and I encourage you to come along to them.

We have 46 regular volunteers who work to deliver our therapies and fundraising events. We simply couldn't manage without them.

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

On behalf of the Trustees and the Members, I would like to thank everyone who supports our Centre

## **5. Election of Trustees:**

**Retiring Trustees** - Kay reported that Frank Sudlow would retire as a Trustee due to moving away from the area..

Sue Napper, previous treasurer, made a presentation to Frank to thank him for the huge amount of work that he done in moving the accounting system from paper to digital system, and in producing monthly reports to the Trustees.

**Election of Returning Trustees** - Kay Taylor, Susan Napper, Jean-Pierre Brown, Alex Scott, Melanie Hawman and Karen Lathaen were elected '*en bloc*'.

This motion was proposed by Tracy McKenzie and seconded by Luisa Moreton.

## **6. Election of Prospective Trustees – Laurence Culhane**

Laurence introduced himself and was voted on to the committee.

Proposed by Jean-Pierre brown, seconded by Alex Scott.

Laurence was diagnosed with Primary Progressive MS 10 years ago, but is still trying to maintain a normal life despite now using a wheelchair.

Laurence has worked for the BBC in local radio for thirty five years and continues to do so. His experience in the media as a presenter, journalist and manager along with a background in technology means he hopes he has some useful skills to bring the trustees.

Laurence would like to help the MS Therapy Centre to continue in its efforts to support those who are working by offering services outside the traditional core hours.

## **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 Frank Sudlow and seconded by Luisa Moreton.

**8. Any other business** No other business.

Kay then closed the Annual General Meeting.

Refreshments were then available.

Signed as a true record of proceedings: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_