

Minutes of Centre 70 Annual General Meeting held in Portico Gallery, Knights Hill, West Norwood, London SE27 OHS on Thursday 17th September 2020.

The meeting was held online using Zoom as permitted by legislation for the COVID-19 restrictions.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from a number of people including Helen Hayes MP, Gai Tetlow, Richard and Gwenda Chadwick, Edward Parry and Jacob and Margaret Ecclestone.
2. **The minutes of the 2019 AGM** were received and approved as amended.
3. **Centre 70's Chair's Report:** Martin Beard observed that the 50th year is known as the Jubilee Year when debts were forgiven, land was returned to those who had had to give it up and prisoners and slaves were set free. Every year staff and volunteers at Centre 70 free people from debt and housing problems, counsel them through difficult, sometimes enslaving, situations, help when these issues are combined and train those being helped to help others.

The advice and advocacy work is constantly busy on many matters: housing, benefits, debt, general legal matters, student finance and managing utilities. The advice and advocacy work combines holistically with the ever-strengthening counselling and wellbeing service – the Inspire Project builds on this combination and its peer support groups have helped reduce isolation over the lockdown period. As before users become volunteers.

Centre 70 works in collaborations and partnerships. Advice is given in prisons, at probation services, at local Foodbanks and in colleges and children's centres. A new counselling outreach has begun with Arts Network.

The time, energy and finance invested to migrate the working arrangements onto a secure cloud-based system and to adopt a new telephone system have paid dividends with the COVID-19 restrictions.

Although not without limitations, working over the internet and by phone has allowed Centre 70 to provide an ongoing service throughout the COVID-19 restrictions. The staff and volunteers have managed magnificently with the added tasks involved and handling the ongoing extensive risk assessments.

Thanks were given to the Director, Brian Foxley, the Managers, Mark Batten and Dominic Cookson, all the staff, the volunteers (and especially to Brian Foxley and the whole team for adopting and adapting to new methods to continue the services in the face of the pandemic), to the funders and donors, to supporters and to the various project partners.

Farewells were said to long-serving members of staff, Silpa Winfield and Ian Baker, and a warm welcome given to Dominic Cookson as the manager of our Counselling and Wellbeing service.

The trustees and the management team have begun a review of the management in order for Centre 70 to be strong for the work which lies ahead. The Chair thanked his co-trustees for their time and expertise.

4. **Treasurer's Report:** Martin Beard presented the summary of the accounts. The full audited accounts will be available on Centre 70's website and a summary of the income and expenditure will appear on the last two pages.

The accounts showed a surplus of £64,760 for the year to 31st March 2020. The surplus was explained by a number of factors including deferred expenses on the premises, the payment for past legal work under the system of payment for legal work and temporary staff shortages.

Centre 70 has had a wide source of income for which we are very grateful. Funders included: Tudor Trust and City Bridge Trust fund the Inspire Project; Lambeth Council for advice work; Thames Water Trust Fund for utilities advice; the Walcot Foundation for our advice for students; the Legal Aid Agency; the Money and Pension Service (through Debt Free London) for debt advice; and the HM Prison and Probation services. This year Trust for London funded us to extend our housing advice work. Donors included: the Richard & Gwenda Chadwick's Charitable Trust; the Dawson family's Leonard Chadwick Charitable Trust; the Prince Zaiger Trust; Fuellers Charitable Trust; and local churches. The London Legal Walk 2019 drew in gifts including from Dawson Cornwell solicitors and Document Risk Solutions. In the Christmas Big Give £8,000 was raised to fund our Counselling and Wellbeing service.

There will be a loss of income in this present financial year due to the coronavirus pandemic and we will now have to budget for a deficit, albeit a sustainable one, and the situation is being analysed regularly. London Borough Lambeth has given an additional grant. Through the London Community Response Fund we were awarded grants from Walcot Foundation, City Bridge Trust and Trust For London to help the costs of added remote working costs and cover the extra time costs of handling the restrictions. We have only made limited use of the Government furlough scheme. We are very thankful for these funders. Additional funds and donations are welcomed.

Centre 70 meets charity law requirements for financial stability. The financial reserves are needed to allow for the uncertainty over the amounts and timing of future funding and reserves have been set aside to help purchase a long lease and refurbish 46 Knights Hill which will add stability, resilience and long-term certainty for the premises and a better working environment.

The audited accounts will be available on Centre 70's website. Thanks were given to Jacqui Eke, our finance worker, Brian Foxley and all involved concerning finances and to the auditors.

5. **Auditors:** It was agreed by the members to authorise the trustees to appoint Wagstaffs of Richmond House, Walkern Road, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 3QP as auditors and to agree the auditors' remuneration for the coming year 2020-2021.

6. **Election of trustees:** All the other present trustees were willing to be reappointed as trustees for the coming year: Martin Beard, Emma Burgess, Laura Cassidy, Clare Chamberlain, Georgina Day, Cassie Hanratty, Elvis Langley, Kati Massey, Gai Tetlow, Kate White and Liz Woodroffe. They being the only nominated candidates, all were elected to serve as trustees on the Board with immediate effect for the new year 2020/2021.

7. **Email notices:** The members confirmed the use of email for formal notices and Board meetings over the internet (as provided under the Articles) and the ongoing use of all means of communication over the internet to deal with the affairs and running of Centre 70.

8. **Any other business:** During the meeting questions were taken about aspects of the work of Centre 70. Manager Dominic Cookson, trustee Elvis Langley and staff member Ambra Biagini contributed with answers to questions from Cllr Sonia Winifred, Katherine St John-Brooks and other attendees concerning the Counselling and Wellbeing Service and the need for resources to deal with the impact of the pandemic. Martin Beard was thanked for his work as Chair.