



Minutes of Centre 70 Annual General Meeting

Held in the Community Room at West Norwood Library, 1-5 Norwood High Street, London SE27 9JX from 7-30pm on Thursday 21st October 2021

1. **Apologies for absence** were acknowledged.
2. **The minutes of the 2020 AGM** were received and approved as amended.
3. **Centre 70's Chair's Report:** Martin Beard said the planned celebrations of Centre 70's Jubilee Year last year had had to be postponed. But Centre 70 has continued to serve the communities around and about despite the pandemic, applying resilience and perseverance and finding new and creative ways to provide the help Centre 70 gives.

Martin thanked Brian Foxley, the director, the managers, Mark Batten and Dominic Cookson, and all the staff and volunteers, his fellow trustees, Centre 70's funders and donors and many supporters. Special mention was made of volunteers who had continued their work during the pandemic – like the director, managers and staff, they had switching to working over the internet.

Centre 70 holistically combines advice and counselling and wellbeing services. The greater part of the work is in advice and advocacy. Clients tell of their appreciation for the help, for example, a restored gas supply for heating and enhanced welfare provision. Centre 70 is looking for more funding to provide more mental health and wellbeing support as the need clearly increases.

In January a long lease of the premises was purchased to meet practical requirements and to secure Centre 70's presence in the area for many years to come. For this, thanks were expressed for the encouragements of Cllrs Jim Dickson and Jackie Meldrum, for the work of Yvonne Hardy and her team at LB Lambeth, and Centre 70's lawyer, Andrew Weir at solicitors Anthony Gold, and for the generous gift of a donor who has asked to remain anonymous.

Martin spoke of staff changes over the year - farewells for Edward Freeman and Sandra Mayne and welcomes to Tonia Haworth and Alexis Alafouza.

The Board was joined by Naomi Neiland at the end of last year and farewells were said to Cassie Hanratty, who left last August having moved away from the area and having new commitments. For reasons of other commitments, three trustees, Clare Chamberlain, Georgina Day and Emma Burgess were not putting themselves forward this year. All were thanked for their service.

Martin observed that Centre 70 is always looking to welcome new trustees and others who are willing to volunteer their time and energy to help Centre 70 provide the wide range of services.

Anna Rodriguez Panadero and the staff at the Library were thanked for hosting this event. It was noted what a lovely resource West Norwood has in this building.

4. **Treasurer's Report:** Kati Massey, the Treasurer, presented the summary of the audited accounts copies of which were distributed. The full audited accounts will be available on Centre 70's website

She reported that the most significant change from the previous year was the successful purchase of a 125-year lease on 46 Knights Hill. Whilst this brings with it the opportunity for stability, it is also incumbent on Centre 70 to invest appropriately in the building to ensure it can continue to serve its community.

The accounts show a significant surplus for 2021. However this is explained by a number of factors. The first is that the lease was facilitated by a significant donation which shows on the statement of financial activities as income but not expenditure, and second is that a considerable amount of historical billing was completed when the ongoing legal aid work slowed. The pandemic also meant deferring essential building and maintenance work and therefore a significant portion of the surplus is committed to these future works whilst still enabling Centre 70 to meet the needs of the reserves policy.

There are also a number of notable differences in funding streams from the previous year. The significant drop in income from Legal Housing Advice relative to the previous year, for example, reflects the changes in the housing sector (such the temporary stopping of evictions enforcement) that took place during the pandemic. The reduction in Debt Free London grant funding reflects the end of the contract, and the reduction in HMPPS was as a result of the lockdowns prohibiting prison visits. Despite these significant reductions, new funding streams were identified and existing streams uplifted which meant the overall income from charitable activities was only £40,000 less than the previous year.

It is also important to note that there has been an increase in grants related to Counselling Services.

Centre 70 is currently in good financial health, but nevertheless still needs to build its core service capacity in order to meet demand (and potentially an increased post-pandemic demand). It can only do this through additional funding and donations.

Thanks were expressed for Jacqui Eke, the finance worker, for Brian Foxley and all involved concerning finances and for 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 2021-2022.

6. **Election of trustees:** The remaining current trustees were willing to be reappointed as trustees for the coming year: Martin Beard, Laura Cassidy, Elvis Langley, Kati Massey, Naomi Neiland, 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 2021/2022.

7. **Any other business:** Thanks were expressed to Helen Hayes MP who had attended earlier and had spoken of the importance of Centre 70's work and the large and increasing need for the services Centre 70 provides. Martin Beard was thanked for his work as Chair.