

Minutes of the Leicester City of Sanctuary AGM 2017

Saturday 13th May | Holy Cross Priory Church

Pete Hobson, in the chair, welcomed members and others to the meeting, in particular Sian Summers-Rees, national chief officer; Colleen Molloy, a local member but also a nationally employed development officer, and Joseph Chivayo a national trustee of City of Sanctuary.

1. 43 members were present as follows: Ajay Aggarwal, Sadiq Ahamed, Malka Al-Haddad, Anju Baroi, Nicky Brading, Chrs Bullough, Shali Bullough, Sonia Bullough, Ann Carter, Dickson Chikwizo, Tracy Chikwizo, Jafor Chowdury, Anne Fishenden, Jackie Hall, Phil Hardy, Pete Hobson, Pam Inder, Samuel Javid, Piotr Kuhiwczak, John Lessells, Rosalind Matthew, Jenny Mattingly, Eileen McKellican, Annie Merton, Colleen Molloy, Ambrose Musiyiwa, Indira Nath, Golden Ngwenya, Katherine Niderquell, Eric Nkundomubano, Rosemary Ogwuikie, Manoj Patel, Alexandros Plasatis, Mark Polishook, Susan Skyrme, Cathy Stevenson, Eguagie Clement Ugiagbe, Mick Walker, Jenny Westmoreland, David Wigginton, Mark Wilkinson, Geoffrey Woodruff

Apologies were received from: Mike Alexander, Robert Blow, Hilary Comfort, Maggie Edgington, Dr Richard Fynes, Tarjinder Gill, Christina Mottram, Michael Tully.

2. The Minutes of the 2016 AGM were approved.
3. The Annual Report for 2016-17 had been distributed. Mick Walker, co-ordinator, spoke to some of the highlights of the year:
 - A special thanks to the 40+ organisations that LCoS directly works with to improve the lives of refugees and asylum seekers in Leicester.
 - A successful creative writing project that enabled participants to read their poems on BBC Radio Leicester.
 - A cooking project.
 - A growing football team.
 - Journey Festival International.
 - Closer liaison with the police service and successful conversations with Leicester Mercury on related terminology.
 - The bike scheme has been revised and is being delivered with much more efficiency of resources.
 - Bus Fare allocations have been reviewed to ensure resources are spread effectively.
 - Members of the NEST team are now accredited and give more substantial support.
 - ESOL classes are growing, with many starting independently of LCoS.
 - Drop-in session volunteers have increased with around 12-15 now being asylum seekers or refugees.

The reported was applauded and **received** by the AGM.

4. Financial Report 2016-17. In the absence of both the Finance Officer and the Treasurer, Shali Bullough spoke to the tabled Report and gave a brief summary (See

Financial Report for year ending 31st March 2017 for details). These figures are subject to the report of the Independent Examiner.

- The AGM asked whether there could be a separate Bus Fares expenditure line. SB indicated that the majority of Bus Fare expenditure is under the Red Cross expenditure line as the resources sits within that particular fund; however, LCoS does have access to the detail if required.
 - The AGM asked why surplus funds shown in balance could not be used to enhance Bus Fare support. SB explained that those funds were given to the charity for a particular purpose and their use was therefore restricted.
 - The AGM enquired what would happen to the two posts (finance and administration) that the People Project funding, received in the previous year, had enabled. PH clarified that the charity would be looking at ways to keep those posts, or variations of them, going forward.
 - The AGM **received** the Financial Report for the year ending 31st March 2017
5. Structures for the Future - PH summarised why there was a need to revise LCoS organisational structure and how the tabled report, developed with Voluntary Action Leicester, came to be (see 'Leicester City of Sanctuary – proposals for revised structures' report from Hardip Chohan of VAL for details)

The AGM heard comments on the report

- Several individuals voiced concerns that the the proposed changes came from closed conversations, and that the conversation that did take place were not minuted. Some raised issue that the structures did not allow for refugees and asylum seeker representation.
- Others, including the coordinator, said they saw no evidence for this and in fact had plenty of evidence to support the opposite; that LCoS was increasingly representative and this structure did not change that.
- It was asked if the report was an interim report and PH clarified that it was.

The report, with its interim conclusions, was **accepted** by the AGM

6. Dissolution of Charity. PH drew attention to paragraph three in the Chair's section of the Annual Report outlining the background to this motion. He summarised why the decision to explore becoming a CIO was taken two years ago, and following that why, unbeknown to trustees, the ratification of this decision at the 2016 AGM did not meet legal requirements to effect that change. Sian Summers-Rees, chair officer of City of Sanctuary nationally, indicated the support of the national movement for this course of action, which other groups were also considering taking. PH then proposed the motion:

That the unincorporated charity Leicester City of Sanctuary (charity number 1138017) be hereby Dissolved, in accordance with clause 5 of its constitution, and that the

charity's trustees are hereby required to pass the property, assets and patterns of activity to the newly formed Charitable Incorporated Organisation of the same name and identical Objects (charity number 1172819).

This was passed, with 41 members voting in favour and none against.

7. Election of trustees Out of the eight trustee places available, the six currently serving trustees had been validly nominated for re-election, as follows: Mike Alexander, Pete Hobson, Sam Javid, Annie Merton, Golden Ngwenya, John Ssekindu. One further valid nomination had been received for Mark Wilkinson.

All these were **accepted** by the AGM to serve as trustees for Leicester City of Sanctuary unincorporated charity, number 1138017.

8. A proposal had been tabled for debate by two members, Pam Inder and Indira Nath. The chair noted that he anticipated lively debate following the tabling of this proposal as some members had already raised concerns about its factual accuracy and its potential to unfairly damage reputations. He explained the AGM would hear comments both FOR and AGAINST the proposal in turn.

- PI first spoke to the proposed resolution and the principles the document suggested the AGM should re-affirm. She stated that it was not intended to be critical of individuals, but expressed concerns that over the past year the organisation had departed from some of its core principles in a number of areas, as instanced by the evidence presented in a supporting paper the proposers had tabled at the meeting.
- In response MW said that the proposal was factually inaccurate in a number of its assertions. He reminded the AGM that at last year's meeting he shared with members how stretched the organisation was and there were plenty of 'behind the scenes' roles he would welcome support with; directly asking for people to offer their time. He then explained that people who offered their time ending up doing the work – and there was no attempt to do this behind closed doors. He further highlighted that LCoS has to be administrated in some way, and he was reacting as promptly as he could to the developing circumstances. He could see no evidence of the organisation doing more 'for' than 'with' refugees & asylum seekers, but has plenty of evidence to the contrary. For example, the new consultative group working with Journey Festival International.
- Indira Nath seconded the proposal and stressed that she thought LCoS was on a slippery slope to breaking the law.
- Mark Wilkinson said that due the factual inaccuracy they felt the proposal should be thrown out. It was also highlighted that without the dedication of the people the proposal insulted the charity would be in much worse place.
- Ambrose Musiyiwa agreed that the committee did a good good, but that the resolution identified groups and things that could be done better. For example, LCoS refuses to talk to refugees and asylum seekers about their experiences.

- Annie Merton (vice chair) felt, that it might be possible for some positive elements of the Resolution to be seen as a good thing for LCoS, but that in her view as framed the Resolution was backward looking and unhelpful and that it would be more helpful to reframe it in broader, more constructive and forward looking terms. She also suggested that the charity was not in a position to commit to elements of the resolution as it is currently in the middle of governance review.
- Sian Summers-Rees, chief officer of National City of Sanctuary, said that re-affirming principles is a positive thing to do, and that going forward that national body can offer support to do this.
- PI was invited to respond, and stated that the background document tabled was not to vote on, only the proposed resolution. She felt that even if you disagree with where it came from you can still agree with the proposed principles the proposal aims to re-affirm. She also said that she was happy with AM comments to put the document aside for 2017 AGM and revisit it.

AM then officially proposed that **the motion be not put**. Despite time being constrained, the meeting wished that asylum seekers be allowed to comment and two further speakers were allowed before voting:

- Anju Baroi thanked individuals for their continued support and hard work, and explained the gap that LCoS filled in her life. She thanked fellow volunteers for their personal support, and praised those who convinced her to attend creative writing workshops and talked about her positive experience of watching a film at the cinema with other refugees and asylum seekers. Another speaker thanked LCoS for the part it had played in her life.

The chair then put to the meeting “that the motion be not put” and this was **clearly carried** on a show of hands.

Notice was given of the *Great Get Together* musical picnic, one of a series of events around the country marking the 1st anniversary of the murder of MP Jo Cox, taking place in Cathedral Gardens from 12-2.30pm on 17th June; also of the *Bishop’s Garden Party* on 24th June in which the £2 entry fee is being donated to LCoS

The AGM broke for refreshments before retuning for guest speaker Joseph Chivayo – National City of Sanctuary Trustee based in Derby.