

Shrewsbury House Community Association

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

21st February 2023, 7.30pm

Old Library Bar

ATTENDANCE

Board of Trustees

Geoff Sheath (Acting Chair)
John Mills (Chair)
Andy Brockman
Jess Macfarlane (minutes)

Apologies

Richard Perrott (Treasurer)
Rob Belfield
Kate Halpin
Sajid Raja
Abi Bralee
Fiona Kemp
Duncan Martin

Manager, Shrewsbury House

Sonia Maloney

Others

Individual members, users and local residents (c25-30)

Rachel Akedele (RBG VCS lead officer)
Ivis Williams (Councillor, Shooters Hill Ward)

1 Welcome and introductions

Geoff Sheath welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that this meeting had been postponed from December due to snow which had closed the building. He reported that due to a highly unusual combination of circumstances the number of Trustees present was much reduced. John had not been expected to attend due to a scheduled kidney dialysis session – however, that had ended earlier than expected and he was actually present although he had asked Geoff to take the chair.

Geoff introduced Rachel Akedele (RBG VCS lead officer) and Ivis Williams (Local Councillor). Both were supportive of the House, and said they understood our concerns. Ivis said that as Cabinet member for finance she would continue to have conversations and was happy to do anything she could to help.

2 Chair's report

John had recorded a short piece, which was played. He said that he would be stepping down due to ill health and had hoped to leave SHCA in a strong position. However, fuel bills had risen from ca £17k to £60k per year, leaving a huge funding gap. We bid for additional money in the RBG four year budget round – however, rather than receiving additional support, the grant had been cut, from £20k to £18k. This meant that there would inevitably be difficult times ahead. He thanked fellow Board members and Sonia and staff for all their hard work.

3 Finance report

The Report and Accounts for 2020/21 were available on the website. Jess Macfarlane gave a short presentation on the financial situation and trends.

- current year was likely to see around a £15k loss
- this was a result of inflation, particularly in energy
- at the same time unexpectedly RBG was cutting our annual grant from £20k to £18k from next year, despite significantly higher costs. This is extremely disappointing.

The financial outlook over the coming months was uncertain, and difficult decisions would have to be taken, including a price rise of 15% for all room rates from April and an increase in affiliation rates; and plans for future development would have to be put on hold.

Jess proposed that independent examiners Michael Adamson be retained as independent examiners for the next year, at a cost of £800. **Proposal agreed unanimously.**

4 Manager's report

Sonia Maloney introduced Liz McDermott, who spoke about the work the volunteer gardeners had been doing, including how they had used lockdown as an opportunity to get on top of things when there were no members of the public about. She spoke about the work they were doing with the SEND group. Volunteers were always welcome, as were any donations of plants, compost etc. Everyone agreed that a huge amount had been achieved – little short of a miracle!

Sonia gave a short presentation on how the House was recovering after the COVID closures. She thanked all the staff and volunteers for their support during this difficult period, and said that the focus going forward would be on fundraising to try and regularise the financial situation and on developing services for the community.

5 Shrewsbury House Centenary and Green Garth

Andy Brockman gave a presentation on the history of Shrewsbury House, as well as Green Garth and the importance of using it effectively within the community. He said that we were in dialogue with RBG about repairs and a programme of works. He said that although centenary plans had had to be scaled back because of the financial situation there were still several things planned, including a 1940s event and Open House in September.

6 Farewells

Geoff reported that this year we were saying goodbye to some outstanding Trustees – Fiona, Abi and John.

They have all been involved in so many aspects of SH life, but to list a few things –

Abi has put a huge amount of effort into the unexciting but vital work of governance and policy processes and has been a calm voice of reason throughout our many ups and downs. Her son James was our first Board baby (we've had four more since). Abi moved to Bedfordshire several years ago now but has continued to join meetings by Zoom – however, inevitably her talents have been recognised by organisations closer to her new home and she feels that this is the right time to step down.

And Fiona has led on HR and on user surveys, as well as sitting on other working groups and doing the occasional shift behind the bar on a Friday night! She is now travelling more, and with grandchildren in different parts of the country she too is ready for the next phase.

John has been Chair since November 2017 and has been involved in every aspect of Shrewsbury House life from setting up websites, mailing lists and newsletters, writing and developing funding bids, negotiating with RBG on projects, working behind the bar every Friday for two years, leading on our business plan, climbing around in the attics, boarding up windows and investigating drains.....too much to list.

Many thanks to all of them.

Today is the last day for Anne, who's been on placement from GLLAB, working in the office and reception – many thanks Anne!

And finally, we say goodbye to the powerhouse that is Carmel. All will be very much missed.

6 Election of trustees

Trustee nominations had been received from Larissa Turkina, Harry Denford and Sally MacDougall. They each spoke for a few minutes on their background, experience and what they would bring to the Board.

It was proposed that Larissa, Harry and Sally be elected to the Board (three separate votes). Each carried unanimously.

10 Q&A

There were questions from the floor about fundraising including things like the Donate option, standing orders, local supermarkets'. Charities. Ivis mentioned Local Lottery Funding.

11 AOB

Geoff thanked everyone for coming, and said that help was always needed if anyone could spare time - gardening, fundraising, working on the bar etc.

Finally he thanked all the staff for another good year under Sonia's leadership. Without their commitment and dedication we couldn't function.