

Shrewsbury House Community Association

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

18th January 2018, 20.00

Old Library Bar

ATTENDANCE

Board of Trustees

John Mills (Chair)
Richard Perrott (Vice Chair/Treasurer)
Amanda Jolly (Company Secretary)
Rob Belfield
Jess Macfarlane

Apologies

Andy Brockman

Manager, Shrewsbury House

Kathy Bagnall

Affiliated Groups

Keep Fit in Retirement
Sundari Yoga
Royal Greenwich Fencing Club
The London Club
Bowls
French
Whist
AWPS (Aperture)
Iyengar Yoga with Cressida
Family History
Table Tennis
Cougar Jujitsu

Others

Friends of Shrewsbury House
Royal Borough of Greenwich
Do You Vintage?
Shrewsbury Park Residents' Association
Friends of Shrewsbury Park
Local residents

1 Welcome and introductions

John Mills welcomed everyone to the meeting, and the Trustees and House Manager introduced themselves. John asked Caroline Sefton from the Friends of Shrewsbury House to say a few words.

2 Friends of Shrewsbury House (FOSH)

Caroline said that FOSH had started in October 2017, with the purpose of providing practical support for the House, staff and Trustees. At the moment it was a very small group, meeting on Saturdays to do a bit of gardening. She asked everyone to spread the word about SH and

its beautiful gardens, and said that FOSH would welcome any expertise on plants or wildlife. She spoke about the Little Library project, held in room 3 every Saturday from 1000 to 1200, encouraging people to borrow and drop off books. Some ideas for future activity included a 'foster a flowerbed' initiative, and another sunflower trail. (A local resident commented that the last sunflower trail had been amazing). Caroline asked anyone who might be interested in helping or just finding out more to sign up after the meeting.

3 Chair's report

John gave a brief summary of the background that had led to last August's EGM and the appointment of a new Board of Trustees. The new Board had met for the first time exactly five months ago, with a brief to get the House back on a sound financial footing. There had been a number of difficult decisions, including not to replace a member of staff who left in September, although there were plans to get some additional admin support from GLLaB at no cost to the House.

The Board had looked at running costs, pricing for groups and rooms and charging for events.

Trustees were also considering ways to maximise the use of assets. Following a meeting with RBG to clarify licencing issues the bar was now regularly open on Friday nights, staffed by volunteers (Trustees), and it was hoped that it might be able to build up to other nights. It was important to get the café reopened and following a tender process an external caterer had been appointed and the café should be reopening in February.

A programme of events to encourage use of the House by the local community was being developed – the first would be a Quiz Night organised jointly with the Friends of Shrewsbury Park and Friends of Shrewsbury House. Following the recent highly successful Vintage Fair, more were planned for the year.

There was still spare capacity in the House, particularly in the afternoons, and work was going on to build both regular bookings and external events such as weddings and funeral receptions. The small offices at the top of the House were not used and possibilities of renting them out were being explored.

The website had been redesigned to make it more relevant and accessible. There was now a regular newsletter, sent via email to almost 300 people with hard copies available on the House noticeboard and in the reception and café.

Volunteers would be key going forward, to help in the garden, on the bar and elsewhere, for ad hoc activities and helping to plan events – all were asked to let the Board or Manager know if they felt they could spare any time.

The Board would be actively seeking to recruit more Trustees, as two had resigned since August leaving only six. Expertise in marketing, fundraising and a number of other areas would be particularly welcome.

The Board had been working with RBG to develop a roadmap and business plan, with the long term goal of getting the House back to being a vibrant and successful community hub.

John thanked all at the meeting for their support so far, and asked everyone to spread the word about the House – it's not closing, there is a lot going on, and it is there for the local community.

Finally, John particularly thanked the staff, who had had to manage with fewer resources and whose support and goodwill had kept things going through this difficult and uncertain period.

4 Treasurer's report

Richard Perrott gave a brief analysis of the financial position at Year End March 2017. Revenues had been disappointing at £144k and cost control poor. As a result, reserves were depleted down to £65k. This situation didn't improve and by August 2017 cash stood at £55k. This was far too low and meant the House's viability was at stake.

As part of its initial financial review, the new board elected following the EGM decided that Shrewsbury House needed to hold at least 9 months' expenses as contingency in the event of disappointing revenues or unexpected costs i.e. increase the cash levels above £100k over the medium term. The only way to achieve this would be to turn losses into surpluses. To do that the Board needed to take some difficult steps, focusing on the cost base and reducing it where possible; as well as reviewing pricing. The decision to outsource catering also reduced the financial risk to the house.

Following these steps some improvement had been seen; there was £70k in the bank at end December 2017, and even if RBG grants were excluded the House was only narrowly lossmaking in the prior 6 months. However, there is still a great deal to be done, and it will take years to rebuild Shrewsbury House's financial reserves, but the situation was sharply improved from August.

5 Discussion

Following the Chair's and Treasurer's reports, there were general questions and discussion.

It was widely felt that it was important to attract young families, and there was some discussion about why the House no longer ran a playgroup, pre-school or creche – concerns were expressed that these groups might have felt unwelcome in the past (although others disagreed), but also there were some logistic reasons, such as toilet facilities, and also issues with fall in demand. However, Kathy noted there were still regular groups such as Baby Sensory and Lingotots.

Funeral celebrations and the best way of publicising the House as a suitable venue were discussed.

There was a question about fundraising – from the 2016 figures it looked as though much more could be done. What plans were there? Some suggestions included fundraising dinners, auctions, "bake-off" type events, and ways of getting people to donate. The Board recognised that this was an area that could be strengthened, and experience of this would be one of the things looked for in recruiting new Trustees.

There was further discussion about general community events, and it was noted that this year would be the 50th anniversary of the House becoming a Community Centre – there was general agreement that a summer "birthday party" to commemorate this should be organised.

6 Appointment and Remuneration of Auditors/Independent Examiners

It was proposed that the Michael Adamson and Co be reappointed as Independent Examiners, at a total cost of £650. Passed unanimously.

7 Amendments to the Memorandum and Articles of Association

John Mills said that when the Board was first appointed, advice from both RBG and Greenwich Action for Volunteer Services (GAVS) was that the Mem&Arts needed a complete overhaul. The main proposals for change were to abolish the Affiliated Group vote, replacing

it with individual member votes; and enabling the Board of Trustees to be drawn from a wider range of backgrounds and to be elected between AGMs. Other minor changes were listed.

There was some discussion about possible implications of the proposed changes and whether those relating to Trustees could be used to, for example, enable a local pressure group to have undue influence.

The meeting was asked to approve the proposals by special resolution, passed unanimously.

8 Election of trustees

One nomination for Trustee had been received. Kathryn Green spoke briefly about why she was standing. She was a local resident, knew the House and was keen to be part of the local community. Kathryn's background was in sales, marketing and events, and she was currently working from home. She was active in her local PTA, including being involved in fundraising.

The meeting welcomed Kathryn enthusiastically and she was voted in as Trustee unanimously.

9 AOB

Len Newland from Shrewsbury Park Residents' Association reminded all present about the importance of the local Neighbourhood Watch.

John Mills asked anyone interested in helping with any of the events and activities discussed during the evening to contact Amanda Jolly, Trustee and Company Secretary.

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