

Minutes of the Refugee Support Devon AGM
held on Tuesday, 22 October 2019 at
Exeter Community Centre, St Davids Hill, Exeter



Present: Jenny Longford (Chair), Chris Hill (Treasurer), David Mezzetti (Company Secretary), Bob Mycock (Company Director), Bernadette Chelvanayagam (Company Director), Annette Hughes (Manager), Tameem Shaaban (VPR Outreach Coordinator), Souad Fadel (VPR Outreach Coordinator), Neli Montes de Oca (Casework Coordinator), Denise Parker (Education and Employment Coordinator), Trupti Desai (Administrator), Billie Buchanan (Social work placement), Laura Waycott (Reviewing Accountant, Francis Clark), Anne Barnes, Celia Bouquet, Carol Eastley, Peter Marson, Lynne McVernon, Mohamed Ezzeldin, Claire Harding, Nigel Padfield, Verity Stiff, Colin Stiff, Ahmad Alassaf, Abdullah Alassaf, Wendy Milne, Caroline Romijn, Ann Faherty, Fran Schacter, Andrew Richardson, Nicola Beglin, Michelle Lambourne, Claire Grayson, Claire Taylor, Peter Tansley, Sheila Sloan, Tony Griffin, Mark Breeze, Stephen Matthewman, Karla Rebollo Rodriguez, Ali Al Matar, Mahmod, Ofa Al Matar, Laura Empson, Paul Jenkins, Marian Jenkins, Dania, Shawish, Walaa Hemesho, Hajji Shikh Hussein

Apologies: Elena Isayev (Company Director), Liz Oxburgh (Company Director), Nick Floyd (Administrative Assistant), Angus Doulton, Richard Eastley, Marina Neophtou, Saliha Abdelkhalek, Yvonne Bearne, Sue Button, Alhussein Elrayah, Sylvia Rigby, Zenzi Hobongwana Graham, Karenza-Monica Case, Pat Barker, Samantha Knights, André de Medonça, Phil Sleigh, Kathryn Warner, Karin Hooper, Margretta Bowstead, Faith Stafford, Jude Bishop, Clare Rance, Susie Nicholls, Peter Di Giuseppe, John McKenzie, Anthony Greenwood, Brigid McEleney-Smith, Jean Brown, Jim Price, Sahar Alnass, June Marshall, Janet Hughes, Jeni Fulton Price

- 1. Welcome and apologies:** Jenny Longford welcomed everyone and explained the agenda for the evening. The first part of the meeting would cover the formalities of the AGM and this would be followed by short talks by three volunteers and three clients. Once the formalities and talks were over, everyone was warmly invited to stay on to mingle over light refreshments.
- 2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 23 October 2018:** Claire Harding proposed that the Minutes be agreed. They were seconded by Peter Tansley. It was agreed by all those present.
- 3. Annual Report and Accounts for the year 2018 – 2019:** Jenny drew everyone's attention to the annual review, which gave a good overview of RSD's work in the last financial year.

Laura Waycott of Francis Clark and RSD Reviewing Accountant, presented the annual accounts. RSD's income was comparable to last year. There was an increase in expenditure by about £27K and this was largely because of the new immigration advice clinic and the VPRS Welcome Project. There was a deficit of just over £18K, but otherwise the accounts were in a relatively healthy state.

Chris Hill, RSD's Treasurer, endorsed what Laura said. He added that RSD has carried forward just over £106K at the year end, of which £32K are restricted funds and £74K are unrestricted. Although this is in excess of what RSD's required to keep in reserve, we have to exercise caution and take care not to overspend. RSD's income is unpredictable and we need a few more donors before we feel secure for the next few years. The picture looks healthy through to March 2020, and possibly March 2021. Chris thanked Michelle Lambourne for preparing RSD's monthly accounts and he also thanked Francis Clark for producing the annual accounts.

Claire Harding proposed that the accounts be passed, and this was seconded by Sheila Sloan. It was unanimously agreed by those present at the meeting.

4 Appointment of Directors: Jenny clarified that we use the titles Company Director and Trustee interchangeably as RSD is a charitable company.

This year Peter Bainbridge stepped down as a Company Director and will not stand for re-election. Jenny thanked Peter for his hard work and support of RSD's work during his 5.5 years with us. Peter was responsible for spearheading our work on governance of the organisation and making it more professional. He created RSD's 5-year Business Plan and annual Operating Plan. He was also responsible for reviewing and modifying them regularly. Peter had our heartfelt thanks for his contribution to the organisation.

Jenny introduced the rest of the Company Directors.

Jenny explained that three Company Directors are required to stand down annually at the AGM. So Jenny Longford, David Mezzetti and Chris Hill stepped down and stood for re-election while Bob Mycock took over as Chair temporarily. Caroline Romijn proposed to re-elect all 3 Directors, seconded by Denise Parker. The meeting declared them all elected.

Jenny went on to say that RSD is looking for three new Directors and a Minutes Secretary –

- a Company Director to oversee fundraising for RSD
- a Company Director to oversee the operational planning for RSD
- a Company Director to spearhead RSD's public relations and communications work
- a Minutes Secretary to write minutes at Board meetings and they don't need to be a Company Director

All the four job descriptions are on our website. Please contact info@refugeesupportdevon.org.uk if you need more information.

5 Any other business: There was no further business.

Information round-up: Jenny invited three volunteers and three clients to talk about their experiences of working with and receiving support from RSD. The presentations were scintillating, varied and at times harrowing and we shall summarise them in our autumn newsletter.

Announcements: Jenny thanked all the volunteers for their generous support, commitment and vast amounts of time spent on RSD's work. She also introduced each member of staff individually. She particularly emphasised the work Souad Fadel was doing on the women's group project, which is now very popular with the women and their children. We need more volunteers on that project – the women meet up once a month on a Saturday and we need help with the planning of each meeting, and actual help on the day. Please contact info@refugeesupportdevon.org.uk if you're interested.

Annette Hughes also took the opportunity to thank Jenny and all the other Company Directors who not only give a strategic direction to the organisation, but also provide unstinting support to staff on a day-to-day basis when needed.

Finally, David Mezzetti talked about RSD's *400 Appeal*. RSD's goal is to encourage 400 people to set up a direct debit of £10 (or whatever they can afford) per month, which would help us provide vital services to new and existing refugees and asylum seekers month after month. The income we make from individuals' continuous support is as important as the corporate funding we seek from philanthropic organisations. We have over 60 people who are donating on a monthly basis to us now and our ambition is to have 200 (half of our goal) people signed up by Christmas. Please go to our website at refugeesupportdevon.org.uk or contact us at info@refugeesupportdevon.org.uk if you wish to become one of the 400 to contribute to our essential work with refugees and asylum seekers.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm.