

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 16th September 2018

Attendance:

Trustees - Michael Woolley (Chairman), Kathy Gee (Vice Chairman), Nick Psirides (Honorary Secretary), Mike Hill (Honorary Treasurer), Andrew Hurley and Peter Reilly.

Members – Dorothy Boyce, Lance Boyce, Simon Carter (Museum Director), Doug Collins, Jane Tarver, Michael Thomas, Jenny Townshend and John Young.

Staff – Neil Gulliver (Clerk to the Trustees), Emma Townshend (Director's Assistant & Head of Personnel), Jay Quinn (Head Gardener), Rachel Shepherd (Head of Development), Michael Snow (Duty Manager).

Apologies – M. Blanchett, J. Breeze, R. Carpenter, M. Fenton, J. Luck, Mr & Mrs C. Nesbitt, M. Norton, D. Russell, Mr & Mrs I. Snow, R. Starkey, P.Tansell and J.Woodall.

1. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on the 16th July 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on the 16th July 2017 were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman then referred to a question submitted by Mrs Snow relating to the 50th anniversary of the Museum which had been referred to at last year's meeting. He stated that the anniversary had been marked by the grand summer raffle which had raised over £2,000. The Museum's main celebration of its half century was held in 2012-13 to mark 50 years of the rescue of the first building and the founding of the Museum. At that time, a number of events to raise public awareness and involving the community had been held.

2. Chairman's Welcome Address

The Chairman commented that the Museum continued to thrive despite a number of problems and issues. The Museum had lost five Members who had given nearly 100 years service in total as volunteers. The Chairman thanked the staff, volunteers and Members for all their support and efforts in helping the Museum to continue to thrive.

3. Election of Members of the Museum's Council of Management (Trustees)

The Chairman moved, seconded by Nick Psirides, and it was unanimously resolved that Kathy Gee and Andrew Hurley be re-elected as Trustees for a further three-year term.

4. Adoption of Annual Report

The Chairman presented the Annual Report and commented that with a number of members of staff leaving, the Museum was currently relying on a small number of committed staff. However this had provided an opportunity to review the staffing structure needed to take the Museum forward.

The Chairman, seconded by Peter Reilly, moved and it was unanimously agreed to adopt the Annual Report.

5. Adoption of the Accounts

After opening remarks by the Honorary Treasurer, he, seconded by Michael Thomas, moved and it was unanimously agreed that the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2017 be adopted.

6. To Appoint Crowe UK LLP as the Museum's Independent Examiners

The Chairman, seconded by the Honorary Treasurer, moved and it was unanimously agreed to appoint Crowe UK LLP as the Museum's Independent Examiners for a further twelve months.

7. Response to Written Questions

The Chairman referred to a number of questions raised by Mrs Snow as follows:-

Question 1

From the Report of 2016 there were 9 people on the Visioning Team. How many of these people remain working for the Museum?

Answer

There were still 4 people remaining from the original Team, namely Kathy Gee and Mark Armstrong (both Trustees) and Simon Carter and Rachel Shepherd (both members of staff).

Question 2

How many staff had left the Museum over the past two years?

Answer

Between 17th July 2016 and 16th September 2018 the number of staff who had left the Museum's employment was 48. Of these 40 were casual or fixed term contract and 8 were permanent staff members. This number included staff who had resigned, retired, been made redundant or dismissed.

Question 3

Did the Trustees carry out an exit interview to find out why there were so many staff leaving?

Answer

This question presumed that there was a high number of staff leaving for reasons which the Trustees were not aware. This was not the case. The Trustees did not carry out exit interviews as the staffing of the Museum was delegated to the Museum Director and the Trustees were only directly responsible for the management of that post holder. When appropriate, the Director met with staff leaving depending on the circumstances and the role they had undertaken. Trustees received a bi-monthly report on the personnel of the Museum including who had joined and left the Museum's employment.

Question 4

It was noted that net income from trading activities was down from £287,571 in 2016 to £243,339 which was a substantial loss. Any indications that the situation had improved for this year?

Answer

This was not a substantial loss but a drop in sales, not quite the same thing. The overall trading sales were down as we had set out in the Annual Report for a number of reasons and this figure reflected a drop in sales in the shop and tea room, lower wedding bookings and no income from the High Street Shop which was still trading until February 2016. The profitability of Avoncroft Enterprises was down £34,371.

It was not possible to report figures for 2018 part way through the year and the Trustees were not in the habit of giving 'profit warnings' like very large public companies. The figures in year could change quite considerably and the Honorary Treasurer reported on the monthly figures to the Trustees and to the Enterprises Board and assessed any risks to the trading company or the Museum.

Question 5

When Groupon was first used, I voiced my concern at the AGM that it was used in the high season. The trend was that visitor numbers increased but it did not increase revenue. It stops visitors buying memberships as it is not worth it. Why is it being used for the Summer season again? Surely this was a tool for the low season months.

Answer

The idea of using the marketing power of Groupon or any voucher promotion, was to encourage a first-time visit which was unlikely to happen without the promotion ie someone who previously was not aware of Avoncroft and so would never have visited without their marketing. Achieving this visit is effectively income the Museum would not have received and had not had to pay for marketing to achieve. It also gave the opportunity to convert the visitor into a frequent visitor and to encourage secondary spending while at the Museum.

Encouraging new visitors in the low season when the trees were bare and the site may not have been looking at its best, was not a good way to encourage the visitor to make positive recommendations to friends and family.

The reviews of Avoncroft from Groupon visitors were 128 positive and 1 negative (2 stars out of 5) or 99.2% positive. The rating for all Avoncroft's reviews on Groupon was an average of 4.59 stars out of 5. Anyone rating the Museum that favourably was likely to make word of mouth recommendations to others about their visit.

The numbers were not available for how many visitors using a Groupon voucher became members having enjoyed their visit. If they were from further away, they were unlikely to buy it for purely advantageous cheapness of visits but may have bought it in order to support the Museum. Buying membership was always worth it as it supported the ongoing work of Avoncroft in rescuing historic buildings. The Museum had a considerable number of members who lived long way from the Museum including members in Scotland, Ireland, Wales and all around England and many of these would not visit on multiple times each year but who all thought it was worth it.

Chairman

The meeting closed at 3.00pm.