

Members' Forum Notes

15 October 2018

11.00 – 12.30

Millbrooke House

Millbrooke House,
137 Carisbrooke Road,
NEWPORT, Isle of Wight, PO30 1DD
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PRESENT:

Mel Barnes, Chris Biles, Daniel Burgess, Dawn Perry, Roy Perry, Miriam Tong (Chair), Liz Tuckwell, Helen Tunley-Smith

NOTE TAKER:

Chris Cane

APOLOGIES:

Chris Amy, Ruth Hollingshead

1 Welcome & Introductions

The CEO welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked members to introduce themselves. She also asked if everyone was happy with the notes from the last meeting and whether the members would like her to read through everything. Members asked CEO to 'precis' through the notes from last time which she did and were approved.

2 Sight for Wight Future Plans Update

CEO informed the meeting that LJ, Member Services Manager, is researching companies who offer short breaks for visually impaired people.



There's a company called 'Safehands' who offer accessible short breaks in Blackpool and Llandudno, Wales. CEO asked members for a show of hands for location preference and Wales was more popular. Sight for Wight would provide sighted guides to go with members. LT said the problem is when visually impaired members want to go out and about. CEO stated that this is when it becomes more expensive and members would, collectively, have to cover the cost of the volunteers. LT said that 'Traveleyes' was another good company to investigate. CEO is keen to explore other sight loss charities to see if we can sort out reciprocal arrangements so that we could support them with some of our sighted guides when they visit the Island and then they can provide help and support when we visit their county. There are lots of possibilities to engage with local groups.

Action(s):

- ❖ CEO to ask LJ to put holiday package possibilities in February 2019 Newsletter to gauge interest.

Scaffolding News – this has not yet been put at the end of the Talking News as scheduling the planned Audio Team meeting, at which this would be discussed, had not been possible due to recent absences of key volunteers.

LT asked about the My Guide training and the CEO informed the meeting that we now had two volunteers who were trained and ready to be partnered with Members seeking a My Guide volunteer and that these two volunteers are also interested in co-delivering sessions alongside our Member Services Manager and two other staff members from 2019. Once the prospective four new My Guide trainers have completed the

prerequisite training programme, we will be able to advertise 2019 My Guide training dates.

Striders/Strollers – Following some discussion regarding the constantly evolving needs of Members participating in walking activities, it was proposed that LJ could routinely chat with MB to monitor this, (in addition to the Volunteers Manager gaining feedback from the Sighted Guides who regularly support walks). RP wished to note that the recent St Lawrence stroll was excellent.

MB pointed out that since Reception doesn't have a permanent member of staff in situ; it appears less welcoming. The CEO recognised the importance of a warm welcome, and cited the Riverside Centre as an ideal example of an organisation with a large, open-plan reception invariably manned by a variety of volunteers able to provide a welcome. With a very small core team of staff and Reception Volunteers at Sight for Wight it was simply not possible to permanently man reception. However, whenever we have planned meetings and events a staff member, typically the Member Services Manager for Members activities, would always be tasked with welcoming visitors. The CEO advised that a new (second hand) intercom system had been sourced and would be fitted to ensure we had the facility for VI reception volunteers to work safely at reception controlling door entry when staff members were working elsewhere in the building.

Regarding further updates and news, the CEO identified that as the November newsletter was now on its way to print, meeting time should now be given over to further members' questions and suggestions.

3 Responses to Advance Questions Submitted by Members

LT - Can you bring us up-to-date with the outcome of August's trustees meeting where this subject was due for discussion? Is any effort being made to reclaim part of not all of the overpayment and if not, why not?

CEO Response – At the August meeting, Trustees discussed and agreed to pursue possible reclamation of some of the accidental overpayment, however, they recognised the fine balance to be achieved in endeavouring to reclaim some of the overpayment against legal costs and further time spent on pursuing the matter. The decision was made that the Charity's solicitors be asked to write to the former employee and this action had been taken. A response was awaited and the CEO will chase this prior to the scheduled November meeting of Trustees.

LT - I have noticed that when visiting Millbrooke House for meetings such as last Friday's Yoga taster session and also the last AGM, there is no one about in the hall to welcome clients who perhaps haven't been to the building before who may not know their way around. A friendly greeting goes a long way to making people feel at home and that they are wanted. Also it would be a good idea if any staff members or volunteers speaking to a client for the first time at such events tells them who they are so they know who they are talking to. Visually impaired rely on voice contact and I for one am often not sure who I am talking to.

CEO Response – Again the CEO absolutely agreed on the importance of this matter, and checked that the members were satisfied that this had been satisfactorily addressed in the earlier discussion. Members present confirmed that this had been satisfactorily addressed. The CEO

anticipated that with more sighted guide training and refresher training available to staff and volunteers this would, hopefully, not be an issue in the future.

LT - Thirdly as I mentioned early it would be helpful if events didn't clash as they often seem to. There are days when nothing is planned so with some forward planning this could be avoided.

CEO Response – The CEO apologised that there had been an unfortunate clash of dates with the meetings on that day and the proposed outing to taste cheese. The CEO identified that staff had a team meeting scheduled later in the week to plan and co-ordinate their 2019 calendars so that dates can be set well in advance for all meetings and activities to avoid any future clashes.

DB - Does the Society have any future plans to engage with the various ferry companies which run from the island to provide some training to staff with regards to guiding VIPs on and off vessels and in assisting VIP passengers to a seat?

I am asking this question from personal experience when the help offered is very hit and miss and not consistent, especially on the Wightlink crossing from Ryde to Portsmouth. Crew members seem very reluctant and unsure as to how or what to do when confronted with a VIP and especially one with a Guide Dog; i.e. grabbing hold off the dog lead and pointing to a vacant seat!!

CEO Response – The CEO plans to contact Action on Hearing Loss and Guide Dogs to see if they have planned such training as part of their statutory service provision or to generate income. If there's no conflict then this can be looked at. There is a clear need for such training and we

might consider our ability to offer this service if no other providers are already doing so and provided we have adequate resources and could cover the costs of delivering such a service. Whilst the Charity would not expect to charge community groups for delivering sighted guide training to their volunteers there would be an expectation that commercial organisations would need to pay for the privilege of having such training.

HT – Why don't members have a vote?

CEO Response – The CEO reminded the meeting that there had been previous discussions regarding Guarantor Members (a number of whom are VI members), who have voting rights at the AGM but that with the current constitution of the Charity this did not extend to all VI Members, volunteers or staff. HT wondered if a £10.00 annual fee could be charged and members then get some benefit – like a 2% discount on low vision equipment purchased through the Charity. CB didn't think people would engage with this. The CEO said this could be discussed at the November Trustees' Meeting. The CEO felt there might be merit in having two classes of membership – guarantor and then members who might pay a notional fee. However, there's the difficulty that the large number of members we generally have contact with only via the Talking News and Newsletter might be reluctant to pay a Membership fee. HT said that most Societies have a membership fee and a few perks along the way.

The CEO identified that the primary purpose of the forum meetings was to ensure that Members had an opportunity at these quarterly meetings to raise any questions or suggestions to ensure that the Charity continued to put the needs of Members first and foremost in its planning and operations.

The CEO also made reference to the 2017 Members Survey and identified that by next summer, Sight for Wight will have delivered most of the things that were identified as being important to VI Members and it would be time to start thinking about doing another survey, to ensure that Sight for Wight continues to offer services and activities that are valued by VI Members.

To a supplementary question about the current number of Guarantor Members, the CEO stated that the number had greatly reduced to approximately 20 – 30 following the Guarantor Member forms returned in advance of the March AGM, necessary because of the new data protection (GDPR) regulation.

4 Open Forum – further observations, comments & questions

CB – Nothing further to raise.

DB – Is joining a Ventnor Accessibility Forum; the first meeting is in November so she wanted to put any accessibility issues at the next meeting.

RP – Newport Cricket Club is planning another quiz so would we be interested in taking part again. We would need raffle prizes. This wouldn't be until the New Year. CEO said we would be delighted to support this so the more notice the better.

RP - Talking News – This was mentioned to CC and this was to be addressed at the next Audio Team meeting but due to one of the team having been away for some time, due to health and holiday, it has not yet been possible to have this meeting.

MB – Why is it felt necessary to have entertainment at Volunteer Team Updates? The CEO said it was necessary because many volunteers do so in order to make friends and create a social circle as previously the meetings weren't enjoyable enough. Having said this the next meeting will be planned so that those who want to socialise can arrive first and those who don't wish to socialise can arrive half an hour later; just for the meeting.

MB – Nina Cullinane is a Community Navigator for the Ventnor area (she supports and brings people to the Niton Coffee and Chat) has mentioned an organisation called Bodster Equine Assisted Learning Centre. As well as their normal activities, they visit other premises and talk about their work and even bring a pony or donkey with them for people to touch and wondered whether it might be something to be considered as a possible event? CEO will ask LJ to make contact with them. Telephone number is: 07887 876138

Action(s):

- ❖ LJ to make contact with Nina

LT – AC can't be escort for the swimming on Tuesday. HT offered to help in the changing rooms as she has enough vision.

HT – Nothing further to raise.

5 Any Other Business –

None.

6 Date & Time of 2019 Meetings:

Wednesday 16 th January	(11:30 – 13:00)
Wednesday 17 th April	(11:30 – 13:00)
Wednesday 17 th July	(11:30 – 13:00)
Wednesday 17 th October	(11:30 – 13:00)

The CEO thanked everyone for coming and asked who was staying for the Tech Group as lunch was being provided.