



11th AGM 26 Feb 2019
CEO Pre-View of Year Ahead

Millbrooke House,
137 Carisbrooke Road,
NEWPORT, Isle of Wight, PO30 1DD
01983 522205
enquiries@iwsb.org.uk
www.iwsb.org.uk

You will appreciate from the outgoing Chairman's brief review of the past twelve months that we have, indeed, had another busy year. The developments that we have achieved in the past two years are significant and I would like to formally record my enormous appreciation of the time that the Chairman has given, both to me personally, and to the Charity overall, in supporting the many positive changes that we have successfully implemented or embarked upon. Most importantly we have continued to implement necessary changes in governance and administration to ensure that the Charity remains focussed on delivering its charitable objects; to ensure we remain both valuable to clients, and valued by supporters and stakeholders, and that we steadily broaden and strengthen our position, to better serve our VI Members and the wider community - a commitment you may recall I made upon my appointment to this role almost two years ago.

The findings of the 2017 Members Survey have remained our driving force. Our Member Services Manager, supported by our Member Services Administrative Assistant, have been steadily developing the range of services and activities across the six geographic areas of the Island identified last year: **Central**, based around Newport; **North**, centred on Cowes; **North East**, centred on Ryde; **South East**, Shanklin & surrounding areas; **South**, centred on Ventnor and **West**, covering the western sector including, Freshwater and Yarmouth. The majority of our new initiatives have been and will continue to be targeted at Members from specific areas and, when we are able to offer transport, we will identify a limited number of readily accessible transport pick-up points accordingly.



With the proposed holiday to Llandudno for Members advertised in this February's Newsletter, we will have offered each of the top 12 scoring suggestions, published in the February 2018 Newsletter, that Members said would have the most positive impact on their lives.

Unfortunately, the lack of take-up for some of the events and activities offered has meant that not all of the proposed ideas have taken place. However, we take on board all feedback received from Members, volunteers and staff to better inform our plans and proposals going forward and will continue to develop our programmes to reflect the needs and wishes of Members. The quarterly Members' Forum meetings are especially valuable in giving Members the opportunity to meet with me in person to put forward proposals and suggestions and, of course, to discuss any matters of concern to VI Members. To afford a greater number of Members the opportunity to participate in our quarterly Forum Meetings, dates confirmed in the February Newsletter, we will endeavour to rotate the meetings at a variety of venues around the Island, rather than always host them at Millbrooke House.

Referring again to the Member Services valued in the 2017 survey, you may recall that the most highly rated service was identified as the Newsletter, put together by the Millbrooke House staff team. The quality and content of this publication has continued to improve and the Newsletter will increasingly be used as an effective way to reach out to more Islanders who might benefit from our support and services. Our aim over the coming year is to see wider, regular distribution of the Newsletter to all Island Libraries, Opticians', Health Centres and Doctors' waiting rooms, in addition to St Mary's Hospital Eye Department, and of course, as now, directly to our Members.

The *Talking News* remains highly regarded. Again we are hugely indebted to the large and stalwart team of volunteers who prepare, produce, copy & arrange distribution and will ensure that we continue to support this weekly service with necessary equipment and resources.

The Audio Library remains valued by many, so we will similarly continue our support of this service with our CD collection, currently well used by our VI Members. We will also increase promotion of the complementary services offered by various other providers such as the RNIB and Calibre who have a vast library of resources in a

variety of formats including CD's, memory sticks, online books, large print and braille books.

Low Vision Drop-In Days continue to be popular with our VI Members. Not only are these invaluable for those who have more recently been diagnosed with sight loss, but with ever-changing and developing technology, they remain an important way for VI Members to enjoy first-hand demonstrations of equipment and technology. Perhaps most interesting, are the growing number of free apps that are available to support those with sight loss. Again, reflecting the interests of Members, our Member Services Manager will increasingly promote new technological and digital solutions in our quarterly Newsletter in the 'Tech Spot' and at Low Vision Drop-in Days. To better reflect the needs of VI Members we will host or actively support more low vision drop-in events at other venues around the Island. For example, the Sight Loss Awareness Event taking place on 23rd March, now being hosted at the Riverside Centre, by our Trustee Laura Gooljar, in her capacity as Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) at St. Mary's Hospital.

At the majority of our outreach events during the past year we have included demonstrations with our sim specs and a small selection of low-vision aids and any attendant staff and volunteer ambassadors have had access to further information to give to any interested enquirers.

Another way the results of the Members' survey is influencing our future plans is in Sight for Wight developing closer links with many other organisations and networks on the Island that are delivering services and activities that were identified as being of potential positive benefit to Members in the survey. Members said they generally preferred to participate in activities that are open to everyone, not necessarily those exclusively for people affected by sight loss.

Because of these findings, we are very pleased to have engaged so effectively in partnership working with the national charity *Guide Dogs* during the past year, to successfully deliver their *My Guide* programme. The half-day *My Guide Level 1* programme provides basic sighted guide training – ideal for all of our volunteers, who will be invited to refresh this training every two years. The additional half-day *Level 2 My Guide Training* is for those volunteers who would like to be matched with a VI Member to achieve individually set and agreed goals, for example, increasing confidence to independently access a specific service or activity, within an agreed

timeframe. A number of additional staff and volunteers are currently in the process of receiving further training to deliver the *My Guide* programmes that we advertised in our February 2019 Newsletter.

A new partnership project we are entering into this year is with RNIB. A number of staff, volunteers and VI Members have already indicated their interest in completing some facilitator training to be delivered by the RNIB in March, so that we will in future take a significant role in delivering their established *Confidence Building* programmes on the Island. These are designed to support those newly diagnosed with sight loss.

In constantly reviewing and revising our support and services that offer a significant benefit to Members, there will be some further changes to some current services. Last year we confirmed our intention to make effective and best use of our resources, including consideration of staff and volunteer time, in addition to operational costs. Declining numbers of participants at some of the regular clubs hosted at Millbrooke House have highlighted the need for us to revise our offer, so there will be a progressive shift in delivering fewer activities at Millbrooke House. This point will be expanded as I turn now to sharing the summary of recommendations of the Millbrooke House Working Party.

Regarding Millbrooke House, the Trustees were invited to consider its current and future use at the strategic planning meeting held in August 2017 and subsequently agreed in February last year (2018) to a formal review. A Millbrooke House Working Party, made up of VI Members, Staff and a Trustee representative, was established to gather and analyse all of the relevant facts and needs to be considered. The Working Party held three formal meetings together and individual members undertook further research in between meetings. This enabled a full evaluation of how we currently use Millbrooke House, including an analysis of how many Members participate in events and activities at Millbrooke House. Consideration was given to the changing needs of Members, consideration was given to the space required to deliver Member Services such as the Talking News and Audio Library and the accommodation required for the governance and administrative needs of the Charity. Consideration was also given to the costs entailed in relocating the administration of the Charity to alternative premises and to potential revenue generated from making more effective use of the rooms at Millbrooke House. A full report, supported by further detail in a series of appendices, was presented to the

Trustees for consideration at last week's quarterly Meeting. I am pleased to report that the Trustees highly commended the diligence and thoroughness of the Working Party and supported the four broad recommendations made, which are summarised as follows:

2.1. *Recognise the need to deliver more Member Services not at Millbrooke House but Island wide*

The overall recommendations of the Working Party are to increase the range and frequency of activities and regular social meetings at accessible venues across the Island, gradually replacing the regular social clubs that are hosted at Millbrooke House as attendance at these dwindles.

2.2. *Retain Millbrooke House as the Administrative Base for the Charity*

Based on a cost benefit analysis, the Working Party concurs that it is in the best interest of the Charity to retain Millbrooke House as the administrative base for the Charity.

2.3 *Utilise spare rooms at Millbrooke House to generate revenue from tenants*

The Working Party recommends that necessary investment is made to enable a re-organisation of accommodation within Millbrooke House to make more effective use of available space, to suit the current and future needs of the Charity, thereby releasing spare rooms to generate significant potential revenue from long-term commercial tenants.

2.4 *Undertake Regular Reviews of the Use of Millbrooke House*

Involve a Working Party in undertaking a full and formal review of this report at least every five years, to ensure that the Charity continues to make most effective use of its resources whilst meeting the needs of Members.

Now that the Trustees have approved all of the recommendations of the Millbrooke House Working Party, I will be arranging various meetings and discussions with those who will be directly affected by the proposals and details of the proposed developments will be shared more widely once those initial meetings have taken place.

The recommendation of the Working Party to generate revenue from letting spare rooms is clearly a valuable strand in widening income generation and fundraising, which are clearly key to our future sustainability. The potential revenue generated from long-term commercial tenants sharing Millbrooke House could make a very significant contribution to our overheads.

Legacies have, in most recent years, provided the greatest source of income. You will appreciate from the accounts just published, for the year ended March 2018, as projected at last year's AGM, our income from legacies has been very much smaller.

As I stated last year, legacy income cannot easily be predicted and can never be guaranteed. One of the reasons to broaden our income generation and fundraising strategy is because it is widely recognised that, as we generally enjoy longer lives, many of us can expect to spend our later years in expensive residential care, depleting estates that might otherwise have benefitted family, friends and chosen charitable causes. So Sight for Wight will make further efforts to promote the services supported by the charity, and the positive benefits that accrue as a result, and thus encourage supporters to think about us in their Will. A new legacy leaflet was produced towards the end of 2018 and promoted in the November Newsletter. This will remain an ongoing campaign to encourage more Islanders to think about leaving Sight for Wight a gift in their Will.

So now, onto fundraising plans for the year ahead. You may recall that the changes in governance implemented in 2017 saw the creation of a Board Fundraising Committee to supplement the Local Fundraising Committee, with detailed terms of reference established for each. The Local Fundraising Committee, now steered by the Marketing, Communications and Fundraising Manager and Volunteers Manager together and supported by a team of volunteers, continue to plan and deliver a presence at local shows and events. Last summer & autumn we had a presence at a number of events we had not previously attended, with varying success. Attendance at the *Jack up the Eighties* and *Rhythm Tree* music festivals was not found to be

sufficiently valuable to repeat in the near future. However, we achieved valuable publicity and exposure at the *Ryde Pride* festival and *Island Con*, an event for lovers of sci-fi, fantasy and super-heroes, so anticipate a presence at these events again. In broadening our outreach to new audiences, we increase awareness of the services offered by Sight for Wight and this is essential to increase wider financial support too. Of course, we will continue to attend some of the more traditional Island events, such as the Chale Show, where we have identified there is an overall net benefit in having a presence. However, mindful of available resources, most especially staff and Volunteer Ambassadors' time, the Marketing, Communications & Fundraising Manager and the local fundraising committee will be required to consider a full cost/benefit analysis before we participate in any shows or put on our own fundraising events, to ensure that we are making most effective use of the Charity's resources.

We now have five large print leaflets to promote our services at shows and outreach events. They're available from Millbrooke House, downloadable from the website and available for Members, volunteers and supporters to take away to help display or distribute. One covers Member Services, a second promotes avoidable sight loss, the third leaflet is to help recruit additional volunteers, the fourth encourages supporters to fundraise on our behalf and, as previously referenced, the leaflet most recently produced covers Legacy Giving as a way of securing the future of the Charity.

To provide support to the Marketing Communications & Fundraising Manager, the Trustees have just approved the proposal, again based on a cost/benefit analysis, to create an exciting opportunity for a young apprentice studying administration. We will work in partnership with the Isle of Wight College to engage an apprentice who will spend 4 days a week learning whilst working with us, and one day a week pursuing their college studies. We expect the appointment to commence from April.

So having described the work and plans of the Local Fundraising Committee, I will turn now to the Board Fundraising Committee. The remit of the Board Committee is to consider overall fundraising policy and strategy, making recommendations as appropriate to the full board of Trustees and to oversee fundraising activities that do not come under the remit of the Local Fundraising Committee.

The fundraising target for the year ahead is greater than for many years before as the Trustees have approved not only the development of a Key Stage 1 Primary

Education Project, given preliminary consideration last year, but also the commissioning of a bespoke outreach vehicle.

Firstly a little more on the Education Project. Positive progress has been made during recent months. A formal Working Party has been established of myself, two Trustee Members (including one VI Member) and three new volunteers who have extensive experience in primary school teaching and special educational needs. Together we have an impressive wealth of collective experience of developing, delivering and evaluating tailored education and outreach sessions. Terms of reference have been approved. The overall purpose of the Education Project Working Party is to support the Charity with the development of ideas and resources for the proposed KS1 education outreach programme that links sight, sight loss and promoting avoidable sight loss, to the national curriculum across a range of subjects. The overall aim is to develop, pilot and finalise a Key Stage 1 education programme that would then be offered to all Primary Schools on the Isle of Wight over the subsequent two year period, thereby reaching all KS1 pupils and their respective families.

A couple of meetings of the Education Working Party have taken place to generate ideas for curriculum links and activities that will be inspiring, engaging and fun for pupils; that will be valued by schools for providing high quality education that supports their curriculum teaching; and through the distribution of take-home packs for pupils, will be informative to parents, carers and wider family members. The clear benefit to VI Members will be in widening understanding of the impact of sight loss and increasing empathy with those who experience visual impairment. All of these together will also increase awareness of how Sight for Wight can support those affected by sight loss and expand the number of supporters we have right across the Island Community.

The second major project we will launch a fundraising campaign for is the purchase of a bespoke outreach vehicle. There are some preliminary visuals of what we envisage on display at Millbrooke House. This vehicle, to be fitted out internally to our specification and clearly branded externally, will serve a number of purposes:

- ❖ To support us in delivering the above referenced education programme, capable of supporting a variety of activities with digital technology, low-vision equipment and interactive displays, for small groups of up to eight pupils and supporting staff at once.

- ❖ As an eye-catching outreach vehicle to deliver low-vision and other Member services drop-in support at venues and villages Island wide, particularly those at a greater distance from Millbrooke House or with poorer transport links.
- ❖ An exciting and welcoming outreach vehicle, capable of supporting a range of interesting, fun yet informative activities at public events and shows to promote the support and services offered by Sight for Wight.

The funding required to enable such an investment in future support and services is considerable. The preliminary quotation for the fitted out vehicle is in the region of £75,000 plus VAT. I am delighted to report that the Trustees have recognised the value of this project and have just committed to contributing 50% of the costs from our current reserves. So this leaves a fundraising target of approximately £50,000 to be achieved by the end of 2019 if we are to commission the vehicle in January 2020 with a view to having it available to put into service from April 2020. Our VI Trustee Ruth suggested that an appropriate name for this exciting project might be to call it our 2020 Vision!

So as we publicly launch a fundraising campaign for this project in the coming months we will be inviting staff, volunteers, Guarantor Members and supporters across the Island to help us deliver our 2020 Vision.

Whilst our currently healthy reserves mean that we are ineligible to apply to a number of trusts and fund, efforts will continue to seek some grant support for both these valuable projects.

Continuing on the theme of governance, we identified last year the desire to recruit some additional trustees who have a professional background with significant financial and/or governance experience, so I am delighted to welcome today Christina Conroy, who joined the Board in November, bringing with her a wealth of professional experience that will continue to be of immense value to the Charity. As a Trustee appointed during the past year, Christina stands for confirmation of appointment as a Trustee Director at today's AGM.

Now, as at last year's AGM, much reference has been made to volunteering. With a small core team, of mainly part-time staff, much of what we do can only be achieved with the tremendous support, so generously given, by our volunteers. During the past year, a record 100 volunteers have supported us across all areas of our operations, in facilitating and delivering Member Services; education and outreach;

fundraising; administration and in governance, as it must not be forgotten that our trustee directors are all volunteers too. Our part-time Volunteers Manager continues to recruit, induct, support and co-ordinate training and development of our volunteers with support from the Volunteers Administration Assistant. And if that was not already challenge enough, the growing number of new activities we continue to offer will, of course, require many more hours of volunteer time.

As referenced previously, especially in delivering new services and activities, including fundraising and outreach, we are keen to also attract new volunteers who can support us. So if you know of friends or relatives who might be particularly interested in getting involved we urge you to invite them to look at our website, to see the range of support we welcome and then contact us.

To help evaluate and quantify the enormous support volunteers provide Sight for Wight, we endeavour to keep a monthly record of their hours' contribution to Sight for Wight during the year. We will continue to invite volunteers to describe what they gain from volunteering with Sight for Wight, so that we have both the quantitative and qualitative data that will support our ongoing recruitment of volunteers and which is often required in making funding applications. The Charity was honoured to have received the Queens Award for Voluntary Service in 2014 and Sight for Wight remains immensely proud of the achievements of our volunteers and volunteering programme today.

I very much hope that the impression I have left with you overall, is again, one of great optimism for the future and a desire to see the Charity succeed in its endeavours. At the 2017 AGM following my appointment, but before I took up office, I said: *'I trust that you will find in me someone with the skills, experience, professionalism and proven track record required of a successful Chief Executive, together with the drive, energy and enthusiasm demanded of such a role'* and that remains my commitment to the charity and its core objects I pledge, to continue to take Sight for Wight forward for the benefit of the Island's VI Members.

With the support of dedicated volunteers, including the trustees, the very loyal and hard-working staff team we now have in place and the goodwill of Members and supporters I believe, together, we have a clear 2020 Vision for a great year ahead and handover now to our new Chair to conduct the rest of the AGM.

Ends