

## Forum Minutes

10 January 2018, 12.00-13.30, Millbrooke House



**Present:** Chris Biles, Ruth Hollingshead, Julie Page, MMT Tong (MMT, Chair), Liz Tuckwell

**Minute Taker:** Chris Cane

**Apologies:** Terry Pearson, Chris Amy, Danielle Burgess, Mel Barnes, Roy Perry

### 1 Welcome & Introductions

MMT welcomed everyone to the User Forum & briefly read through the minutes of the last meeting.

### 2 IWSB Client Consultation Report

MMT discussed the results of the recent Client Consultation Survey and was able to provide a breakdown of the most popular services in reverse order:

- 19 Freshwater Monthly Coffee Morning
- 17 Bembridge and Niton Coffee Morning (joint place)
- 16 Braille document production at Millbrooke House
- 14 Home visit service and golf group (joint)
- 13 Opportunities to volunteer at IWSB
- 12 Knitters and Natterers
- 11 Millbrooke House Coffee Morning
- 10 Striders
- 08 Dolphins and Owls (joint)
- 06 Strollers and Ten Pin Bowling (joint)
- 05 Resource Room Low Vision Aids
- 04 Audio Library
- 03 Millbrooke House as a point of contact
- 02 Talking News
- 01 Newsletter

The top ten 'suggestions' for new activities were as follows in reverse order:

- 10 Sport and activity taster day
- 09 Monthly technology group
- 08 Exercise group
- 07 Holidays
- 06 Monthly food and drink tasters at Millbrooke House
- 05 Quarterly technology group
- 04 Quarterly day trips to the mainland heritage sites

- 03 Introduction to technology course
- 02 Social activities closer to home
- 01 Quarterly trips to IOW heritage sites

MMT advised the meeting that these top ten suggestions will guide what the Society does for members this year. MMT will finish rating the scores and look at them in due course. This information will be put in the Newsletter and will be used to help the Society plan forward thinking. MMT asked how visually impaired people preferred to receive information and it was agreed that a simple spreadsheet was the best option with a standard table. Liz Tuckwell asked if this information could go on the Talking News.

### 3 IWSB Future Plans Update

MMT was very enthusiastic regarding future plans for the Society and began by explaining the new staff structure.

#### HR Review

##### **Marketing, Communications and Fundraising Manager**

From 1st November 2017, Chris Cane was promoted to the role of Marketing, Communications and Fundraising Manager. The significant change to the Job Description will more effectively utilise Chris's many strengths and skills and we hope will bring increasing professionalism to these vitally important aspects of the work of *Sight for Wight*, especially at a time when we hope to deliver a growing range of support and services and need to generate additional revenue to support these and existing activities. Chris now has a very demanding workload, but I am confident that he will continue to work closely with colleagues to deliver it successfully. In the near future he will be working closely with Michelle to see if we can recruit some new events stewards, ambassadors and fundraisers to support us.

##### **Member Services Manager**

The most significant change for service users is the replacement of the role of Centre Administrator with that of Member Services Manager. Laura Jasper, with her professional background as a dispensing optician, is perfectly placed to deliver improved services for Members, including exploring a number of new activities at venues across the Island to reflect the range of suggestions made by respondents to the 2017 User Survey. Laura took up her revised role with effect from 1st January 2018. Laura is currently exploring a range of possibilities and, working closely with Chris, will ensure that information about any new opportunities are sent out to you in good time. To enable the delivery of support, services and activities at a variety of locations across the Island, Laura will usually spend two days each week at locations other than Millbrooke House.

#### **Administrative Assistant**

This newly created part/time role will ensure that whilst Laura Jasper is at other locations developing, supporting and delivering Member Services, we still have someone in the office who can deal with telephone enquiries and messages, provide some admin support and generally facilitate the smooth running of whatever may be happening at Millbrooke House. We are delighted that Susan Earley, who has proved herself an excellent and versatile team member, will undertake this role. Susan has been the Interim Finance Officer for the past several months pending the review of that role. Susan will take up the Admin post following an induction of and handover to a new part/time Finance Officer.

#### **Finance Officer**

Following a review of this role, which included taking some independent expert advice, the Finance Officer role has been reduced from 21 hours per week to 16, typically to be worked over four mornings. Following a thorough recruitment and selection process, I am pleased to announce that Lisa Hollyhead joins Sight for Wight in mid-January. Lisa brings a wealth of experience as a qualified Chartered Accountant and successful business person. One of the particular reasons that motivated Lisa to apply to join us is that she has, herself, blind since birth, so feels particular empathy with the aims and role of Sight for Wight.

#### **Volunteers Manager**

While the demand for new volunteers is ever increasing, the role remains pretty much as it has in recent years. However, the new job title Volunteer Manager will replace that of Community Development Officer, which was somewhat ambiguous and misleading. Michelle Taylor will continue to bring her professionalism and great wealth of experience to this vital role, with a need to recruit, vet and induct additional volunteers to support proposed new services and activities as well as maintaining sufficient volunteers to deliver our traditional volunteer roles and tasks. Currently the Volunteer Manager role is 21 hours per week.

#### **Chief Executive**

To fund the introduction of an additional part/time team member, the Trustees approved a proposed reduction in my hours as Chief Executive, from 28 to 21 hours a week, with effect from 1st January 2018. Of course, working on behalf of a charity where so many people volunteer their respective time and talents, I too will continue to volunteer many additional hours. So, whilst no less committed to Sight for Wight, and with a very clear vision for steering the way forward, this is an important personal decision, enabling me to enjoy moving gently towards semi-retirement. However, there are many plans afoot to deliver first! So a significant proportion of my time in the coming year will be devoted to researching and applying for funding from trusts, funds and major grant givers to enable us to develop and deliver our plans into the future.

#### **Sight for Wight Duty Manager**

Finally, with all of the above developments taking place, several team members will, increasingly, be spending more time away from Millbrooke House and out and about on the Island, developing and delivering new plans and services. For this reason, we will ensure that a 'Duty Manager' is identified each working day, drawn from the above team, to ensure that messages and communications are dealt with appropriately and that the individual with daily responsibility for supporting the smooth running of operations is identified.

#### **Name & Logo Change**

MMT described the new name change and logo to the group. We are keeping the diamond shape of the Island and have given the edging a golden yellow colour. The eye now looks friendlier and the new name is, 'Sight for Wight' with the strapline, 'your local sight loss charity since 1895'. Ruth asked for a laminated copy of the logo.

MMT explained that whilst we are proud of the origins and heritage of the charity, founded in 1895, it is important to ensure that the widest group of Islanders who might benefit from the charity know that we are here for them. There are thousands of people on the Island who are sight impaired and might benefit from the support and services we offer, but who are not registered blind and might therefore imagine they cannot turn to us for information, help or support. Especially for those more recently diagnosed with a sight loss condition, we had become increasingly aware that the charity name *Isle of Wight Society for the Blind* might have been off-putting.

Liz Tuckwell asked how much all this cost and MMT informed her that we were extremely fortunate that Mat Rutherford, a professional graphic designer based in Australia, (yes, there's a family connection with our Chairman) volunteered his time and talent, without charge, to make the changes based on our brief. The only cost would be to change the logo on our website which could be up to £200.

Whilst *Sight for Wight* will be adopted as our new working name, we will still retain the *Isle of Wight Society for the Blind* as the original legal name for the purposes of registration with the Charities Commission and Companies House. This means that our respective registration numbers will be unchanged and supporters, followers and funders, old and new, should have no difficulty in tracing our history and records.

MMT said we will gradually start rolling this out and the County Press has already been informed this week. We will spend some money on marketing materials so

this would have happened regardless of the name change. We don't have any up-to-date good quality leaflets that states what the charity does and we will purchase some new pop-up banners with some good quality photos of people participating in various activities. Liz Tuckwell wondered about photo permissions and MMT said that the photos used for our existing banners were in our publicity folder so this is why they were used. MMT will address photo permissions for future publications.

#### **2018 Members Social Gatherings**

MMT was able to share planned social gatherings in 2018 for Members at Millbrooke House:

##### **Members Summer Gathering**

Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2.00pm – 7.00pm

MMT felt this could be enjoyed by both older and younger members so that older members can have afternoon tea and younger members might prefer to attend for a barbecue and glass of wine.

##### **Members Mulled Wine & Music**

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2.00 - 4.00pm

Details will be published and RSVP invitations issued nearer the dates.

#### **AGM**

The AGM will be on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 10.00am

Open Invitation to Members & Volunteers

Julie thought it would be a good idea to have a 'rogue's gallery' of staff to be displayed at Millbrooke House.

#### **ACTIONS**

- Chris to provide an A4 laminated copy of the logo for Ruth.
- MMT to address photo permissions for future publicity.
- Chris to organise photos of staff for 'Rogue's Gallery'

#### **Financial Report**

Liz Tuckwell asked about finances and MMT advised the formal accounts for year ended March 2017 would be lodged with the Charity Commission by the end of the month (in line with reporting requirements) and made available on both our website and that of the Charity Commission.

Last year was a good year with a net income of £138,892. £206,759 in legacies has been keeping the Society afloat but sadly these legacies are going to dwindle in the coming years so MMT will be focusing on finding other monies via grant applications etc.

Liz Tuckwell asked if Dress for Less was making money and MMT said it donated its net annual income of £10,930 to the charity. However, paid staff time supporting Dress for Less was not factored in to this sum.

#### **Ex Gratia Payment**

Leading on from this MMT wanted to read out a statement regarding the ex-gratia payment for which Charity Commission approval had been sought. The statement that appears as Note 11 in the published accounts is as follows:

‘During the year it came to the trustees’ attention that a member of staff had been overpaid in comparison to originally agreed salary. As the overpayment has been occurring for approximately two years, the overpayment has amounted to £10,500. The trustees have come to the decision that to seek repayment of these funds would create financial hardship for the employee in question, and have therefore agreed that the charity has a moral obligation not to seek repayment in the circumstances. The trustees have put in place procedures to ensure payroll is more closely monitored and avoid any similar situations in the future.’

To expand on that statement and identify the range of controls that are now in place to strengthen financial governance, the following more detailed statement is provided.

- The trustees deeply regret the accidental overpayment that was identified in January 2017 and reported in the financial accounts for the year ended 31 March 2017.
- Following professional advice, the decision not to seek repayment was agreed by trustees in February 2017, for the avoidance of financial hardship by the employee in question.
- The establishment of a finance sub-committee was approved at a meeting of trustees held in May 2017, to strengthen and continuously review financial activities and procedures of the charity. The terms of reference for the finance sub-committee are clearly defined and include an internal audit function. The finance sub-committee comprises a minimum of two trustees, including the Treasurer, together with the CEO and Finance Officer. The finance sub-committee has, to date met on three occasions. Formal minutes are recorded and circulated with reports made to the full board of trustees.
- The IWSB payroll function has, in recent years, been outsourced. The overpayment originated when a part-time employee was erroneously paid the full-time equivalent rate, contrary to information supplied to the former payroll office.
- When IWSB appointed a different firm of accountants the payroll details were passed directly from the previous company to the present company

and the error was perpetuated.

- A meeting of the finance sub-committee trustees and the Chief Executive was held with the charity's firm of accountants in July 2017 to discuss the overpayment. At this meeting controls were discussed and agreed, and have subsequently been implemented, to enable the CEO and Treasurer and/or other trustee member of the finance sub-committee to monitor and check salary payments each month. Further, all correspondence between the Finance Officer and the payroll team at the accountants is copied to the CEO for information, monitoring and checking.
- The CEO and finance sub-committee will introduce and implement any other controls deemed appropriate to prevent the possibility of accidental overpayment.
- The CEO and Trustees are implementing a budget for the new financial year to enable the quarterly monitoring of all actual expenditure, against budgeted expenditure. This will enable more immediate recognition of any deviations from budgeted expenditure.
- The charity is moving towards the implementation of on-line banking that will require on-line payments set up by the Finance Officer to be formally released by one or two authorised signatories (in accordance with agreed financial limits). The Finance Officer will not be an authorised signatory of the charity.
- The employee concerned is no longer with the charity.
- All salaries are now being paid at the correct rates agreed.
- Some specific examples of where financial practice has been reviewed and systems strengthened include with regard to static box collections, bucket collections, petty cash management, other cash received, ordering procedures and the adoption of and adherence to good fundraising practice.
- An application has been made to the Charity Commission in respect of the (moral) Ex Gratia Payment.
- The CEO and trustees are committed to ensuring good financial governance. They have been and will continue to work together to strengthen financial governance and promote best practice across all of the charity's financial activities.

MMT stated that this was a very serious occurrence and the Society has done everything possible to ensure this does not happen again. It is recognised how very disheartening and disappointing this news is for members, volunteers, supporters and indeed other staff, which is why a fuller statement has been prepared to provide reassurance to all that stronger financial governance is now in place. Naturally, the charity must respect confidentiality and will not divulge the name of

the staff member concerned.

That aside, MMT said the accounts look encouraging and give the Society confidence to move forward knowing there are currently healthy reserves. However, this year MMT intends to devote time seeking significant grant and trust fund money to help cover future costs. Expenditure is expected to go up in the last quarter of this financial and into the new financial year as we invest in new things, such as improved materials for marketing, outreach etc., especially for members.

#### **Sight for Wight Partnership Working – Macular Society**

MMT reported that our Member Services Manager had attended two days' training in Andover with the Macular Society to enable Sight for Wight to deliver their programme, 'Skills for Seeing'. Sight for Wight is working in partnership with the Macular Society who will make payments to us in respect of training provided by Laura to clients referred by the Macular Society.

#### **Sight for Wight Partnership Working – Guide Dogs**

Another new partnership, established between Sight for Wight and Guide Dogs, will also be led by our Member Services Manager. We are working together to deliver their 'My Guide' training programme. Further details will be announced in due course.

#### **Dress for Less**

On the Dress for Less front there will be an advertisement for a part-time paid retail manager, in this week's County Press as the increased shop size means the Society needs to find more volunteers. The paid manager will take some of the admin burden of the running of the shop and training and development of volunteers. Current volunteers have been invited to apply for this position and any that do will be guaranteed an interview.

**4 Responses to any Advance Questions** – No advance questions received.

#### **5 Open Forum**

**Liz Tuckwell** said she heard a rumour about the costings of the minibus and was concerned about having a people carrier as there wouldn't be sufficient space for Dolphins, Strollers or Striders. MMT advised that no changes would be made until we had undertaken a fuller review of costs and future needs and we are still at the information gathering stage. Certainly accessibility issues would be considered when considering any future changes.

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**Julie Page** commented that all the changes moving forward were very positive.

**Any Other Business**

None. MMT thanked everyone for coming along.

**2018 User Forum Dates**

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April (12.00 – 13.30)

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> July (12.00 – 13.30)

Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October (12.00 – 13.30)