



Sight for Wight Members' Forum
Wednesday 18th April 2018
12:00 – 13:30
Millbrooke House

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

Chris Amy, Charles Axford, Mel Barnes, Nicole Barry, Chris Biles, Ruth Hollingshead, Julie Page, Miriam Tong (MMT Chair), Liz Tuckwell, Helen Tunley-Smith

MINUTE TAKER:

Chris Cane

APOLOGIES:

Danielle Burgess

1 Welcome & Introductions

MMT asked everyone to introduce themselves and also asked if it was okay to take some photographs; asking members who hadn't completed a photo consent form to do so.

2 Sight for Wight Future Plans Update

Working with Guide Dogs, Sight for Wight had recently hosted two days of training to enable MMT and the Member Services Manager, Laura Jasper, to deliver 'in house' 'My Guide' training on behalf of and working in partnership with Guide Dogs. Following a further assessment of MMT and LJ scheduled in May, there will be a joint marketing initiative to promote the opportunities to both members who might benefit from the My Guide programme and to recruit additional volunteers who might deliver the My Guide programme. Helen Tunley-Smith (HT-S) asked about My Guide volunteers becoming friends with volunteers. Miriam (MMT) said you can't always stop this from happening. Chris Cane (CC) added that it's about professional boundaries which MMT agreed. MMT invited the group to look out for positive press in the coming weeks!

The Member Services Manager has identified another outreach group and will be representing Sight for Wight at Aspire in Ryde on the second Monday of each month. Details of this will go on the website and Talking News.



The old monthly 'Introduction to Millbrooke House' is going to be replaced by a weekly low vision drop in morning to coincide with the Wednesday Coffee Morning with a semi-permanent display of low vision equipment. This might also encourage people to attend the coffee mornings.

This morning MMT spoke to a meeting with the Rotary Club who meet at Newport Riverside and took our low vision display equipment that we will be taking to all our outreach events and shows this year. They were very supportive of the Society, interested in our plans, appreciative of the services we offer and would like to remain in contact with us as it is very much their mission to also serve and support the local community.

MMT also shared with the group our new promotional sunglasses, keyring torches and pen torches.

MMT asked if there were any questions with future plans. There were no questions. Liz Tuckwell (LT) then asked about the yoga course and MMT said that, sadly, there was insufficient uptake but Sight for Wight is hoping to do a taster session later in the year. LT and HT-S felt that £50.00 for a six week course was too much. Ruth Hollingshead (RH) informed them that the six week course was suggested by the trainer initially. Charles Axford (CA) recommended doing a yoga course and to encourage people to come along to a taster session when the Society puts something on later in the year. As soon as there is further information on this it will be advertised on the website and Talking News.

3 Responses to any Advance Questions Submitted by Members

MMT said there were a number of questions relating to the overpayment and read out the following statement:

'I entirely understand and share your concern that, as a charity, we must maintain continuing endeavours to strengthen governance and transparency and to enhance the reputation of the charity going forward.

As you may appreciate, I am unable to comment on individual employee records, or to name the individual concerned in the accidental overpayment, as this would be in breach of employee confidentiality. If I can refer you to our website, www.iwsb.org.uk, you will find copies of all documents referenced below. You will appreciate from my AGM address, that of the Chairman and in the responses to all the written questions from Guarantor Members, a number of which referred to the overpayment, care was taken not to name the employee concerned and it should be noted that Sight for Wight did not supply any information to the County Press, except that published on our website.

You will appreciate from reading the responses given to all Guarantor Members' questions on the subject, the matter is not yet closed and whilst it is not appropriate for me to make any further comment now, once the scheduled formal review of the decision previously made by Trustees is completed, a further statement will be made regarding the matter.

As the matter is of wide interest, this statement will be made available from our website, the Talking News and the following edition of the Sight for Wight Newsletter.

Whilst it would not be appropriate for me to discuss matters with you or any other concerned Guarantor Member, member, volunteer or supporter at this stage, if you feel you have any factual information you would like brought to the attention of the Trustees directly concerning this matter, I would urge you to submit it in writing to me and I will ensure that the information is presented to the Trustees that they might consider it as part of their scheduled review.

I sincerely hope that this provides the assurance you seek that the matter is being dealt with fully and appropriately.

I trust that you will continue to take a close interest in all of Sight for Wight's activities and recognise the significant changes that are in progress to strengthen the governance of the charity and to re-focus attention on delivering our core charitable objects.

I sincerely trust that in the coming weeks and months, news coverage in the County Press will be featuring the many positive initiatives now being introduced by Sight for Wight to benefit those we exist to serve.

I look forward to receiving any written submission you may wish to send for consideration by the Trustees.'

MMT confirmed the next Trustees' Meeting is 15th May, when the decision made previously will be reviewed. MMT asked people to not contact us on 16th May expecting a statement, as the complexity of the matter might require legal advice is sought. MMT gave assurance that once all advice has been considered the decision of the Trustees would be made known. LT said a lot of people are upset. MMT acknowledged that this was understood.

HT-S asked how many trustees there are. MMT said that all this information is on the website; however, she explained the current Trustee setup.

HT-S also asked what Trustees do. MMT confirmed that they take overall legal responsibility for the effective governance of the charity and compliance not just with Charity Commission guidance but with all relevant legislation relating to companies, employment, health and safety etc. To give members an idea of the amount of information published just by the Charity Commission that Trustees have to read and digest, she brought along two folders; one of which was finance and the other was general guidance; both of which were extremely heavy so that members could see or feel the weight of them and appreciate what the Trustees have to comply with. MMT also identified that the average amount of time trustees collectively give in a typical year, just as trustees; i.e. not including any additional voluntary time given in supporting member activities, fundraising, volunteering at Reception, driving or undertaking maintenance tasks, equates to approximately £12,500 per year based on the minimum hourly rate.

MMT wanted to make it clear that, with regard to the overpayment, it's important to not forget what happened; however, if we want a positive future then we have to move forward. Measures have now been put in place to make sure that nothing like this ever happens again, amongst them, having a finance sub-committee and a qualified accountant as the new finance officer.

HT-S asked why there was a charge for striders and strollers. MMT said that costs need to be covered and that, as with all activities, the charges make a contribution to the charity's total overheads. MMT acknowledged that staff costs represent a significant overhead of the charity; however, for a charity to exist delivering services to so many members there needs to be paid officers. Having said that, MMT pointed out that the current staff give fantastic value for money and volunteer many additional hours of their time, frequently working through their lunch breaks and supporting events outside usual office hours etc. HT-S wanted to know if the Society pays for MMT's ferry fare. MMT confirmed this was not the case.

LT asked if Dress for Less pays for itself. MMT said this is constantly under review as the purpose of setting up the CIC was to provide financial support to the charity. The budget projections produced by the Directors of Millbrooke Enterprises indicate that the larger premises should be capable of generating a higher income and cover the costs of the part time paid manager. Unfortunately, we have recently lost a number of very good volunteers due to ill health and retirement and it will take a while to build a new team. However, there is every confidence in the new part-time paid manager, who has extensive experience of managing volunteers, and who is working wonders to strengthen the sense of team spirit. This, in turn, will translate into additional revenue generation from the shop.

4 Open Forum – further observations, comments & questions from those present

LT said that when she came to the AGM this year, she was told where the coffee was but not shown. CC corrected her and said that she was shown to a seat and given a coffee. LT wondered if she'd been someone new would she have been shown. MMT acknowledged her concern and agreed that any team members welcoming members to Sight for Wight meetings and events clearly identify those present are able to support members.

HT-S wished MMT the best of luck and LT said she appreciates what MMT is doing for the Society.

Julie Page (JP) said that, on one occasion when her husband came to collect her, there was no one on Reception and it would be useful to have some sort of buzzer or bell to alert other staff members that someone was in the Reception area. This was agreed as a helpful practical suggestion.

5 Any Other Business

None

Meeting closed at 13:30 as some members were attending the new book club in Newport.

6 Date & Time of Next Meeting:

Wednesday 18th July 2018

12:00 – 13:30

Millbrooke House