

Minutes of Routes to Roots Annual General Meeting 20th June 2013
United Reformed Church, Skinner Street, Poole

1. Attendance**Present:**

Liz Bailey
Beryl Bariana
Mike Bublick
Vera Brown
Stephanie Buckley
Tim Buttler
Alan Cook
Alison Dalton
Dave Dalton
Eric Damerell
Lynn Foster
Caroline Foy
Susan Gittins
Scott Jones
Alan Knapp

Steve Little
Marion Luckman
Janette McCallum
Ruth Meaden
Kate Mellor
John Parsons
Sarah Percy
Joan Percy
Paul Richards
Gabi Sanger-Stevens
Pete Shilling
Pat Southgate
Rosemary St John
George Taylor

Apologies:

Nigel Benning
Gill Cook
Matt Devereux
Dick Dyke
Margaret Green
Chris Lay
Hazel Marston
Maureen McCabe
Michael McCabe
Gail Nuttall
Annette Palmer
Jean Robinson
Llia Sanger-Stevens
Natalie Saunders
Marcus Steward-Keeling

Terence St John
Philip Ward

2. Opening Prayer and Welcome

The Revd Pat Southgate, Chair of R2R, opened the meeting with a reading from Jeremiah 18 1-4, referring to the Lord as a potter forming us into the shape "as it seemed best to him". She then opened with prayers. She welcomed all those present and thanked them for coming to the meeting.

3. Minutes of the Previous AGM

The Minutes of the AGM held on 21st June 2012 were reviewed and then agreed as a true copy by the meeting and signed by the Chair.

4. Chair's Report

The Chair's Report was issued with the AGM pack. Pat highlighted a few points from her report as follows:

Partnership working with BCHA was improving all the time and resulted in much better outcomes for the clients.

She was also very pleased to introduce Scott Jones to the meeting as a part time Outreach Worker. Having worked with BCHA, he brings to the post a wealth of knowledge.

With Scott on board, Liz will have more time to develop a new role of researching new opportunities for practical and social activities for the clients, to promote their wellbeing and identifying individual support needs. She will aim to be more involved in the Drop Ins.

Gabi's management services with Germann Keeling Ltd have made a considerable difference to obtaining funding for R2R and working more closely with BCHA.

The charity is now 11 years old and still addressing the homelessness issues in the town. At a recent street count, 16 people were identified as rough sleeping, an increase of 25% on the previous year.

We are very grateful to the Fisherman's Cafe again for providing cooked breakfasts to rough sleepers. Over a period of 21 weeks, 604 breakfasts were supplied to 39 individuals.

A mobile library van has been funded by QHA in partnership with R2R and will soon be able to be available at more venues. More volunteers are needed to support this venture, and also a permanent place to store the van.

Ground clearing work has continued at Holton Lee, and R2R have now been given another plot of land to make use of, under the "Flourish" Project. More volunteers are always needed to accompany the clients on the one day a week they visit Holton Lee.

Special thanks were given to Susan Gittins for her work with increasing the publicity of R2R. Susan is willing to become a trustee and her nomination will be voted on later in this meeting. Thanks were also expressed to the committee who are so gifted and passionate about the work of R2R.

Pat mentioned that Ann Tyson had stood down as Honorary Secretary due to personal reasons and she was thanked for her contribution to R2R. Pat welcomed Lynn Foster as acting Honorary Secretary, and her nomination as Honorary Secretary will be voted on later in this meeting.

Pat thanked all the volunteers who give their time so willingly, and also both Hill Street and Skinner Street churches without whom our work could not continue. There would always be challenges in our work, and we appreciate the support of the police and PCSOs in helping us to address these.

There were no questions.

5. Treasurer's Report

Sarah reported that each member would have received a copy of the unexamined accounts in the AGM pack, together with the Treasurer's written report. Sarah added the following comments to her report:

There was an error in the accounts where the year had not updated but this has now been amended.

In 2012/13 we spent more than we received but because of reserves held, a step of faith was taken to employ Scott as a part time outreach worker and this would release Liz for project and support work.

A late payment was received from BCHA and HMRC gift aid, which meant our income increased this year, but once again our work mainly depends on church organisations and individuals who support our work by membership, fundraising, grants and direct donations, whether of money, time or goods. Thank you to everyone.

Our operating costs continue to increase due to increased general costs and also more people needing the help we provide. The future is again uncertain with the end of the POST contract in March 2014 but we are praying this contract will continue.

It is estimated that R2R current activities will cost about £75,000 in 2013/14 and Sarah encouraged all to pray for R2R that the work will continue to meet the needs of the homeless.

Sarah thanked Caroline Foy for her hard work maintaining the books and records.

There were no questions and Sarah proposed that the meeting adopt the accounts as issued with the AGM pack with amended dates. Kate Mellor seconded the proposal and the meeting were all in favour.

6. Secretary's Report

Lynn referred the meeting to the report circulated with the AGM mailing, and reported on the following:

Membership has increased significantly this year, for which we are very grateful. We continue to work on building up the membership base and encourage all members to make R2R known and supported within their churches.

Volunteer numbers have also increased from 80 to 100 and we record our thanks for all those who support R2R with their time and energy.

The Charities Commission is accepting applications to become Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIO) and the opportunity for R2R to apply is due in July 2013. The Board will keep you informed of progress.

Lynn thanked both Caroline and Gabi for their help in preparations for the AGM and also Liz, Scott and Gabi for their commitment and sheer hard work. They are a real blessing to us.

7. Committee Elections

7.1 Chair and Trustee - proposed by Kate Mellor, seconded by Sarah Percy

7.2 Honorary Secretary – proposed by Pat Southgate, seconded by Kate Mellor

7.3 Treasurer and Trustee – proposed by Pat Southgate, seconded by Jenny Elson

7.4 Trustee - Kate Mellor – proposed by Sarah Percy, seconded by Pat Southgate

7.5 Trustee – Susan Gittins – proposed by Kate Mellor, seconded by Gabi Sanger-Stevens

7.6 Committee member – Jenny Elson - proposed by Pat Southgate, seconded by Sarah Percy

There being no other nominations, all were elected unanimously.

8. Management Report

Gabi submitted her report to the meeting. Various statistics have been accumulated over the year as follows:

Breakfast Provision to those actively rough sleeping

Number of individuals assisted over 21 weeks = 39

Average number of clients per week = 9

Number of breakfasts provided = 604

Drop-Ins June 2012 to May 2013

Number of individual clients throughout that period = 279

Maximum number of individuals in any one month = 121 (June 2012)

Some have been with us for some time, others come only occasionally and still others are with us for only one or two sessions.

Afternoon drop-ins

Average number of clients = 18

Lowest number of clients = 7

Highest number of clients = 30 – but only on one occasion

Total number of meals provided = 1,635

Evening drop-ins

Average number of clients = 23

Lowest number of clients = 9

Highest number of clients = 34 – but only over 30 clients on 9 occasions

Total number of meals provided = 2,331

And those figures don't take into account any take-aways that we have provided.

Whilst all these numbers give us some measure of how we are doing and it all appears to be very good, it doesn't paint the whole picture.

The make-up of these clients has changed over the course of the year, particularly those using our drop-in facilities. Many of our older, longer-term clients have been housed or have otherwise moved on. There is a larger younger element within the groups and they can be more of a handful and are less easily quietened if they do become rowdy. We have on occasion this year had to resort to excluding individuals for varying periods of time. For some this has been a sufficiently salutary lesson but others are more difficult to convert. We have also had to call on the police on a few occasions to sort out particularly difficult behaviour. Much of this is fuelled by alcohol and possibly drugs, compounded by mental health issues and general dissatisfaction with the situation in which these people find themselves. Whilst this does not excuse the behaviour, we do need to bear in mind that these are some of the most difficult issues to deal with and that these individuals need our love and support to find a way through their addictions and problems.

We recognise that our team leaders and volunteers do find these situations difficult to deal with at times and we are working to improve matters through various measures. We are enormously indebted to all our volunteers for their patience and perseverance in these situations. We are also extremely grateful to Skinner Street URC for their co-operation with us and for their continuing support of our work, particularly as they often bear the brunt of the anti-social behaviour at the times that this occurs outside of the drop-ins and office hours.

We have good relations with the local police and particularly with the PCSOs who regular attend the drop-ins. We will continue to foster this relationship. I know that they have agreed with the Church regarding access to the property to move on any people who are congregating outside of drop-ins and office hours and we fully support the Police in these actions. We have also engaged with EDAS and the SMART team who work with addiction problems and they now attend our afternoon drop-ins on a regular basis to engage with clients in a friendly, non-office setting. We are just starting to operate the same engagement with the Community Mental Health Nurse attending the afternoon sessions. We are also re-launching our Dialogue project with the local police and our clients engaging in open, frank and confidential discussions about areas of concern.

We are in the process of bidding for funding to provide training for team leaders and for volunteers to help them deal with difficult behaviour and situations. We are also bidding to fund additional hours for our Support Co-ordinator Liz Bailey to enable her to attend more of the evening drop-ins – Liz is already working closely with clients in her new role during the afternoons. We will continue to monitor clients and do all we can to control rowdiness and unacceptable behaviour.

All that said, I would like to stress that most of the drop-in sessions pass without incidents and are a comfortable place for our clients to find a meal and friendship. We shall continue to provide this much-needed outreach to those who are so very marginalised in our society for as long as we are able.

9. Outreach Worker's Report

Liz Bailey commenced her report by thanking all volunteers for donating their time and for donations of clothing and food, all of which are much appreciated by the clients. She also thanked Skinner Street for their support in helping us to make a spiritual base here for the clients, which is exactly what Jesus would want us to do.

Liz then introduced Michael, one of our clients, to explain his story and R2R's part in it. He recounted how he was sleeping rough in a car park in Poole when he was contacted by R2R who invited him to breakfast and to the drop in to meet with him. He was signposted by Liz to Poole Council, and after an assessment plan looking into his physical, emotional and financial situation, Poole Borough moved him into Bridge Corner House within 2 weeks. He mentioned that the evenings for homeless people are the longest and loneliest times. After Bridge Corner, he was moved to Blandford Road, and then after one other move, on to his own independent living accommodation in Rossmore. He obtained a rent deposit, attended courses in food and hygiene, maths and IT, and is now at work in a local restaurant, financially coping, and looking forward to a holiday with his girlfriend.

As Liz pointed out, Jesus met all Michael's needs and turned his life around.

In Liz's new role, she will be concentrating on the "wellbeing of clients" – the aim is to add skills and self esteem to each one and bring about positive wellbeing. It is hoped to extend the work done in the afternoon drop ins. The work at Holton Heath will be fostered, and the aim is to have more professionals sharing their skills with the clients. Any volunteers who have skills would be more than welcome to come and speak with Liz to see how they can be used to encourage the clients.

10. Part Time Outreach Worker's Report

Liz then introduced Scott Jones to the meeting. Scott has worked for R2R for 3 months. He previously worked with BCHA for a few years and works for them in a part time capacity. He is a Christian and worships at Sunnyhill Church. He believes Jesus can meet the needs of the clients, and give them hope. At present, Scott does the early morning outreach, and also does assessments of clients and visits to hospital etc with them. He is aiming to attend the evening drop ins.

11. Date of Next Annual General Meeting

It is proposed that the next AGM will be held on Thursday 19th June 2014, unless otherwise notified.

12. Any Other Business

Stephanie Buckley raised the question of the soup runs, in that they have the same clients and the same aims, but wonder about communication between the soup runs and R2R.

Liz explained that previously the funding was from the Government and they were not in favour of soup runs, but now that Liz has been released from that contract, she can visit more with the soup runs and liaise more closely. It is hoped there will be more communication between us all in the future. It was pointed out that the Council appreciate the work the soup runs do, especially in this last winter when it was so cold.

It was suggested that a Soup Run volunteer become a committee member and the meeting was asked to consider this.

Alan Knapp asked if there was a single organiser of the Soup Runs but it was explained that each church was autonomous, although R2R do have a contact name and number for each group.

John Parsons asked if it were possible for a client to become a committee member, in order to give a view from "the other side" and it was explained that there was no problem with this. He stated he would like to be on the committee and Pat Southgate proposed he become a committee member, and Ruth Meaden seconded the proposal. The meeting voted in favour.

It was also suggested that now might be a good time to set up a prayer group for all the workers with the homeless.

George Taylor reported that the ramp at Hill Street Baptist was extremely slippery in wet weather and needs to be sorted out. It was agreed to pass this comment on to the church.

Alison Dalton enquired if there had been any contact with the Safer Neighbourhood Police Team and was advised that they had indeed attended prior to the AGM and had been advised that their queries were better addressed outside this meeting. Gabi Sanger-Stevens will arrange a meeting with them as soon as possible.

Eric Damerell thanked the committee for the Volunteer Certificates which were recently sent to all volunteers.

13. Close

The meeting joined together in the saying of the grace.

Lynn Foster
(Hon Secretary)