



**OPAL Services (Older People Active Lives)**  
A subsidiary of  
**Rural Community Services (West Cheshire)**

**Minutes of the 8th Annual General Meeting**  
**November 13th 2019 at Cheshire View, Waverton, Cheshire**

**1 Welcome**

Jane Colville, Chair of the Board of Trustees, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Members of the Company present

Gill Clough	Trustee	Mary Diggle
Jane Colville	Trustee	Elaine Dunham
Ilene Hoyle	Trustee	Pat Carter
Victoria Ridgeway	Trustee	
Gill Swash	Trustee	
Mary Thompson	Trustee	
John Webb	Trustee	
Rhiannon Wilson	Trustee	

**Staff**

Zoe Blocksidge  
Jackie Clegg  
Janice Eastwood  
Julie Ennis  
Morag Hutson  
Sam Moggan  
Brenda Platt  
Jean Toyn

**Other attendees 30**

**Apologies 40**

Including Philip Hearfield – Trustee and Honorary Secretary

**2 Minutes of the 7th AGM held on November 14th 2018 at Forest Hills Hotel in Frodsham**

Acceptance of the minutes was proposed as a true and accurate record by John Webb, seconded by Ilene Hoyle, and approved unanimously by the Members present.

**3 Presentation of the Trustees Annual Report**

Jane Colville presented the Trustees Annual Report, highlighting what she felt were some of the most significant issues for our organisation.

The first was the sheer pace and nature of change which was inevitable but nevertheless needed to be addressed. She referred to the changes that had taken place over the last year in both the Board of Trustees and the staff team. The Board now had a wider ranging skill set, and who all put in a significant amount of their own time to help run the organisation. Within the staff team there had been some movement, and a new post added in that of Volunteer Coordinator.

As far as our services were concerned, the Carers Connect service which is a small service aimed at carers who are fairly new to the role was introduced as part of our Carer Support services, and funded through some additional funding the Carers Trust secured from the Council.

2018/19 was the second year of the two Brightlife funded services (New Horizons and What's Cooking). The outcomes have been very favourable and those services have been providing opportunities to develop effective preventative services and to reach a wider age range. We have benefitted as an organisation by diversifying in this way and it has helped us better understand the need that is out there in the community, and how with a limited budget it is possible to make a significant difference to a range of people who may be at risk of being isolated and lonely within their own community.

Jane referred to changes in the way our Council funded services are commissioned and contracted so we now relate and report to Cheshire Community Action and to the Carers Trust in respect of our Club services and our main Carer Support service. In making this change we have needed to adapt to different reporting requirements and systems. GDPR and its requirements has been demanding of time and effort to ensure that we as an organisation are fit for purpose as far as this legislation is concerned.

Finally, Jane referred to the new governance arrangements which had been put in place with a new committee structure and reporting arrangements. This has meant that Trustees and staff have more awareness and involvement in the business we are engaged in and we conduct ourselves in a more effective and efficient way.

Her second key issue related to funding for services and the fact that it was becoming harder to achieve. This is particularly so in the case of those services that we have had no statutory funding for. This includes our very popular GoOnline service and our two Brightlife services. We were delighted in Spring 2019 to learn that the two Brightlife funded schemes in Helsby and Frodsham were to be further funded by the Marshes Community Foundation for one year, and that we have enjoyed the support of the Westminster Foundation to enable our GoOnline service to continue. Both sets of funding finish at the end of this financial year or early into the next one so we are having to do what we always do and continually search for other potential funders willing to enable the innovative and progressive work we are engaged in to continue. This gets harder and more time consuming every year and along the way services that are proven to be effective and needed may well disappear.

Our own fundraising efforts continue each year, and in 18/19 we were fortunate to have a financial boost as a result of Rowlinsons solicitors in Frodsham adopting us as their charity of the year and raising money for us. The whole experience was a very positive one for us and we hope for them too.

Jane finished by offering her sincere appreciation to a number of people including all our volunteers of which there are well over 200 now and who are loyal and supportive and without who we couldn't operate. Our staff team consists of eight members, all of whom are part-time and bring all sorts of skills, experience and ideas to the table. She also mentioned the Trustees who work tirelessly for the organisation and the Commissioners and funders who support us.

Finally, a thank you went to our members and their families who through the year received services from us and who on a daily basis show their appreciation and enjoyment for what is offered.

#### **4 Presentation of the Financial Statement for the financial year to March 31st 2019**

Mary Thompson, Honorary Treasurer, presented the Financial Statements making the point that 2018/19 was an excellent year financially, allowing the charity to continue with all the various services it provides. It also enabled us to recruit two new members of staff – Morag in Finance in July 2018, and Jackie as Volunteer Coordinator in February 2019.

She focussed on the income obtained across the different services starting with the OPAL Clubs. Since October 2017 the contract for the OPAL Club service has been with Cheshire Community Action rather than directly with Cheshire West and Chester. These changes brought a reduction in funding of 9%. To support the service, the OPAL Clubs themselves contributed £8,419 last year in the form of a management charge. The contribution from the OPAL Clubs has become a necessary part of the funding for this service. In April 2018, the Club daily fee was increased from £10 to £12. This is the first increase since 2012 and still represents good value for the service received. The extra £2 helps to pay for any increased daily running costs and a contribution to the charity.

Cheshire West and Chester and the Vale Royal Clinical Commissioning Groups awarded £25,000 through the Better Care Fund to continue the Break Time service.

The new Carers Connect project was awarded further funding of £8,000 through Cheshire West Carers Trust for a second year and has become a valued service.

The GoOnLine project received funding of £10,000 from the Duke of Westminster Foundation and a further £10,000 from the National Lottery.

Bright Life extended its funding for a further 12 months to enable us to continue and expand further the New Horizons and What's Cooking projects.

### **Fundraising**

A major focus of the charity is always to consider where our core funds may come from in the future. This continues to be challenging with changes in commissioning arrangements, and this last year we have seen reductions in income for the OPAL Club, the Break Time and the GoOnLine services. Many contracts often run for no longer than 12 months and so the Funding Group is constantly striving to find sources of income to guarantee the future of our valued services.

In addition, the Funding Group arranges our own fundraising events to support the organisation. Last year, in-house fund raising brought in over £4,000 from raffles, lottery and specific fundraising events. These events were most enjoyable but could not have happened without the support and dedication of staff, trustees and many other volunteers to run them.

We also received donations from outside organisations – namely £1,000 from the Westminster Foundation, £2,500 from the Provincial Grand Lodge of Cheshire, as well as a further £1,000 from other local organisations and individual donors. Gift Aid brought in a further £766.

The main donation of the year came from Rowlinsons solicitors who chose RCS as their charity of the year and raised over £6,000 for us. The charity has used this wonderful donation to help fund the Volunteer Coordinator post this year.

Mary then focussed on **Expenditure** making the point that overall, expenditure has kept within budget, whether that be the core costs of running the charity or the cost of running the services. This is becoming more and more difficult to maintain. Staff time is the greatest proportion of any budget and we are aware how hard the staff work to keep their increasing workload within their budgeted hours, and we are very conscious and grateful for how much of their own time they give to the benefit of the organisation.

Five of the six clubs ended the year with operating surpluses. Operating costs for each club vary, the main variations being rent, transport and lunch costs, so it is easier for some clubs to operate within budget than it is for others.

Mary then referred to **Reserves** and the future. The charity has continued to build up its reserves for the future. We set aside funds to cover at least 6 months running costs in order to continue our services should there be any loss in funding. At 31 March, the company had a cash balance of £119,000, approximately £18,000 of which was money already received for services during this

financial year. The company holds its surplus funds in a Virgin Money Account where it holds £85,000 on deposit. We have also opened a Co-op savings account to run alongside the main current account for any monies for which we need easy access. The clubs too have savings accounts to house any surplus monies.

Finally, Mary thanked all the club treasurers, organisers and key volunteers, who assisted in keeping the accounts and their records. Morag, our Financial Administrator, has been in post for 17 months and has taken on the responsibility for virtually all the financial processing and recording, and is a great asset to RCS, for which Mary was particularly grateful.

Mary reminded those present that our previous external independent examiner decided to stand down after the last AGM and therefore we needed to seek a replacement. She introduced Rebecca Ellams of Hall Livesey Brown Accountants to give her Financial Report.

#### **5. Receive the report of the Independent Examiner**

Rebecca stated that all she had seen concerning the accounts and financial practices were as they should be and she had no concerns or issues to raise.

#### **6. Re-appointment of the Independent Examiner**

It was proposed and seconded, and was subject to a unanimous vote that Rebecca be reappointed as Independent Examiner for 2019/20.

#### **7 Retirements and re elections of Trustees**

**7.1** In accordance with clause 29 of the Articles of Association, three Trustees were required to retire by rotation at this AGM. Accordingly Gill Swash, Mary Thompson and John Webb agreed to retire and seek re-election. The Members present voted unanimously in favour of their immediate re-elections.

**7.2** In accordance with clause 34 (2) of the Articles of Association, Philip Hearfield and Rhiannon Wilson were required to resign and seek re-election, having been co-opted as trustees by the Board of Trustees during the year. The Members present voted unanimously in favour of their immediate re-appointment.

**7.3** The retirement of Nicola Boardman and Eula Hersey was noted.

**7.4** The chair thanked Victoria Ridgway for stepping in as temporary Honorary Secretary until a permanent secretary could be appointed.

#### **8 Any other Ordinary business**

The Chair was thanked for her service and dedication to the organisation.

**Jane Colville**  
Chair of Board of Trustees

**Philip Hearfield**  
Hon. Secretary

**Date:** December 2019