



**INDEPENDENT OPTIONS  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
27TH JANUARY 2021**

**ACCOMPANYING INFORMATION**

# INTRODUCTION

The time since our last AGM has primarily seen us responding to the Coronavirus pandemic as it has unfolded. Staff across the organisation have been brilliant in their attitude and dedication to the people we support and has meant we have managed to navigate this crisis with a minimum of trouble.

The restrictions on gatherings have meant we cannot hold our AGM in the usual way, and necessitate us holding it remotely. We have had to think about the best way to do this, giving consideration to how those who are unable to access electronic meetings can still have an input.

This document is an accompaniment to the draft accounts and voting and question forms that have been provided, either electronically via the AGM mini-site, or physical copies where requested.

The main formal purpose of the AGM is to get member approval for the Financial Statements, approval and re-election of Trustees and to appoint Auditors for the following year. It is difficult to facilitate on the day voting which is why we have asked members to complete the voting form in advance of the meeting. We will then collate the answers and advise the results during the AGM itself.

The AGM also gives an avenue for questions to be asked about the organisation, and the enclosed question form can be used for this purpose. Questions and responses will be posted to the AGM mini-site. Paper copies of the questions and responses will be also be sent but the timescales involved mean they're likely to arrive after voting forms will need to be returned. We appreciate this is not ideal however we are having to adapt as best we can to the circumstances.

The following pages contain more detail around the various items that members will vote on, and hope that they contain sufficient information to allow you to do so.

I just briefly wanted to touch on the Financial Statements to the 31st March 2020. They will be discussed in more detail later in this document, but they show another challenging year for us, driven primarily by recruitment challenges and the consequent increased usage of agency staff and the resultant additional costs incurred. The effect of the Coronavirus pandemic was negligible for this period, although we were working towards anticipated issues from January onwards, and in lockdown by March 31st.

The pandemic has sadly resulted in many people being put out of work across the country, however this has been to our benefit. We are pleased to advise that we managed to all but eliminate our agency usage by the end of June, and as a result we expect to achieve a reasonable surplus for the Year Ended 31st March 2021.

The non-formal part of our AGM is the get together and food we have after. Sadly we cannot have that this year, but hopefully we will be able to see everyone in person at next year's AGM!



**Philip Kirby**  
**Finance Director**

# AGENDA

Our agenda covers the only the formal business of the AGM. There is further detail for each item on the page number listed. The voting form allows you to vote whether to approve or object to each motion.

Item	Page
Approval of the Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2020	4
Re-election of Trustees who are retiring	6
Appoint Auditors for the ensuing year	6
Amendment to Articles to allow meetings to be held virtually in future if required	7

# APPROVAL OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2020

We have enclosed a copy of our draft accounts for the Financial Year Ended 31st March 2020.

The accounts show a loss for the year of £120,500. This compares to a surplus of £180,142 the previous year, although this was helped by the sale of Beech Avenue. Removing the profit from this sale would give a like-for-like loss last year of £63,591.

The loss was driven by the same issues as in the previous year, namely reliance on agency staffing to due a difficult recruitment climate. It was amplified by the opening of 6 Supported Living tenancies during the year, and the transfer via TUPE of a seventh. The opening of the tenancies and need for significant additional staffing meant our spend on agency staff was over £600,000 during this year. When we consider that agency staff cost up to 70% more than our own employed staff, it is clear this had a significant impact on the results.

We additionally had a full year with the loss of the Trafford Shared Lives contract, that transferred over in October 2018.

Looking forwards, the opening of so many new tenancies does put us in a much better position for future years. As mentioned in my introduction, the Coronavirus pandemic has resulted in a hugely improved recruitment picture and we have managed to all but eliminate agency usage from July 2020 onwards and this is reflected in much improved figures for the current year.

## Key Figures

### Income

Service	2020	2019	Change
Central	£56,831	£17,787	+£39,044 (+219%)
Shared Lives	£823,833	£1,201,692	-£377,859 (-31%)
Short Breaks	£401,232	£316,050	+£85,182 (+27%)
Supported Living	£2,456,721	£1,433,724	+£1,022,997 (+71%)
The Centre (includes donations)	£45,949	£76,582	-£30,633 (-40%)

We can see the large increase in Supported Living income during the year following the opening of 7 new tenancies. This will increase further in the current financial year as all 7 will be open for the full year. We can also see the reduction in Shared Lives income although it should be noted that much of this relates to carer fees paid directly over. Short Breaks income increased as a result of a successful fee renegotiation.

The Children in Need funding for the Centre ended in March 2019. We have been funding this from our reserves, but have been successful fundraising during the year and not needed to utilise these. We continue to try to identify longer term sources of funding.

## Expenditure

Service	2020	2019	Change
Central (including governance costs)	£586,355	£528,404	+£57,951 (+11%)
Shared Lives	£667,138	£1,028,323	-£361,185 (-35%)
Short Breaks	£271,753	£246,840	+£24,913 (+10%)
Supported Living	£2,338,500	£1,261,301	+£1,077,199 (+85%)
The Centre (includes donations)	£42,001	£42,701	-£700 (-2%)

We can see here again the significant increase in Supported Living activity, but also the fact that expenditure increased by more than income for the period, and this is as previously stated due to the additional agency costs incurred this year. Central expenditure has primarily increased as a result of increased auto-enrolment pension rates as set in law.

## Balance Sheet

Our balance sheet shows total reserves of £809,266, down from £929,766 last year. Of that, £43,578 is restricted, primarily for The Centre.

Our reserves are mainly held in the buildings at Hallfield & The Pines. We have seen an increase in debtors primarily due to timing of invoice payments, but also in part due to delays in the setup of ISF for some individuals in new tenancies.

Our cash balances are distorted by the ISF funds held, just over £700k of the cash balance is funds held in this way. This does show a drawing down on our cash balances but as stated, this is primarily due to timing of payments and also some delays in payment for new tenancies, and is therefore resolved after the date of the financial statements. As a result this does not present a cause for concern.

## Conclusion

Although the accounts do not present a particularly positive picture of the year in question, the situation has improved markedly in the current financial year and the growth in services leaves us in a stronger position for future years.

The accounts have been audited by Hurst Accountants, who are satisfied that the financial statements are free of material misstatement. The Trustees have reviewed the accounts and also confirm the accuracy of the information contained.

The motion to adopt the Accounts for the Year Ended 31st March 2020 is based around members being satisfied solely as to the accuracy of the accounts.

**The Trustees therefore recommend that members vote to approve this motion.**

# RE-ELECTION OF TRUSTEES WHO ARE RETIRING

Our Memorandum & Articles of Association state that each year one third of our trustees should retire from the board. These are those serving longest since their last election. These members can stand for re-election. This year, these trustees are:

## **Pauline White**

Pauline has served on the board as a parent trustee since 1999. She has stated her wish to stand for re-election.

**The board of trustees recommend approval of the re-election of Pauline as a trustee.**

## **Eric Stelfox**

Eric has served as Treasurer since his appointment in 2014. He has stated his wish to stand for re-election

**The board of trustees recommend approval of the re-election of Eric as a trustee.**

## **Niall Wilson**

Niall has served on the board as a family member trustee since 2019. He has stated his wish to stand for re-election.

**The board of trustees recommend approval of the re-election of Niall as a trustee.**

There were no new trustees appointed during the year so there is no motion required in respect of these.

# APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS FOR THE ENSUING FINANCIAL YEAR

Hurst Accountants have been our auditors for a number of years. Whilst this can present potential issues around familiarity with our organisation, they have a number of measures in place to avoid this being an issue such as review by an additional partner not connected to the audit.

We have no concerns around the quality of the work from Hurst Accountants, and are satisfied that the safeguards around familiarity are sufficient.

**The board of trustees recommend approval of the motion to appoint them as auditors for the next financial year.**

# AMENDMENT TO ARTICLES TO ALLOW MEETINGS TO BE HELD VIRTUALLY IN FUTURE IF REQUIRED

The Coronavirus pandemic has raised an issue with how the constitutional obligations of the organisation can be met whilst being unable to meet in person. There have been specific exemptions put in place in law to allow us to hold this AGM remotely, however the situation has caused many organisations to review their articles to allow them to hold remote meetings in the future when the exemptions have ended.

Whilst we would anticipate a return to regular in person meetings by the time of our next AGM we believe it would be sensible to allow the flexibility to be able to hold both Board meetings and our AGM and any Extraordinary General Meetings virtually if required. We would therefore propose the following be included within the General Meetings section of our Memorandum and Articles of Association:

“The Board may, whenever they think fit, opt to hold General Meetings by electronic means. Meetings held by electronic means do not require physical attendance of members in the same place to be considered quorate. Meetings will be deemed quorate by the attendance of members to the electronic meeting, or via the submission of a completed voting form, in sufficient numbers to meet the requirements for a meeting to be quorate”

The board do not intend for electronic meetings to be the default in future years but think the flexibility to hold one this way if situations dictate would be helpful.

**The board of trustees recommend approval of the amendment to the articles.**