



MINUTES

of the

West Berkshire Homeless (Newbury area)

Annual General Meeting

Held via Google Meet on Wednesday 3rd March 2021

Present: Catherine Knight (Chair)
Erica Gassor (Trustee & General Secretary)
Nick Schlanker (Trustee)
Kevin Gallagher (Trustee)
plus 34 supporters

Apologies: Apologies were received from Lynne Wilson, Libby Goldsack, Shirley Parfitt and Christine Chun. Two supporters, Kate Oppel and Martha Vickers, intended to join but were unable to access via the link.

- **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

Catherine Knight welcomed all and thanked them for their continuing support for WBH and its work.

- **Thank You from Marcin Wasiluk on behalf of the family of Michal Hrynaskiewicz**

Marcin was Michal's best friend who joined the meeting to speak on their behalf of Michal's mother in Poland. Marcin thanked WBH for the help that Michal had received, especially in getting Michal's ashes and belongings back to Poland.

- **2020 WBH AGM Minutes**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous year nor corrections (these had been circulated to attendees via email prior to the meeting). These were approved by the meeting.

- **CHAIR'S REPORT (Catherine Knight)**

- **Summary of the year**

A challenging year for us to carry out our work of personal engagement and transition work with our clients due to COVID, most of the work having to be carried out by telephone or social distancing. Our focus has been on immediate emergency provision of not only accommodation but essential supplies for those that need them.

- **Working partnerships with others in voluntary sector and West Berkshire Council**

There has been excellent co-operation between the voluntary sector and West Berkshire Council coming along side-by-side to ensure those in the greatest need are provided for.

- **Thank you to all our supporters**

We are indebted to our wonderful supporters, without whom none of our work would be possible. Grants and funds from local churches have continued. The loan of the Quakers premises for the Drop-In Centre was remarkable and, as soon as we are able, we will reopen the Drop-In Centre.

West Berkshire Funeral Directors were outstanding to those in need throughout COVID, and West Berkshire Council supported WBH and gifted the charity with the means to get Michal home to Poland. The companies who support WBH are ITS, Swift, Ressance, eValue and CSS and we thank them for their continuous generosity along with many other people who give kind donations. Through such donations WBH were able to provide a wonderful 3 course take-away meal to be served at Christmas. The Good Exchange projects with matched funding as well as company and individual supporter donations has enabled us to continue our work with our move-on 3 houses. During the year, we have learned that it could take up to 4 years for an individual to transition with focus and effort. Some clients have far more complexity than was first thought.

- **Personnel**

Mid-summer saw Fran Chamings move from WBH to take on a full-time job as Manager of West Berkshire's Food Bank. Fran was amazing for WBH, we all wish her the best. Neil Salmon stepped down also and is a loss to the charity but has said he will support us when he can - bucket shaking! Thanks to both for their hard work and dedication.

- **Welcome to additional Trustee**

Kevin Gallagher was introduced as a new WBH Trustee. Kevin attended WBH meetings right from the start observing how WBH worked and, with others alongside him, opened a Day Centre in Portsmouth mirroring the WBH model.

Catherine thanked all the Trustees of WBH, past and present, and all those who have helped to form West Berkshire Homeless and to build on it.

- **OPERATIONS REPORT (Erica Gassor)**

- **2020 - an odd year!**

The Drop-In Centre had to close; we had no opportunities to fundraise at events, but due to the generosity of our supporters we were still able to carry on with our work.

- **Changes in personnel**

We are delighted to welcome Katie Walter as the new 'front line' worker alongside Erica. From the start, Katie has been heavily involved in WBH activities and played a big part in receiving and delivering the hampers at Christmas and organising the Christmas meal.

- **Increase in homeless numbers during lockdown**

During lockdown we went (in November 2019) from 9 people living in cars or tents to 62. West Berkshire Council met the need and took rooms in hotels and local B&Bs etc to provide temporary accommodation.

These people are now being moved on into various types of accommodation and at the last count (approx. 10 days ago) there was only 1 individual who was living in either a tent or a car. What an amazing achievement in the past 9 months! The next move is to find them something more permanent which they can make a home.

- **Co-operation between voluntary and official sectors**

Working together, the voluntary sector and West Berkshire Council's Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) team are continuing to find people somewhere warm and dry to stay safe from the COVID infection.

- **Since WBH started in February 2017**

WBH have helped over 200 people since the charity started and still keep in touch with lots of them. A lot have moved on successfully to work and accommodation.

- **Mentoring and support**

We continue to mentor and support because moving from the streets into accommodation is a big move with sudden responsibilities of utility bills etc. We do help and signpost people to the right organisations to ensure they get the maximum benefit. It is an important part of our work to ensure these people are not alone.

- **Move on houses**

We have the 3 move-on houses, currently housing 9 people, who we are working with to achieve total independence. This can often take longer than we thought.

- **Storage containers**

A lot of the work at the moment is supporting people moving into accommodation which is unfurnished and needs kitting out. Again, support has been amazing and donations of beds, tables, chairs, kitchen appliances, bedding, towels, curtains and more have been willingly given. Ressance in Newbury, one of our company supporters, has loaned us, free of charge, 4 containers where we can store donated items until they are needed. With the lockdown rules, it has been more difficult to collect items but we are coping and making sure folk do have what they need.

WBH also work closely with the Community Furniture Project who are very supportive.

One of WBH's great assets is our ability to act quickly in certain situations to aid other voluntary organisations and the Council, making their life easier. Our agility is our strength in some respects.

- **Christmas 2020**

The Christmas Hampers delivered to the containers just before Christmas were amazing. 39 were delivered! Then we added the meat products which were funded by one of our supporter companies, eValue. Then on Christmas Day itself we had more than sufficient volunteers and a volunteer Chef to come up from Southampton who cooked a fantastic 3-course takeaway meal. 40 hot meals were provided by selfless volunteers giving up their Christmases so that other people in serious need had a good Christmas as well.

- **Ongoing**

We are still receiving 3-4 calls every week, and we instantly refer them to register with West Berkshire Council to ensure they get onto the Homeless Register, that they're taken account of and that they're put in the figures. The figures are updated about once every 6-8 weeks. Once they are registered, we then work with the Council to try and bring the most efficient solution to their homeless problem. A lot have complex issues and in an emergency we have put people into B&B/hotel accommodation funded by WBH. In some instances, we can't claim the money from anywhere else so your donations go towards helping those people have emergency accommodation.

The Good Exchange grants have been extremely useful and your donations via this platform have been match funded and those funds have been very responsibly used to make sure that we get the maximum value out of every penny that is given. Thank you.

- **TREASURER'S REPORT (Nick Schlanker)**

Prior to the meeting an Agenda was emailed to attendees which included a balance sheet.

We have had a very successful 12 months with some very generous donations as well as smaller ones and that has funded the work carried out. This means at the end of the year we are in a very healthy position financially. As at 31 October 2020 the balance on the account was £36,936. As we start thinking what needs to be done in the next 12 to 18 months, having this sort of balance in the bank gives us the flexibility to choose which direction we go in.

We are obviously cognisant as well, that we are facing a potential return to homelessness in the coming 12 months as the lockdown rules are relaxed, where rough sleepers have been generally supported by the Government and by Local Authorities throughout the country; that clearly will not be continued in the longer term, so we would expect to see people returning to the streets in the coming 12 months and therefore should be prepared for that.

- **EMERGENCY PAYMENT POLICY (Kevin Gallagher)**

Kevin has been a WBH Trustee for 2-3 months now, having been involved with other charities previously. Kevin talked about the need for small emergency cash payments and that WBH now have a policy on how these payments can be paid.

- **Problems**

One of the issues which occurs with homelessness is emergency payments; it's a continuing problem. There are a number of reasons why a homeless person would need an emergency payment, food for example, or for a utility bill, a stopgap until UC hits their bank account. The most important one is the mobile phone top-up. It's a misconception to think a mobile phone is an extra but for anyone who is homeless it is a necessary part of life. Mobile phones are needed to maintain contact with the Council or other agencies or they can be sanctioned, so it is extremely important for homeless people to have access to a mobile phone or sometimes a top-up payment is needed.

- **Solution**

We have produced a policy with regard to how that money can be paid. Payments up to £25 can be made without the approval of the Trustees but there are rules and regulations for emergency payments to be made. The recipient must be at risk of becoming homeless.

- **PERSONAL STORIES**

Finally a reminder

Why are we here?

Why did WBH start?

Why are we still here?

Why we intend continuing well into the future.

A group of people who came together, who refused to be observers in this problem on every single street in the larger towns of the UK but who wanted to be participants in this problem. Very simple. A movement from observers into participants, trying to resolve this homeless tragedy that is on our streets.

Kevin ended by thanking everybody for their continued co-operation and hoping you will continue to join us in making homelessness a zero-tolerance issue.

COMMENTS RECEIVED

- Despite all the problems of 2020, it was wonderful to hear how the Council has worked with you in such a positive way to solve the problem of taking many homeless people off the streets in the pandemic.
- Thanks for being available to do this when the Council Offices are shut, besides all the other jobs that all the Trustees do on our behalf throughout the year.

QUESTIONS ASKED BEFORE, DURING AND POST THE MEETING

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Are clients able to arrange COVID-19 vaccinations?	The Holt Nurses have organised for the homeless to have COVID vaccinations via Healthcare and were carried out approximately 3 weeks ago at the Soup Kitchen. Most of the homeless of a senior age were encouraged to go and were vaccinated. There will be other vaccinations taking place after the 3 weeks in line with the Government recommendations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the situation regarding the Day Centre	We would currently estimate opening at the end of 2021/early 2022.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Matched funding - in the Treasurer's Report it was stated that matched funding is available at times. Please can you tell me how we determine when that is?	We do still have an open project on the Good Exchange which is due to close at the end of March https://app.thegoodexchange.com/project/18162/west-berkshire-homeless-newbury-area/running-costs-for-move-on-multi-occupancy-house . The Trustees are in the process of discussing our plans for 2021/2022 and we will then put another project onto the matched funding platform - most likely in a month or two's time at which point an email will be circulated with details.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What numbers are in temporary accommodation?	<p>The number fluctuates, anything between 15 and 25 and this accommodation is provided by the Council in most instances. WBH step in where they can't provide it instantaneously, eg at a weekend when the Council don't have full working capacity.</p> <p>Two Saints are moving people on to 107 and then moving them on from 107 into permanent places, so there is a constant flow of people between Two Saints, 107 and the individual accommodation. Two Saints have the capacity for 65 people in all, which includes the houses there. Currently there are 2 or 3 vacancies.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How many rough sleepers are there currently?	The rough sleeping numbers are, at the last count, down to 1 person but we have an update at all the RSI meetings which take place approximately every 6 weeks.

The meeting was closed by the Chair with a prayer at approximately 7.45pm.

**West Berkshire Homeless
Financial Activities**
November 2020 - October 2021

	Total			
	Nov 2020 - Oct 2021	Nov 2019 - Oct 2020 (PY)	Change	% Change
Income				
Grants - Direct	15,333.75	34,842.70	-19,508.95	-55.99%
Non Profit Income	66,982.10	57,699.33	9,282.77	16.09%
refund		113.06	-113.06	-100.00%
Rent recieved	16,270.00	25,338.34	-9,068.34	-35.79%
Total Income	£ 98,585.85	£ 117,993.43	-£ 19,407.58	-16.45%
Total	£ 98,585.85	£ 117,993.43	-£ 19,407.58	-16.45%
Expenditures				
bank fees	40.00		40.00	
Business Expenditures-Fines, Penalties, Judgments		120.00	-120.00	-100.00%
Contract Services-Legal Fees		75.00	-75.00	-100.00%
council tax	3,037.26	2,579.00	458.26	17.77%
donations	-60.00	1,144.60	-1,204.60	-105.24%
emergency accomodation	6,587.71	21,442.38	-14,854.67	-69.28%
Facilities and Equipment-Property Insurance		85.00	-85.00	-100.00%
Facilities and Equipment-Rent, Parking, Utilities		234.00	-234.00	-100.00%
Operations-Books, Subscriptions, Reference	360.00	60.00	300.00	500.00%
Operations-Postage, Mailing Service	14.50		14.50	
Operations-Printing and Copying	20.00		20.00	
Operations-Telephone, Telecommunications	852.97	2,081.98	-1,229.01	-59.03%
Other Types of Expenditures-Advertising Expenditures		29.00	-29.00	-100.00%
Other Types of Expenditures-Insurance - Liability, D and O		854.11	-854.11	-100.00%
Poverty Fund	11,763.40	12,160.70	-397.30	-3.27%
purchases	4,927.13	5,057.58	-130.45	-2.58%
Rent paid	46,801.31	47,435.69	-634.38	-1.34%
Repair and maintenance	477.40	3,700.65	-3,223.25	-87.10%
training	480.00	58.70	421.30	717.72%
travel	716.55	1,947.36	-1,230.81	-63.20%
utilities	4,706.92	5,989.89	-1,282.97	-21.42%
website costs	143.86	172.64	-28.78	-16.67%
Total Expenditures	£ 80,869.01	£ 105,228.28	-£ 24,359.27	-23.15%
Net Operating Income	£ 17,716.84	£ 12,765.15	£ 4,951.69	38.79%
Other Expenditures				
Awards and Grants	637.20		637.20	
Good Exchange Fees	410.33		410.33	
Total Other Expenditures	£ 1,047.53	£ 0.00	£ 1,047.53	
Net Other Income	-£ 1,047.53	£ 0.00	-£ 1,047.53	
Net Income/(Expenditure)	£ 16,669.31	£ 12,765.15	£ 3,904.16	30.58%

**West Berkshire Homeless
Balance Sheet**
As of October 31, 2021

	Total
Fixed Asset	
Total Fixed Asset	
Cash at bank and in hand	
Cash on hand	52,463.32
petty cash	0.00
Total Cash at bank and in hand	£ 52,463.32
Net current assets	£ 52,463.32
Net current assets (liabilities)	£ 52,463.32
Total assets less current liabilities	£ 52,463.32
Total net assets (liabilities)	£ 52,463.32
Charity funds	
Opening Balance Equity	10,300.83
Retained Earnings	26,635.99
Surplus/(Deficit)	16,669.31
Total Charity funds	£ 53,606.13
 Bank statement @ 31 Oct 2021	 53606.13
 £	 -

Prepared by Will Potter

Reviewed by Dave Carter ACMA/CGMA

I, David Carter confirm I have carried out an Independent review of the the above Financial Statement to 31st October 2021 and confirm the statement is a true representation of the Financial affairs of West Berkshire Homeless Charity.

13th January 2022

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13th January 2022