

LifeLines AGM Minutes 2023- 7th of October 2023-1.45p,

Introduction

To give more time for the afternoon's activities the AGM's timing was moved back from 2pm to 1.45pm. This was agreed unanimously by all present.

AGM Quorum

The AGM was quorate with 75 paid-up members attending. With 1069 paid up members of LifeLines, the number required was 5% of the membership or 54 paid-up members.

Minutes of last AGM

The Minutes of the last AGM were published on the LifeLines website on 10th September 2023. No comments on these Minutes were received. Jan Hall proposed and Carole Butcher seconded that these be accepted.

The Minutes of the last AGM were accepted unanimously.

Annual Return

All registered charities must make an Annual Return to the Charity Commission. The annual income of Lifelines is over £25,000, so our Return must include the Trustee's Annual Report and our Accounts, with an Independent Examiner's Report. The Annual Report was published on our website on 18th September and includes a review of our activities during our year as well as the Accounts. The Independent Examiner's Report is in progress.

Thank You

All our members, the Coordinators and the Committee were thanked for their continued dedication to the work of LifeLines. Special mention went to our wonderful founder Jan Arriens who co-chaired the Conference for the last time.

Also, special thanks were given to Melanie Mitchell and Beryl Kingsbury who stood down from the Committee at the AGM for their fantastic work over the years. Melanie for looking after the Coordinators so brilliantly, and Beryl for her vital work in distributing the Wing of Friendship.

The State Coordinators who stood down during the year and all those currently serving were thanked. David Brown stood down from Pennsylvania, Illinois and Utah in November 2022 and was replaced by Fiona Wiggins who unfortunately has had to step down from Pennsylvania to be replaced by Deborah Murphy. Melanie Mitchell looked after Utah until May 2023 when Andrea Woodside became a Coordinator and took over the State. Laura Vizer took over Illinois in January 2023. Sally Warren stepped down from Missouri and South Carolina in March 2023. Hannah Persaud stepped down from Kentucky in May 2023 and Alison Robinson took over. Andrea Hughes took over both Missouri and South Carolina in June 2023.

The Regional Group Coordinators who stood down during the year and those currently serving were thanked. Since the last AGM Alison Robinson stepped down from the Yorkshire/Leeds/Harrogate Group. Ann Barnes stepped down from the East Anglia Group. Matthew Thornton-Field is now co-facilitator of the North West Group alongside Carole Butcher.

Membership Secretary Report

Our Membership Secretary Sue Drysdale was thanked for her incredible hard work for LifeLines. She read her Membership Secretary Report which was as follows:

'AGM report by Membership Secretary October 2023

We are always looking to attract new members to join LifeLines. Each year we have members who cease to correspond, or who lapse their membership, and co-ordinators constantly receive new requests for pen friends.

During the year 2022 / 2023 LifeLines attracted just 47 new members, one less than last year. There were 59 existing members volunteering to correspond with a second person which was wonderful, and we are very grateful to them.

This number is lower than last year when it was 73. We were able to give penfriends to 106 people on the row.

Unfortunately, over the year to June 2023, membership numbers dropped again from 1179 to 1074, which means we lost 105 members, almost the same as the year before.

The waiting list at the moment stands at 44 on the first list and 86 on the waiting list for a second penfriend. The number waiting for a first penfriend has gone down from 65 last year. The second penfriend list has been closed since I took over as membership secretary in June 2022 because it is unrealistic to keep adding to a list that is not reducing. It is encouraging that the waiting list has reduced somewhat.

There have been a few talks and articles in the press during the last year. As always, one of the major ways that prospective members hear of LifeLines is from their friends. There are some people who do an internet search, but we do actively seek ways we can recruit new members. The appointment of a new press and publicity secretary has been a positive step and we have now started to welcome members from recent adverts in publications. The move to accept digital applications also seems to have made it more attractive and easy for people to join.

Please do talk to people who might be interested as we know that word of mouth is a really effective advert for our organisation.

I would like to thank everyone for their support over the last year which has had its difficulties, but I am constantly inspired by the dedication and commitment of the committee, the members and the people we write to on the row.

Sue Drysdale

28th September 2023'

There were no questions on Sue's report.

Treasurer's Report

Our Treasurer James Mason was thanked for his hard work in keeping LifeLines' finances in order. He read his Treasurer's Report which was as follows:

'In short, as your Treasurer I am pleased to announce the financial health of LifeLines remains strong.

For FY2023, ended 30 June, LL made a surplus of approximately £1,400. Whilst this is lower than last year's surplus of approximately £5,000 part of this is because we did not make a gift aid claim.

One risk we have noted is - as has been raised by coordinators - a decline in membership.

However, thanks to our Publicity Secretary Lindesay Mace's tireless work we have already placed advertisements to the value of £1,500 in the current Financial Year. We will continue to make money available to secure new members and retain existing ones.

As your committee we always strive to not rest on our financial laurels and consistently adapt to changing situations. As a result of the outlook, I am happy to announce that for the 15th consecutive year our subscription fees will remain frozen and will not increase.

Two brief final points:

- After over two decades with Barclays we are moving our account to the Co-op. I ask that anyone paying by Standing Order change their payments to our new details.

- I would not be your Treasurer if I did not let you know that there are a selection of reasonably priced books outside.'

James was asked about the need to transfer the LifeLines bank account from Barclays to the Co-op. He explained this was due to ethical considerations and the fact that Barclays had insisted we open a new bank account but then closed them to new account holders for organisations like ours.

Carole Butcher proposed and Jan Hall seconded the Annual Report and Accounts for acceptance.

The Annual Report and Accounts were accepted unanimously.

Resolutions

Members were invited through State Coordinators and the website to submit resolutions to the AGM by 14th September. One resolution was received but it has been agreed that this be adjourned for consideration at the next AGM due to the need to take legal advice upon it.

Election of Committee Members

Davina Chima and Sue Drysdale retired from the Committee on rotation as required by the Constitution but were eligible for re-election. Nikita Mistry resigned from the Committee in August due to work commitments.

Deborah Murphy was co-opted to the Committee as Wing Editor in May 2023 and stood for election for the first time.

Members were invited through the website to nominate members for election to the Committee at the AGM by 14th September.

The following nominations were received for the Lifelines Committee.

Members of the Committee are also Trustees for the registered charity.

Davina Chima accepted renomination, proposed by Patrick Ballin, seconded by Sue Drysdale.

Sue Drysdale accepted renomination, proposed by Jan Hall, seconded by Edmund Conybeare.

Deborah Murphy accepted nomination, proposed by Sue Drysdale, seconded by Patrick Ballin.

All three candidates were unanimously elected.

AOB related to the AGM

There was no other business.

The AGM closed at 2.15pm