

The Othona Community

Annual General Meeting

held on Saturday 20 September 2008 in the Michael Room, St Michael & All Angels, Turnham Green.

MINUTES

Present: Sheila Maxey in the chair; Margaret Lydamore as secretary, and 32 other members.

1. Sheila opened the meeting with **prayer**
2. **Welcome and Outline of Meeting:** Sheila outlined the format of the meeting, and welcomed all present.
3. **Apologies for Absence** had been received from Dave Evans, Pat Price-Tomes, Stephen Priddle, Audrey Vinicombe, Steve Barnes, Ruth and Dave Bull, Robbie Spence, Tony Sinden, Clare Stone, Janet Proctor, Ali Tebbs Marge and Geoff Langwith, Harry Tittley, Laurence and Margaret Whitford, Nikki Randell, Gillian Macklow, Portia Roebbs, Jean Bateman, Gail and Matthew Dell, Dave and Karly Balachino, Anneke Meier, Kaz Fox, Paul and Ruth Gilman, Godwin Ashcroft, Chad Ashcroft, Bob Whorton.
4. **The minutes** of the AGM held on 17th February 2007, having been made available on the net and at the meeting, were unanimously agreed. There were no matters arising.
5. Presenting the **Annual Report and Audited Accounts** for the 17 months ending 31st March 2008 (copy in Minutes Book), Stephen Mortimer, treasurer, explained that the format they appear in is required by law, but is hardly user friendly. He offered to respond to any specific points members wished to make individually by email. The salient point to note was that whereas the loss shown to 31 October 2006 was £5000, the loss shown for the 17 months to 31 March 2008 was £57,000. This period did include two winters, notorious for lower income, but the loss for the equivalent period in this financial year would have been £20,000. Although the overall cash level is up, this is as a result of specific fundraising; he has had to use cash from these funds to keep the Community operational. In the current financial year we are still not meeting budget, so the decline is continuing. However, the Trustees are now being given up to date information in the form of monthly accounts, the Centres are being closely scrutinized and Trustees have taken steps towards the efficient management of the Community's property. Steve ended by saying how impressed he was by the commitment to the Community of its members, and thanked the Trustees for their support.

Dave Ball, Trustee with special responsibility for finance, having emphasized the good news of Othona's position – it transforms lives, it is asset rich, it has generous members and now has a strategy to make the best use of its assets – pointed out that Othona does not have a revenue model that works, in that our expenditure continues to exceed our income. The problem is more acute at Bradwell, but is not confined to there. The crux of the problem is lack of cash, and we must face the brutal reality of our situation with an unswerving hope for the future.

Questions included a renewed request for bednight information at both Centres, and a query on how the Community's assets, when liquidized, would be invested. Money from the sale of the cottage will be used to improve the present cash position and that from the sale of the farm will be invested to preserve the capital and produce income for expenditure. Trustees recognized the need to keep the real value of the capital as an asset, and will take advice on how this can be done.

Robin Stallard proposed, Valerie Ashcroft seconded, and it was agreed unanimously, that the Report and Accounts be accepted.
6. **Election of Treasurer:** Stephen Mortimer had been proposed by Louise Heatley, seconded by Rosie Sinden-Evans; agreed unanimously.
7. **Election of Community Secretary:** Pat Price-Tomes had been proposed by Janet Marshall, seconded by Elizabeth Sayers; agreed unanimously.
8. **Appointment of Auditors:** Stephen Mortimer proposed the reappointment of Tiffin Green; agreed unanimously.

9. News from the Trustees: Sheila briefly introduced all the Trustees, pointing out that their role is to ensure that Othona is operating according to the vision behind the Trust Deed. This is that Othona is a place of prayer and spirituality, where people can consider the deep questions of life; a place of Christ-like hospitality; that it builds inclusive community where everyone has a part; that it has a concern for the environment and social justice in its DNA. The Trustees have to make sure that we do this legally, and keep afloat financially while making the best use of our assets. In thanking Trustees, staff, committees and all members for their commitment, Sheila added that we have to keep an eye on renewal and be always open to newcomers, especially young people.

In response to questions from the floor, Sheila reported that the farm went on the market in July and we have not yet had an offer. Trustees have recently agreed not to drop the price from £1,100,000. Covenants protecting the Community will be incorporated into the sale. The cottage has been put on the market separately and Trustees hope to sell within a month.

10. News from the Centres:

Burton Bradstock:

Tony Jaques, Warden, reported that 4 long term core posts are now filled, and a new and more visual website is in operation. The summer was good, but raised issues concerning the reconciling of different people's needs and expectations that have to be discussed in committee. The groundwork for the Littleness project will begin in October, and the Building Fund is still open. Elizabeth Sayers, Committee Chair, explained that the role of the Committee is to support its core and volunteers with advice and guidance, and to enable them to get on with the task of running the Centre. Co-opted Committee members would still be welcome.

In response to a question, she said that although relationships with the local church are good, they are not close, but many local people are involved with the Centre.

Bradwell:

David Williams, Centre Manager, outlined a lively and varied summer. VAPS had stayed for a month and saved the Centre £4000 by painting Medlar Corner. 21 members of the Bruderhof did a great deal of work in 24 hours, and a Palestinian couple dropped in for a moving visit. David pointed out that he had little notice of such visits and that he had to be flexible and accept people quickly. On one occasion 18 Lambeth bishops called in during a visit to Bradwell. The Community is being used as a resource for the local area, and David has spoken at school assemblies and the WI. Chris Jones, Committee Chair, said that the Committee was largely new since February and had faced quite a challenge. It had created standing groups (programming, maintenance, managing volunteers, fundraising) to make things happen and these were working well. A special 'cut your carbon' group would be a short-term venture, and a new group to gather up the worship culture already existing would meet soon. He thanked David and the core for their work over the summer.

In response to questions, Chris said that although the EEDA funding application had been turned down, putting it together had stimulated ideas of what can be done with wind turbines and solar panels, and that another application to EEDA can be made soon.

11. Sheila believes that our email network must be wider than the database we have created, and urged those with email addresses to make sure that Christine Cox has them.

12. Date and venue of next AGM: 26 September 2009 (since Sheila is not available on 19 September), venue to be notified.

The **concluding act of worship**, led by Tony Jaques, was followed by tea and socializing.

(Signed)(Date)