

The Othona Community

General Meeting

held on Saturday 16th February 2008 in the Michael Room of the Parish Hall, St Michael & All Angels, Turnham Green.

MINUTES

Present: Sheila Maxey in the chair; Pat Price-Tomes acting as secretary, and 50-60 other members.

- 1. Opening and welcome:** Sheila opened the meeting with prayer, welcomed all present and outlined the format of the meeting.
- 2. Apologies for Absence** had been received from: BB Core members Ali Bullivent, Karen Phillips, Patrick Scott and Alison Wright; Julie; Michael Aldridge; Dave Evans; Hugh and Mary Beavan; Dave and Ruth Bull; Jan, Trevor and Maddy Darley; Audrey Day; Paul & Judy Fox; Dave & Terry James; Steve and Margaret James; Sheila Leys; Jerry Macklow; Clare Stone; Brenda Motley; Stephen Riddle; Tony Rickwood; Gavin Marmay; Mike Seckleman; Tina Seckleman; Audrey Vinicombe, Laurence & Margaret Whitford.
- 3. Committee Elections:** Christine Cox and Gillian Macklow were appointed tellers. The results were: Bradwell Committee – Kate Mulkern and Rosie Sinden-Evans to serve 3½ years, Jonney Aldridge and Robert Ricks to serve 2½ years, Chris Jones and Sheila Leys to serve 1½ years; Burton Bradstock Committee – Elizabeth Sayers and Julie Walker to serve 3½ years, Carole Atkins and Janet Proctor to serve 2½ years, Jennie Barnsley and Harry Titley to serve 1½ years.
- 4. Items not covered by the agenda:** 3 members raised items to be taken at item 10.
- In making a **Presentation to Roger Pygram**, retiring treasurer, Sheila expressed the deep gratitude of the Community for Roger's committed hard work over the past 7 years. Warm applause supported her remarks.
- 6. Introduction of new Treasurer:** Sheila's introduction of Steve Mortimer, who has been appointed by the Trustees, was received with applause. An election will be held at the AGM in September.
- 7. Extension of Community Secretary's term:** The Trustees proposed, Janet Proctor seconded, and it was agreed unanimously that Pat Price-Tomes' term of service be extended by 7 months to the AGM.
- 8. Report from the Chair:** Sheila introduced all the Trustees who were present. Both Audrey Day and Robin Stallard had retired as Trustees as from the January meeting; thanks were expressed to both of them and also to others in the Community who undertake particular roles, including those who had served on the Centre Committees and were now retiring. Sheila also reminded the meeting that Othona exists in a context of many small communities surviving only a few years. She said that she and the Trustees were more confident and hopeful than they had been 2 years ago; their current concerns include being better employers and communicating better. The strong teams at both centres are a source of encouragement. Othona needs a clear sense of purpose, which is relevant to today and owned by the whole Community, in which context Sheila read the new Mission Statement. Charity Law now requires us to be of public benefit, ie to people outside the Community (which is declining and ageing), as well as in it. We all need to spread the good news of Othona. We walk a tightrope between the needs to be commercially viable and meet the requirements of the law, and to be counter-cultural, offering something which is not readily available 'out there'.
- 9. Report from the Trustee responsible for financial matters:** Dave Ball highlighted the fact that stewardship is not the 'unspiritual bit'. We are asset rich but cash poor. Recent years have seen losses on the £150,000 turnover and this cannot continue if Othona is to survive. The key concerns are a) the need for cash, b) the need for an asset strategy, and c) the need to work with both centres to ensure they break even. Steve Aldridge has been appointed by the Trustees to advise on property and investments and is working

with Tim Fox on these areas. Dave reminded the meeting that ‘the only constant is change’; his reading about Norman Motley has convinced him that if he were here today, he too would be looking to adapt and move forward.

In response to questions Dave clarified that the surplus shown in the Charity Commission accounts includes restricted funds; the centres are not breaking even.

It was suggested the centres could make more money by encouraging those who wished to avoid flying to spend more of their holidays at Othona, and also that there should be more opportunity for members simply to reflect and ‘be together’, perhaps in the winter months.

Lengthy discussion on transparency and openness, particularly in relation to minutes of Trustees’ meetings, followed. Sheila reminded the meeting that, in the interests of openness she has established a practice of reporting in *Full Circle* on the decisions made by Trustees. Various views were expressed, all in support of transparency but varying as to exactly how much and how it should be achieved.

10. Reports from the Centres: Burton Bradstock – Tony Jaques introduced Mandy Addenbrooke who joined the core in January as deputy warden. He expressed thanks to Elizabeth Sayers, without whose skills and hard work the major and highly successful reorganisation of the core would not have been achieved. The main hope for BB for this year is to make significant progress towards completion of the new Littleness.

Bradwell – David Williams thanked the retiring Bradwell committee for all they have contributed; he made special mention of Paul Seckleman’s help with the programme. He introduced Gail (deputy manager) and Matthew (Community co-ordinator). who will soon be Mr & Mrs Dell, both of whom have quickly made a great difference to the running of Bradwell. He highlighted the major improvement works spearheaded by Matthew.

Asked for ideas for increasing bed nights, David wanted plenty of publicity and Tony is seeking to maximise knowledge of the programme, especially via the web. The reason for starting to produce 2 programmes per year is that it brings Othona to people’s attention twice. Word of mouth is the best promoter; it requires good quality experience for visitors.

Notices & Members’ Concerns:

Jan Marshall highlighted Bradwell’s entry to a competition for a grant from EEDA for environmentally friendly developments. She encouraged members to sign a ‘carbon footprint pledge’ available on the web – more signatures will help.

Rosie Sinden-Evans spoke about the Bradwell fundraising cascade which is not quite complete. The centre has raised nearly £20,000 since November 2006. She asked members to consider making a monthly standing order, however small, because demonstrations of commitment by members can help when applying for grants.

Robbie Spence wanted to raise awareness of the MSN group; there was a general feeling that participation should be limited to Othona members, and that anonymous contributions should not be allowed.

Tony Sinden mentioned that member Judy Chamberlain, who had been suffering from cancer, had died on 15 February and Jan Marshall told the meeting that Norman Motley’s sister Winifred had also died on that day. They were both remembered in the

Concluding act of worship led by Steve Barnes, which was followed by tea and socializing.