

The Association of Talking Friends

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, held on 27th April 2019 at Bull Street Meeting House

01 -19 Present Alan Johnson, Gillian Bryan, Diana Lampen, Jules Morris, Sue Thompson, Michael Langford, Hilary Johnson, Anne Austin.

02 -19 Prevented Chris Love

03 -19 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the AGM 2018. Minute 07 – 18 was read and we shall return to this matter in this Meeting. The Minutes were accepted.

04 -19 Presentation of Trustees' Report for 2018 We have read the Trustees' Annual Report to the Association. The Report has been accepted.

05 -19 Presentation of the Accounts for 2018. Gillian presented the Accounts and Balance for 2018, signed by John Bodycote. With the cushion of the appeal we have £3,826 in the Bank. We would otherwise be in deficit by £456. We thank Gillian for her work.

06 – 19 Membership of the Committee. Anne Austin is standing down as a member of the Committee. We thank Anne for her service since 2007.

07- 19 Discerning a future for the Association of Talking Friends.

We have heard of the challenges facing the Talking Friends Association and we have considered the document presented by Alan – 'Choices facing the Charity'. We have discussed the following points:

- ❖ The number of subscribers is falling , (despite an estimate that there may be as many as 750 visually impaired people in the society);
- ❖ There may be a failure of oversight in the Society;
- ❖ There may be fewer people wanting to read the Friend;
- ❖ Other technologies may increasingly be used;
- ❖ Visually impaired Friends and Attenders may not be aware of the Talking Friends Association, despite our efforts to reach them.

We have also heard about the strengths of Talking Friends:

- ❖ The importance of a sympathetic reading;
- ❖ We are financially viable;
- ❖ We have a number of willing volunteers who continue to read;

The final section of the 'Choices Facing the Society' document considers possible options:

- ❖ To continue as we are until the income from subscriptions and donations is insufficient to support the expenditure of running the charity.

The AGM's comment: There is the possibility of continuing for a number of years providing there are no major breakdowns in duplicating equipment etc.

- ❖ If subscribers decline further we ask whether it would be reasonable for LMs to arrange to read magazines to individual current subscribers.

This might be possible with rotas etc for LMs or AMs to arrange this. However, smaller Meetings might struggle to provide readers.

- ❖ In the event of the charity's being laid down we ask whether it would need to be reconstituted in order to serve visually impaired Friends in some other way, such as responding to individual requests for current Quaker output. Craig Barnett's book 'Quaker renewal' is an example.

It should be possible to change focus in this way without fundamentally changing our Constitution. We are not clear about whose responsibility organising and providing permission for this work might be.

- ❖ If the service were radically changed we ask whether Publications at Friends House, or The Friend would be prepared to offer material in an alternative format rather than print – audio and sell them in the book shop. If this were to be the case, subscriptions to a separate organisation would no longer be necessary.

If the charity becomes unviable its resources would need to be given to another organisation with sympathetic objectives.

We wonder whether Yearly Meeting is actually committed to this aspect of diversity and inclusion.

We ask the Committee to address the following:

- ❖ To start the process of finding Alan's successor;
- ❖ To continue the search for another Trustee and more Committee members;
- ❖ To approach the Clerks of the Area Meeting to arrange a report to Area Meeting;
- ❖ To contact Jane Dawson at Friends House and ask about the policy being developed to make material available in alternative formats;
- ❖ To engage with other organisations, such as The Friend Publications and Friends House about their responsibility to visually impaired people.

08-19 Any Other Business We thank Hilary and Alan for braille titles of AV materials and making them available in the Woodbrooke Library. Materials are available by post to subscribers to the Library.

09-19 Date of next AGM 25th April 2020