

DORSET COMMUNITY ACTION
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD BY ZOOM
FRIDAY 21ST JANUARY 2021

WELCOME

Simon Wraw, Chairman, welcomed all those present and especially DCA's Patron Angus Campbell, Lord-Lieutenant of Dorset. The Chair explained that with the current COVID restrictions in place there had been no other option but to hold the meeting virtually and expressed his thanks to all for taking the time to join the meeting via Zoom.

APOLOGIES

Five apologies were received, two of which were from member organisations.

ADDRESS FROM DCA'S PATRON

Mr Campbell said that whilst the last year had been extremely challenging it had brought out the best in people across the country and the numbers volunteering had substantively increased with voluntary organisations in Dorset feeling the benefit of the extra resources in these unprecedented times. He added that Dorset Community Action had come to the fore to support the VCSE sector in Dorset and had been recognised for working in partnership with statutory authorities to deliver guidance on the COVID restrictions. Mr Campbell express his thanks to Alan Clevett the outgoing DCA Chair and to the staffing team and said he was looking forward to working with the new Chair and Trustees, in his role of Patron, in this next year.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The Chair asked that the minutes of the last AGM meeting on 6th December 2019 be accepted as a true record of the meeting. Nick Warren proposed, Alan Clevett seconded, members agreed unanimously. There were no matters arising.

ANNUAL REPORT 2019 – 2020

The Chair reported that 2019/2020 had been another challenging year of ongoing uncertainties in Dorset Community Action's (DCA) operating environment, in particular the reorganisation of local government and the creation of two new unitary authorities and its impact on DCAs long term sustainability. Despite this DCA had had another successful year and the staffing team had continued to develop DCA's services and work with partners to support the voluntary sector in Dorset.

The Chair explained that headlines in the Annual Report for 2019-2020 included:

- A second year, successfully delivering the Building Better Opportunities, Supporting Enterprise programme, supporting sixty-nine people on the

programme to turn business and project ideas into a reality with one to one coaching or as part of a team challenge. The project is funded by The National Lottery Community Fund and European Social Fund.

- DCA Continued in its role as the 'Local Trusted Organisation' for Big4Littlemoor, one of several national projects funded by the Big Lottery through the BIG Local Trust to deliver ten year community regeneration plans.
- Over £2 million raised by groups across Dorset with the support they received from DCA advisors.
- 517 attended networking events, allowing groups to meet, share and receive information about Dorset's voluntary sector and funding opportunities.
- 184 delegates trained.

He added that as the looming challenges of COVID on the sector became apparent in early 2020, the DCA team had to move quickly to adapt to the very different ways of working and needs. DCA were proud to be part of the COVID-19 Dorset Community Response Taskforce, under the leadership of Dorset Council. The decision to engage lead infrastructure organisations to inform the voluntary response in Dorset was fully supported by the Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, Dorset Health Care and Public Health Dorset and led to a fully integrated, delivery focused response being used to support communities, VCSE sector services and over two thousand new volunteers across Dorset.

The Chair further added that the response from Dorset's Communities had been incredible. The dedication and community spirit had enabled DCA to collectively help the most vulnerable in the community to be less isolated, receive essential food supplies, medication deliveries and much more, demonstrating again how vital, engaged and fantastic Dorset was when all working together.

There were no questions on the Annual Report.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2019 - 2020

John Morley presented the 2019-20 Annual Accounts to members and reported that they had passed audit. He noted that the Annual Report and Accounts had been approved and signed off by Trustees at the last Board meeting.

He then referred the meeting to the Statement of Financial Activities in the Annual Accounts which could be found in the AGM packs. Incoming resources for the year were £639,021 which was a £50k reduction on the previous year. Expenditure was £677,918 a £10k decrease on the year before.

Mr Morley explained that the net movement in funds for Unrestricted Funds showed a deficit of £7,386 which reflected the predicted budget agreed by the Trustees, this then decreased the free reserves to £205,453, which represented 7 months general running costs. Trustees considered that the Charity needed to maintain free reserves at a minimum of 2.5 and a maximum of 9 months running costs as a cushion against fluctuations of income.

He further explained that review of risk management for the organisation was an important ongoing process and as part of that Trustees had identified the key risks and the controls in place as being:

- Financial sustainability - ensuring continual monitoring of funding contracts so early indication of any concerns could be identified.
- Exiting the Local Government Pension scheme – seeking professional advice to mitigate future risk.
- Loss of district council and county council income by 2021, following the new tendering process - mitigate this through developing relationships with new client groups and partners.
- The loss of income for the Community Learning and Resource Centre in Wimborne due to the restrictions of CV19 - seeking alternative ways of staffing and developing partnership working.

Mr Morley added that attention had also been focussed on future funding and ensuring that DCA chose the right direction and strategy to match a changing operating environment by the creation of a Strategic Plan which included involvement from staff, trustees and stakeholders.

There were no questions on the Annual Accounts.

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR

The Chair proposed that Ward Goodman be appointed as DCA's Auditors for the coming year. Chris Spackman seconded the proposal, which members agreed unanimously.

ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

Chris Spackman (Vice Chair) explained that Simon Wraw and John Morley had been co-opted onto the Board in the year and he would like to ask that they both be appointed onto the Board. Alan Clevett proposed, Nick Warren seconded, and members unanimously agreed the appointment.

The Chair then explained that three Trustees would sadly be retiring: Pauline Batstone, Nick Warren and Alan Clevett. He thanked each Trustee for their support and arduous work they had put in over the years they had served on the DCA Board

Alan Clevett added that over the last six years he had witnessed the development of DCA and the excellent job the staffing team had done in responding to funding pressure and reacting to increasing demands for its services. The last year had provided its own unique challenges and through the sheer hard work and never give up attitude of the DCA team they had successfully met the challenges head on and developed closer partnership working. Mr Clevett said he felt DCA was in great shape to move forward into the future and thanked his fellow Trustees for their time and support.

REFLECTION OF THE CURRENT YEAR

Alex Picot, Chief Executive explained that whilst the challenges of CV19 that the Voluntary Sector faced were still very prevalent, he felt that three things had stood out in the current year:-

- The collection of valuable data on what was happening in the sector as a collective of organisations, with two surveys; The National Village Halls survey co-ordinated by Action with Communities in Rural England, which

gathered baseline information on community premises and a survey run by DCA to collect a snap shot of the health of the third sector in Dorset which enabled us to communicate the challenges that were being faced and how groups could work more effectively together with the resources they still had.

- The Dorset Council led COVID response team which demonstrated the true value of a co-ordinated local response and that communities would not work without the thousands of volunteers that gave up their time. Moving into the recovery stage it would be important to not to lose the good working relationship built with the public sector and the essence of why this was so successful.
- The fantastic DCA webinars that had offered a valued service to organisations, and the challenges for the staffing team of how to ensure that the daily changes to government policy on COVID, which had an impact on how third sector organisations operated, were effectively communicated at the webinars.

Mr Picot added that moving forward it would be important to keep up with the pace of change and stay current with what was affecting stakeholders and members to ensure that DCA continued to provide the relevant services. He encouraged organisations to keep up regular dialogue with the team and to be part of the membership of DCA and also express his thanks to all those who had supported DCA over the last year.

FUTURE PLANS

The Chair explained that the Board had started to consider the future direction for DCA over the next two to three years and the needs of the voluntary sector, members and key stakeholders. He added that he and the Vice Chair would like to share the key points from the business planning process:-

Identified Key groups of stakeholders:

- Funders – statutory, businesses and funding bodies
- Communities – individuals and informal community groups
- Direct customers – businesses, village halls, charities and parish councils

The need for the voluntary sector is greater than ever:

- COVID 19 has driven demand up, squeezed and/or redirected some funding and DCA has had to rapidly adapt to meet new demands and find new ways to deliver its services
- As a result of CV19 lockdowns, new emerging trends include digital exclusion, financial hardship, food security, and rising unemployment

DCA needs to adapt to meet the changing requirements of its key stakeholders and also secure the funding needed to provide its services. To do this we need to ensure we:

- Develop additional and sustainable new sources of funding
- Broaden our skills base and capability
- Continues to grow our membership and engagement widely across the community we represent
- Work in partnership and collaboration with others across the sector
- Has adequate representation for its members and community in the new structures

- Is supporting local VSCE organisations to become more enterprising for long term sector sustainability

The DCA Strategic Review (December 2019) concluded on three key strategic themes to focus on over the next one to three years:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Low Carbon
- Community Economic Development

We believe this still to be directionally correct, with the COVID pandemic resulting in a greater and immediate emphasis on Health and Wellbeing with the resulting economic impact also now very apparent

Four new “pillars” are also proposed to strengthen DCA’s ability to deliver on its strategic themes:

- Better together
- New Ways of Funding
- DCA Training Academy
- Building Skills and Capability

The chair concluded that he hoped that everyone had found the key points from the Strategic Plan informative and that it detracted nothing from the services already provided by DCA but was a focus on how to build on and sustain them for the next two to three years.

CLOSE OF AGM

The Chair noted that this was the end of the formal AGM business and thanked everyone for their attendance.