



Working Together Ludlow

to include people with learning difficulties

AGM MINUTES
20th November 2018 at 6pm

Baptist Church
Rockspring Centre

Welcome: Roma welcomed everyone to this AGM in the Baptist Church.

Present: Roma Jackson, Susanna Grunsell, Simon Lambourne, Emily Moseley, Nicola North - *Trustees*

Clare Carrant, Sam Hine, Sammy Powell, Jane Jenner, Julie Wright, Susan Geuter, Daniel Geuter, Kevin, Jude & Chloe Shepherd, James Cooper, Andrew Norton, Liz Woodall, Juliette Best, Fran Best, Sarah Edwards, Janine Bryant, Graham & Angela Prince, Andrea Pearce, Lisa McCourt, Nicola Bradbury, Diana Powell, Jan Amphlett Whyley, Cate & Becky Whitlock, Janine Jarrett, Michael Jackson, Sandra Wilkes, Else Sargent, Julian & Helen Crombleholme, Tom Crombleholme, Claire Carter, David Key, Colin Sheward, Viv Parry.

Minutes of Last Year's AGM: These were agreed and signed. Proposed by Sammy Powell, seconded by Julian Crombleholme.

Last Year at Working Together: Nicola talked about the year from July 2017 to June 2018, with projected photos. Lots of people have left for varying reasons, including volunteers from the café. But Working Together carries on as always. There was a good Willow Trust canal trip, a fun but very wet trip to Aberystwyth. The café stayed open during the Geuters' summer holiday, and also for the Ludlow Food Festival. The members were very helpful selling at the market on Tinsel Tuesdays. Then at Christmas Richard Geuter retired. A well earned rest after doing about 5 people's jobs at once for so many years.

In the New Year there was a grand spring cleaning of the café – clearing the cellar and cleaning all the shelves etc. And our café manager Fee started work, introducing new recipes to serve.

In April we had the successful ceilidh.

Our Facebook page gained us a bit more footfall. The new logo was launched. The members continued to enjoy Diversity Club run by Lisa and Nicky, and now with a new volunteer Sandra.

Youth Club continues with Sammy. Karen had her baby.

Sewing Bee has been going very well under Susan's guidance. Writers Club, and Sports continue successfully. We have painted the café. We started to prepare for the Soap Box Derby. We now have a new Monday and Friday volunteer, - Helen.

Chairman's Report: Roma thanked Nicola very much for the role she took on (as a volunteer) to run Working Together since Richard's retirement, and for her huge

contribution in moving Working Together forward. We could not have continued without Nicola. Our thanks also, to Sam Hine for supporting Nicola and for her work on the viability of WT, her research and successful sourcing of financial support and the forward planning with the aim of providing a secure future for the charity.

Also Thanks to our friend Richard Staynor who retired earlier this year after many years as a much valued Trustee and Treasurer. Our thanks to Sara for stepping in to bridge the gap and welcome to Julie for taking on this role.

Been a trustee for many years – only Susanna has been with us for longer. Our involvement you could say has been through thick and thin and I'm delighted to say that Nicola, Emily and now Simon's recent contributions have been invaluable – not least in bringing down the age profile of the group! You'll hear more from Simon when I shut up.

The important part of being a trustee is in the name... TRUST. We, with the help of Sam Hine have only the assured future of our charity and its aims in mind at all times and we are determined to uphold them in order to ensure our members have the best opportunities to enjoy life to the full as fully paid up members of our community with all the opportunities for fulfilment we can offer.

As part of the work Sam has been supporting us with, we have looked at all aspects of Working Together operations. The lease on the café comes to an end in 2019 and this has urged us on to think very carefully about the future.

The café has served us well for many years but sadly has become increasingly unsustainable. It isn't wise for us to have to depend so heavily upon the generosity of the public, the generous grants and contributions from our benefactors simply in order to keep the doors of the café open.

In the present climate of austerity and the massive competition from other cafés in Ludlow we struggle to entice enough customers in - however delicious and lovingly made our offer is. Although it seemed sensible at the time the Saturday opening has been hugely disappointing.

Our wonderful café manager Fee has worked amazingly hard bringing her energy, her warm welcome and innovation to the café but still the income does not justify the effort.

The truth is the café is not fit for purpose. None of this will be a surprise to many of you I am sure.

We are not accessible to customers with physical difficulties.

We don't have an accessible toilet.

The stairs and the cellar are inadequate and a safety issue.

There is no lift.

The footfall, although always the incentive to stay in the town centre, has been static for some time and latterly is falling and based mainly upon regular WT supporters. This means our front of house team often have very little to do which can be very disheartening although they, especially Hannah and Amy, always stay so cheerful.

The building is in need of significant investment with fixtures, fittings and equipment at the end of their useful life. Although the landlord is, and has always been supportive, the internal decoration and improvements are our responsibility.

Due to space constraints - no more than 3 members can participate each day. 3 members plus support workers plus WT staff and volunteers – this leaves little space for customers and limits the income generation potential to meet the costs of the building.

The Trustees have given all of this very serious thought and have reached the conclusion that for the future of Working Together we now need to move on. This is a decision we have not taken lightly.

Richard Geuter will remind us that Working Together has been looking for an alternative venue for quite some time – somewhere that is safe, viable and inclusive for people of all ages with learning and physical disabilities and difficulties that can widen their participation in and their enjoyment of our community.

We have visited a number of possible alternative venues as well as a number of comparable charities to learn from others.

We are determined that our current offer of Youth Club, Diversity Club, Sports Club, Writers Club, Sewing Bee and fun social activities will continue without being at risk of being pulled down by the financial drain of the Cafe.

So what next? What's the plan?

Following consultation with our members and their families, and in order to try out something different and new, we ran a pilot project for six weeks during the summer – Together Tuesdays – here at the Rockspring Centre. Andrea Pearce took the lead in this with the aim of testing whether we could deliver daytime support services more effectively to more members at this venue. The pilot was a success and since the beginning of October we have continued to offer Together Tuesdays here under her energetic and imaginative supervision. (I'm hoping later Andrea will tell us about Working Together's recent fundraising work for Children in Need.) Susan Geuter's Sewing Bee has already relocated here and is very happy in its new home, welcoming new members to participate and new volunteers to help.

The Rockspring Centre is managed by the South Shropshire Furniture Scheme - a long-term supporter of Working Together. As you will know Jean Jarvis has moved on from this scheme but very wisely has handed the reins to James Cooper who has been the operations manager for many years. We are grateful to them both for their support in the past and especially to James for his ongoing encouragement and enthusiasm. By the way, Jean was excited to know we might be working at Rockspring.

Rockspring offers a modern, good quality, fully accessible venue, with well -equipped kitchen facilities and a community garden. For those who haven't been here before you will have the opportunity to explore the place for yourselves after this meeting.

Our plan is to gradually offer more day time activities across the week from here so that by the time our lease at the Café ends in June 2019, we will be able to offer a much improved alternative to our existing members and, most importantly, will have the space and the capacity to welcome, encourage and support more people to join us.

By relocating to a busy and welcoming community centre like Rockspring our members will be able to engage in a wider range of inclusive activities beyond the Working Together core offer.

For example we will be able to engage in the successful Rockspring Thursday community lunches, participate in flower arranging classes, help out with gardening in the Community garden and join in with keep fit classes.

Hot off the press - Nicola has been in negotiation with a local manufacturing company who are showing a keen interest in having our famous lunches delivered to them.

Our more able members may also participate in supported volunteer placements with the Furniture Scheme here in reception, or in the shop, the workshop or warehouse premises.

Rockspring is also home to the Ludlow Food Bank, supported by Churches Together Around Ludlow and Hands Together Ludlow. This offers excellent partnership working opportunities around food poverty, with discussions already underway for our members to cook ready-to-eat meals that could be distributed to those in need through the Food Bank and at Hands Together lunches across the area.

To maintain the important skills our members learn and use at the Café they would continue to cook lunch for themselves here using the excellent kitchen facilities. There would be nothing to stop us continuing to bake cakes and scones to order, potentially offering town centre delivery for regular customers and supporters and inviting people to join us here for coffee mornings and afternoon teas.

Here we are within walking distance of the town centre. We're also on the town bus route, providing opportunities for independent travel training and for retaining strong links with the Ludlow community.

We can continue to take part in community markets, hiring market stalls to sell our crafts and soups and cakes at Tinsel Tuesdays for example.

The Trustees are confident this is the right way forward for Working Together and are excited by the opportunities this new way of working will bring.

The Café has served us well – but now is the right time for something new.

We are announcing our plans early to give everyone the chance to be involved in shaping the future and for us to be able to make the transition as smooth as possible for our members.

Our staff and volunteers are happy to listen and to encourage members to share their thoughts and ideas in a safe and supportive environment. As always we will continue to listen and to respond to the needs of our members and to uphold the aims and objectives of Working Together.

Here's to the next 16 years!

Thank you for your patience and I sincerely hope you share our optimism.

Accounts: Our grateful thanks go to Jane Jenner for looking after our accounts, which she has been doing for very many years now. We welcome Julie Wright who is now doing the Finance and Admin job for WT.

Resolution was passed to accept the accounts – proposed by Becky Whitlock
Seconded by Cate Whitlock

Friends of Working Together: Trustee Simon Lambourne has organized a “Friends” scheme, which he is launching tonight at this meeting. “Friends of Working Together” leaflets were distributed. These leaflets have an explanation of Working Together’s aims, and what we do, with photographs, and include forms to fill in by those people happy to donate £30 per year, or any other amount, to Working Together, and in return they will get the regular newsletter, an invitation to any party we might be holding, and a complimentary WT lunch. There is a section for Gift Aid, to increase the amount WT gets from each donor. At present this is for individuals, but this can expand to include businesses in the future.

Children in Need: Andrea organised her group to make cookies etc to sell for the Children in Need charity, and raised £195 for them.
We are grateful to Children in Need for the 3 year grant for the Youth Club.

Questions and Comments: Liz Woodall asked what the timescale was for these developments. Nicola answered that negotiations would continue, and the aim is for the gradual development and move to be complete by the time the café lease comes to an end in June 2019.

Question regarding whether the Youth Club would stay at the youth centre, or move to Rockspring too. Nicola answered that discussions were needed with James about possibly moving it too. We do have to pay for the existing space at the youth centre now.

Viv Parry asked about the gardening aspect of the scheme, and whether WT could join in and help with the Ludlow in Bloom competition. Would the judges be able to come and meet the members, as the community aspect of Ludlow in Bloom is very important? Nicola answered that this involvement would be very good, and possibly WT could supply plugs for planting.

James Cooper said he was very pleased to have WT here at Rockspring on Tuesdays, and he is looking forward to future involvement. WT is a very good partner charity to work with the South Shropshire Furniture Scheme.

Sam Hine asked if the members would please get involved with letting her know what they need and want, as it helps her with her funding proposals. Please add any thoughts to the sheets by the kitchen. She is always looking for more funding opportunities. We are grateful to Ludlow Town Council for a grant they have promised WT.

Nicola made a plea for more volunteer help with Tinsel Tuesdays. We are doing a mini hog roast as well as soup this year. The dates are 4th, 11th and 18th December.

Susan Geuter asked that all the news announced this evening about the future of WT should be sent out by email, as there were lots of people who could not attend this evening.

The Meeting ended at 7pm – with time for refreshments and good look round.