

Draft minutes of the AGM of the East Northants Faith Group, held at 7.30pm on Monday 25th June 2018 at the Lounge at St Peter Apostle Catholic Church, Higham Road, Rushden

Present: Helen Allan (Operations Manager), Peter Armstrong, Matt Baker, Maria Borg, Chris Clavey, David Houghton (trustee), Mark Lees (Chair of trustees), Sara Owst, Andrew Presland (trustee), Diane Robinson, Martin Tanner,

Apologies: Jean Bowerman, Callum Cockings, Rachel Hawkins and Brian Withington

1. Mark welcomed everyone to the meeting and opened it in prayer.

Reports from East Northants Community Services service managers

2. **Sanctuary night shelter:** Maria Borg reported that there had been 54 clients so far in 2018, including 4 ladies. A further 20 had stayed under SWEP, Severe Weather Emergency Protocol, including 5 ladies.
3. Destinations of the 54:
 - 8 into local hostels
 - 7 into private rent
 - 1 into Recovery House
 - 1 into St Mary's
 - 7 people were asked to leave (breaking rules or not engaging)
 - 2 returned to family
 - 22 left of their own accord (this is due to short stay or not wanting to engage)
 - 6 remain
4. Of the 54, 48% have had mental health issues (up a lot); 27% have had alcohol issues and 50% have had drug issues. Maria and team would like to be more effective: the Homelessness Reduction Act should help.
5. **Recovery House:** Matt Baker listed the main aims as being to forge better links with organisations such as Community Law Services, for assessing debt related problems, and to identify clients' own skill sets, and any gaps that Recovery House might help to fill, working with other organisations, such as the Bridge for debt management, S2S for detoxes and Midland Heart for housing options.
6. The process of moving on clients was going well, with many moving into self-supporting accommodation, and Midland Heart being used more than previously. The dry houses (follow-on accommodation from Recovery House) had been well-used, with an occupancy rate of about 97% in 2017. About 3/5 of key support staff are ex-residents, and Matt hoped to increase that. Implementing Universal Credit was taking a lot of time, although having one system should eventually be simpler. Looking forward, there is much potential for residents and ex-residents to get involved in social enterprises, using their existing skills and experience – e.g. in building or landscaping.
7. **Food Bank:** Sara Owst reported that, in 2017, the Food Bank gave out 713 food parcels. This figure is lower than the previous year of 1,148 parcels due to changes made by the trustees in the number of times a client can visit the food bank in a single year. It held three CAP money courses: two in February and one in July. The feedback from those who attended the course was very positive but attendance has been poor. As a result, ladies who delivered the course have condensed it from two mornings into one to try to encourage attendance in 2018. We try to help our clients with their difficulties by signposting them to various organisations that may be able to help them, such as community law and various housing associations.
8. Volunteers had changed over the year: Sam Poulton and Paul Lawrence from Whitefriars Church, Rushden, who had served for a few years left as they both found employment. Pat Law and Steve Foster remain steadfast loyal workers giving out the food parcels. Peter Armstrong from St. Peter's Anglican Church, Rushden, joined the team and does all the food collections from the various supermarkets. Darren Davis from Corby Hope Church keeps food shed 3 organised and ensures food dates are rotated so we don't waste any food. Jane Smethers from St. Mary's, Higham Ferrers joined

the team recently. Sara expressed appreciation for the hard work and effort that the food bank team makes every week. Donations were regularly received from many local churches, as well as food trolleys in Asda and Waitrose. At Easter, Harvest and Christmas, lots of donations are received from the local schools and a cheque for £750 was received from Unilever at Colworth Park, along with large amounts of food, tea and mugs and household cleaning products and toiletries. Rockingham Forest Housing, Co-op Travel and St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, Rushden also gave household products and toiletries at Christmas. St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, Rushden, also regularly gives money donations which are used to buy any food products that are needed. Sara expressed her thanks for all these gifts.

9. **Raunds Food Bank:** Sara read out a written report. In summary, Raunds Food Bank was set up 5 years ago, with assistance from Rushden Food Bank. 6 months later, it opened the Community Café at the same time, to help alleviate the stigma of coming to a foodbank. It has worked well – there are regular customers and their donations help towards purchasing food when necessary. About 18 months ago Thrapston Foodbank closed and the Raunds Food Bank gained some of their clients. They also collect donations from Thrapston Co-op, as well as Raunds.

10. The number of clients varied weekly but had increased recently, with up to 11 clients some weeks. Since the beginning of April they had 30 clients. Some are one-offs, some are due to the zero hours system used by the agencies in warehouses in Raunds, some due to sanctions imposed. They have run CAP courses for debt and life skills, called in outside agencies such as Northants Domestic Abuse, and try to signpost other organisations. They are now getting referrals from social workers, doctors and other food banks.

11. They appreciate being in the Tesco Fairshare scheme as it has benefited the Café as well as the Food Bank. They had a surplus of food from the schools and shops over Christmas but their supplies were much depleted and they were grateful that Rushden has been able to help them out.

12. They have a loyal group of volunteers from different churches and none, who are prepared to listen to the clients. Often somebody to talk to is as important as the food parcel. But they do sometimes find ourselves out of our depth, especially with the benefit and housing system and would appreciate any help in this direction. They would also like help with their IT, mainly to update their website and the Facebook page. Raunds Community Café and Food Bank are open once a week on a Thursday morning from 9.30 till 12 noon at the Community Centre, opposite Spar.

Other ENCS projects

13. Helen Allan reported that the **Cornerfield Café** was open on Monday and Thursday mornings. It had been busy recently, with a shortage of volunteers, created partly because past volunteers were now in paid employment. **Community Repaint** was ticking along, with a volunteer from Corby having helped a lot recently

The formal AGM

14. The **draft minutes of the 2017 AGM** were accepted without amendment. There were no matters arising.

15. **Trustees' Annual Report for 2017 (including 2017 accounts and 2018 budget):** David talked through a set of slides, making the following points:

- Income in 2017 was £267,973 and expenditure was £257,267, leading to an increase in reserves of about £10,000, to £69,490;
- The trustees' policy was to *aim* for reserves covering six months' expenditure, or about £130,000;
- By far the largest element of income (67%) was housing benefit: there was clearly a risk in being so dependent upon a single income source;
- 43% of expenditure was on wages, followed by 30% on rent;
- 2017 had been the first full year of employing Helen Allan, our Operations Manager;

- On the income side, increased efforts had been made in pursuing grants and donations, with several successful grant applications. Thank you letters were now routinely sent in response to donations, and a fundraising committee had been established.
- Over £4,200 had been raised through ENCS's own fundraising events: it was important to be able to show funders that we were taking steps to raise money ourselves;
- About £17,200 had been raised in grants in 2017 (from East Northants Council x 3 plus the Gordon Trust) and about £50,000 so far in 2018 (from East Northants Council x 2, the NCF Compton Fund, the Lloyds Foundation - over three years - the Margaret Giffen Trust and the NCF Making Northants Safer Fund). The Lloyds Foundation had also agreed to provide assistance in producing a business plan and developing the charity in other ways;
- In managing ENCS finances, the trustees were mindful of the high level of restricted funds, where the use was determined by the donor. They were keen to maximise the level of unrestricted funds, whilst choosing to designate some funds for particular purposes as needed.
- Changes in accounting arrangements and financial reporting to the Charity Commission would be needed for 2018 because income in 2017 had exceeded the accruals accounting threshold of £250,000.
- The Annual Report had been produced professionally by CVS Northampton, which provides a very economic service. The need for this extra work was the main reason why the AGM was taking place later this year: David agreed to circulate copies electronically to ENCS staff and others who requested it.
- Although the 2018 budget was for £241,000, this was based on the conservative assumption that no grants would be received. More than that was likely to be received in practice. Increases in spending compared with 2017 would be needed to cover the salary of the Food Bank manager for the first time and maintenance projects in the Night Shelter and the Queen Street aftercare house.

16. Those present agreed to CVS Northampton being appointed **Independent Examiner** for 2018.

Looking ahead

17. Mark noted that there were currently only three trustees: the legal minimum, but work was in hand to recruit up to three or four more, to share the governance load and create more space for fresh ideas. The limitations of the existing Night Shelter were clear. Purpose-built premises may be needed to provide better facilities with room for more services during the daytime – perhaps with a separate moving on building. The business plan being produced with the Lloyds Foundation should help make progress. It was also important to also consider where ENCS was going spiritually, with more input being needed from local churches. Alongside that, social entrepreneurs and other experts were needed to help the organisation grow.

18. Andrew noted that some East Northants Faith Group activities had continued during 2017, as well as the services provided by ENCS. As stated in the Annual Report, these included Leaders' Lunches, refugee support and discussion of plans for the Rushden East development.

19. **Any Other Business:** in response to a question from Martin Tanner, Mark advised that the AGM did not need to formally adopt the accounts. That had been done by the trustees about a week earlier before they had been certified by CVS and submitted to the Charity Commission website.

20. Andrew closed the meeting in prayer at 8.25pm.