

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

23rd June 2008

Reading University

Full Members in Attendance: Mark Ashton (Daily Bread Cambridge), Kelvin Bagley (NPS), Patricia Bend (St. Anne's Textiles), Stuart Boreham (Moreton Green), Nigel Cudlipp (representing the Soap Co Keswick), Marcia Darbyshire (Wholefood Planet Norwich), Adrian Harper (Speak Up), Adrian Harris (Lambeth Accord), Richard Hockett (MillRace-IT), Mary Kane (Rag Tag 'n Textile), Sarah Crawley (ISE), David Scoffield (Many Hands), Amelia Suarez (Café Ciao), Marion Summers (Newco), Petra Kennedy (MTIB)

Numbers of Associate Members and non-members also attended; these names were recorded separately.

1. Chair's Welcome

Sarah Crawley, a trustee of Social Firms UK, welcomed everyone to the AGM on behalf of Maria Kenyon who was unfortunately unable to attend the AGM and conference this year. She'd liaised, however, with Sarah and asked her to emphasise the following areas:

- a) the improved ability to respond to policy and influence the social enterprise agenda. Social Firms UK has a new member of staff supporting this function; this is very much welcomed by the board who feel in this time of rapid change the ability to comment effectively is essential to the future of Social Firms UK;
- b) the new definition of Social Firms is bringing with it new opportunities, particularly within the worklessness agenda – the team at Social Firms UK have been working tirelessly from policy to practice, looking at new approaches, toolkits and support for Social Firm development and impact measurement;
- c) finally, words of celebration. The year started facing challenges on budgets, however the out turn has been good (as will be heard from the Treasurer), and Social Firms UK continues to grow and develop. The board issues a challenge to members – we need to spread the word regarding Social Firms as a route to employment creation, we need to be encouraging new members to join and increase the numbers of people achieving employment through Social Firms. This in turn will continue to raise the profile with government departments, which will release further resources and everyone will benefit. We hope members will accept this challenge.

2. Minutes of 2007 AGM

The minutes of the 2007 AGM were accepted by the members: Mark Powell and Marion Summers formally approved.

3. Report from the Chief Executive Officer

Sally Reynolds reported the following main points of progress in 2007:

- growth of the sector to 151 businesses, representing a 10% growth over 2006;
- we launched the first quality standard in the social enterprise sector in the form of Star Social Firm;
- 2 successful events were held during the year, each accommodating in excess of 100 delegates each;
- our support of the sector through trade continued, increasing from 27% non-pay expenditure in 2006 to 32% non-pay expenditure in 2007;
- the organisation has achieved a raised profile within government, we were successful in becoming a new strategic partner to the OTS, were able to recruit a part-time policy officer in October 07 and have since then responded to no less than 8 government consultations;
- the new definition of Social Firms which has broadened out to 'severe disadvantage' has brought new opportunities for growth in the sector and new members;
- the research commissioned by Remploy has been helpful in identifying a national benchmark for the cost of employing a disabled employee within a Social Firm of £6,200 estimated – this methodology is now being piloted in real situations and we should have the results by June 2009;
- the organisation has continued with the updating and production of new tools and resources for members;
- we were successful in our liP review in June 2008;
- fundraising for Social Firms UK continues to be an issue and constant concern;
- our quest for new and renewing members is important not just for representation but also because of related income;
- there is also a continuing need for new Social Firms, for the sake of employees and client groups to get jobs and to show 'critical mass' to policy makers.

No questions were raised on Sally's report.

4. Report from the Treasurer (presentation of 2007 accounts)

Brenda Williams presented the 2007 accounts. There were no queries raised by members against this presentation. Brenda was thanked for her input as Treasurer on the board of Social Firms UK with a bunch of flowers, as she is standing down at this AGM.

5. Election of the board of directors

Sarah reported that 3 trustees and 1 co-opted director of Social Firms UK are standing down permanently from the board: Maria Kenyon (Chair), Brenda Williams (Treasurer) and Colin Harrison (a Full Member). Eric Munro (co-opted) is also stepping down. All were thanked for their contribution to the board. In order to fulfil the constitution, a fourth trustee had volunteered to step down but was wishing to be re-elected: Geoff Tunstall.

As well as Geoff standing again for election, 2 new nominations to the board had been circulated amongst members with the AGM papers at the beginning of June: Stuart Boreham and Simon Hebditch. Members were asked if there were any objections to these 3 appointments and nobody voiced an objection so their appointment to the board was passed.

- 6. Appointment and fixing of the remuneration of the Auditor or Auditors**
Sally reported that, for drawing up the 2007 accounts, we had paid £7,200 + VAT to the company Roffe Swayne for audit, corporation tax and all other work related to tax for the year. For doing the same work in 2009 for the 2008 accounts, we had been able to negotiate the fee of £5,500 + VAT. The recommendation from officers and board is to remain, therefore, with Roffe Swayne. No members present objected to this proposal.
- 7. Application of any surplus**
Sally requested that members approve the use of surplus to help take the charity forward in the form of reserves. No members present objected to this proposal.
- 8. Fixing of annual subscriptions**
Sally presented the membership fee strategy for 2008-2010. All current Associate and Full members are being given the option of signing up to a 3-year membership which, in turn, would secure the current membership fee of £120 for Associates and £80 for Full Members. For those that choose not to take this option, the membership fee will increase by £10 in each case, so the 2009 membership will be £130 for Associates and £90 for Full Members. From the fee paid, £10 will continue to be passed onto the national Social Enterprise Coalition so that all our members are also automatically members of SEC. No members present objected to this strategy.
- 9. Mandate for member representation on policy issues**
Sally explained that Social Firms UK is the voice of its members and, when it comes to consultation responses, we are therefore tasked with completing our responses as representatives of the Social Firm sector. There have been at least 8 consultation responses completed by Social Firms UK since 2008, i.e. more than we've ever had to do before. We appreciate how difficult it is for our Full Members, most of whom are busy running very demanding businesses, to read, let alone respond, to the draft consultations that we compile on behalf of the sector. We are therefore formally requesting our Full Members give us their mandate to represent them on policy issues, and that their silence can be taken as approval on circulated draft consultation responses. This service should also be viewed as an additional member benefit. No members present objected to giving Social Firms UK the mandate to represent them on policy issues.
- 10. Any other business**
No AOB was raised, so the AGM was closed by the Chair.