

## SOLIHULL CHURCHES ACTION ON HOMELESSNESS

### Twenty-sixth Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 13 March 2019 at United Reformed Church, Solihull

#### Present:

SCAH Committee: Revd Dr Sam Gibson (Chair) Rob Verrion Mary Clark  
Louise Cox Alison Vining Sheila Cross Sue Webb  
John Barclay Rosemary Owens Marian Vining  
Bridget Goudie Marguerite Pearsall

Guests: George Daley – SMBC, Darren Townsend – SIAS, Jacquie Fisher – SIAS  
Melanie Palmer – Solihull BID, Phil Bradley – St Basil's,  
Jennifer Jones – BSWA, Ron Crowdy – PCC Solihull, Anne Rudge

Apologies: Angela Callaghan, Fran Belford, Michael Whitfield, Lilian Parnaby,  
Will Davies, Steve Faber,

1. Welcome and introduction from Chair Sam Gibson, opening prayers.
2. Approval of minutes of 15<sup>th</sup> AGM. These were agreed by those present as an accurate record.  
Matters Arising – key aims and tasks will; be discussed in the draft strategy document.
3. Annual Accounts – presented by RV. This were examined by Ron Crowdy, all those present showed their appreciation to Ron for this valuable service. See attached for detailed breakdown of figures. Income for 2018 was £14,551; expenditure was £16,856. Cash in the bank at the end of 2018 was £34,128. A total of 159 adults and 41 associated children were helped. A spike in SCAH's income was due to generous donations from Solihull Methodist Church of more than £6,000. SG recorded his thanks to RV for his hard work throughout the year in providing the monthly accounts.
4. Presentation from George Daley, Lead Advisor for Housing, SMBC. The Council are updating the Homelessness strategy and review document, to be published in April 2019. GD stated that there are currently 800 households either at risk of becoming homeless (500), or who are homeless (300). The Borough has 3 rough sleepers, 12 women in refuges, 125 families in temporary accommodation, 110 families in "other" accommodation, 80 young people in supported accommodation, and 3 families in budget hotels. The Homeless Reduction Act came into effect last year which means that SMBC now help more people over a longer period of time, trying to focus on prevention of homelessness. The HRA has increased demand on the Council. There are currently a number of "day beggars" in Solihull. SMBC are trying to address the problem with a degree of sensitivity. Melanie Palmer will report on this in more detail later. Housing First, an initiative from the West Midlands Combined Authority, has been piloted for the first time this year. Funding has been awarded which for 27 individuals over a period of 2 years. Darren Townsend reported that SCAH were unable to assist with the Starter Pack service as there was

not enough time to make the arrangements. *Following on from this meeting DT was able to clarify that in actual fact SCAH did provide a Starter Pack for this gentleman – an entrenched rough sleeper from Marston Green.*

Melanie Palmer, Solihull BID, introduced the concept of this town centre partnership. Over 400 businesses pay a fee towards the running of the Business Improvement District. This money must be spent within the town centre, there are 8 personnel, 4 of whom are Town Hosts and are very visible in the centre of Solihull. They work 7 days a week. MP noted that there has been a marked increase in rough sleepers and day beggars in the town centre. The numbers are reported by BID on a daily basis and contact is established with them. The Council and the police are kept aware of the situation. There are 2 genuine rough sleepers, well known to the authorities and supported by SIAS and the outreach team. The day beggars have been offered food, housing, support and addiction services. They are visited every day, and MP estimates that they can “earn” about £170 a day thanks to the compassion and generosity of the public. BID is aiming to educate people and inform them of these facts and encourage people not to give money or food. BID want to publish a leaflet to circulate to businesses and the public. There will be an Alternative Giving system put in place with collection points around the town, and APPS for smart phones. SCAH are aiming to be the charitable vehicle who will receive any donations. These funds will go to a separate SCAH bank account, run on behalf of Change into Action. A panel of experts will decide on how the money will be distributed to those in need, probably on a quarterly basis. A meeting in April has been organised to further Change into Action.

5. Strategy Document, draft version – see attached. Written by SG, this document lays out the various projects that SCAH are committed to trying to work towards. Firstly, the Change into Action proposal, working with SMBC, Solihull BID and WMCA. Secondly, working alongside URC Solihull to work towards the conversion of some of the church premises to provide a day centre and/or temporary accommodation. An alternative temporary accommodation of our own such as an adapted shipping container sited on council land. SCAH aims to reach out to local churches and re-establish connections and communication with a goal to raise further funding and attract younger volunteers. A draft letter that would be sent to churches and other religious groups has been written by SG who also offers to visit and talk to congregations.
6. Election of officers and committee – re-election of all officers and committee members was proposed by JB and seconded by SC.
7. AOB – SG expressed our thanks to both the representatives from the Council and from some of our partner agencies for attending the AGM. Please remember to contact Sue W if you can volunteer for the Flag Day on March 30<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting closed with a prayer at 2.10 pm

Next meeting dates: **Wednesday June 19**  
**Wednesday September 25**  
**Wednesday December 4**