

SOLIHULL CHURCHES ACTION ON HOMELESSNESS

Twenty-seventh Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 9 September 2020, held via Zoom

Present:

SCAH Committee: Revd Dr Sam Gibson (Chair) Father Simon Marshall (Chair elect)

David Roots Rob Verrion Mary Clark Louise Cox
Sheila Cross Bridget Goudie Anne Daka

Guests: Angela Callaghan, Carol Linfield, John Bradley, Gemma Thompson

Apologies: Anne Corfield Anne Rudge Sue Webb Susan Gomm Dominic
Smith Fran Belford Rosemary Owens Alison Vining
Pat and Paul Wilkinson

1. Welcome and introduction from Chair, Father Sam Gibson
2. Apologies. Fran Belford from Bromford Housing wished to express her thanks to Hilary Owens for all the shopping requests she has fulfilled, and to Rosemary Owens for her continued support over the years.
3. Approval of Minutes of 2019 AGM. These were summarised by LC and agreed as an accurate record. Proposed by DR and seconded by BG. There were no matters arising
4. Annual Accounts presented by the Treasurer Rob Verrion. The accounts were checked and verified by Ron Crowdy, FCA. Thanks as always to him for his assistance. For the year 2019, there was a deficit of £331. Cash in the bank was £34K, including the project fund of £14K. The accounts were approved by Anne Daka and seconded by Bridget Goudie. The Treasurer will now lodge the accounts with the Charities Commission. The number of adults helped each year has been steadily rising since 2015 and continues to increase significantly.
5. Review of the Year from Father Sam – see attached. This document includes a summary of SCAH's achievements during 2019, led by Father Sam who expressed his thanks to the Trustees and committee members. Sam then introduced Father Simon Marshall. Simon then gave some background on himself and set out his aims for SCAH – see attached.
6. Election of Officers and Committee. In line with the Constitution, every member of SCAH is up for re-election on an annual basis. Father Simon was elected as Chair, proposed by RV and seconded by DR. David Roots, Business Development Officer was then elected, proposed by LC and seconded by AD. The remaining members were proposed by BG and seconded by SC
7. New Volunteers – SCAH are pleased to welcome several new shoppers to SCAH. Anne Corfield, Paul Chalmers and Pat and Paul Wilkinson. Father Simon also thanked the retiring shoppers; more on this later. DR then thanked Father Sam for introducing him to SCAH at the beginning of 2020. DR has enjoyed working with other committee members and particularly values the contact with the clients. DR is trying to establish on-going relationships with local businesses and retailers. In early 2020 he was visiting local retailers and since Lockdown commenced, he has maintained contact through email but

with little success. However, DR has persisted with local retailers when he has been shopping for Packs and he has been successful in obtaining a blanket discount at Morrison's Sheldon. The Discount letter has been sent to all volunteer shoppers who are encouraged to shop at this branch of Morrison's whenever possible. The discount may vary from month to month and will be between 10% and 20%. This will be a considerable saving. DR wishes to do the same at Tesco and ASDA. He has also reached out to churches during lockdown by sending emails to churches of all faiths. One of these letters resulted in a donation of £2000 from Solihull Quakers. The storeroom has been re-organised and is now far more user friendly with all goods clearly displayed. DR maintains the stock control sheet. Special thanks must go to Rosemary and Malcolm Owens for kindly supplying a fresh supply of greetings cards for inclusion in the Starter Packs. These are all in the filing cabinet in the store room.

8. SCAH Through Lockdown – between the beginning of March to the end of August, 92 adults and 36 children were helped. Volunteers shopped either on-line or continued to visit supermarkets. Many packs were delivered personally to clients because most caseworkers were working from home and prohibited from face to face contact. SCAH applied for a grant from Change into Action and were awarded £2000 specifically for Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid clients who were victims of DV during lockdown.
9. MC gave a vote of thanks to retiring committee members Sue Webb and Rosemary Owens. SW had been volunteering for SCAH for around 15 years, with particular responsibility for organising Flag Days and several successful Pub Quizzes. She also liaised with agencies regarding Christmas parties as well as being a busy volunteer shopper. RO is a Founder member of SCAH and was Chair for several years. She oversaw the establishment of the rent deposit scheme, the second hand furniture store and the founding of Mildenhall hostel. For many years, her home became the SCAH storeroom. And RO has built up a valuable and trusted relationship with countless agencies and the Council. SCAH are extremely grateful to both RO and SW for their dedication and very much hope to keep in touch.
10. Covid-19 update from Gemma Thompson, Housing Strategy and Commissioning Lead, SMBC. Gemma oversees the co-ordination and bidding for funding and delivery of housing needs for Solihull. Solihull Community Housing has the responsibility to deliver the housing across the Borough. GT thanked SCAH for adjusting working methods and working hard during the pandemic to continue to offer much needed support for the homeless and vulnerable in Solihull.

At October 2019, (the most up to date figures), there were 1180 people at risk of homelessness and in temporary accommodation. At the beginning of September 2020 there were 3 rough sleepers.

During the Public Health crisis, resources have been focussed on helping those most susceptible to the virus – rough sleepers, sofa surfers etc. Case workers offered a remote support service apart from a few exceptional cases. And because there were fewer Outreach workers, the police stepped in to cover the gap and this has resulted in a stronger working relationship between the council and police.

At the end of February 2020, a task force was set up to ensure that vital services were available. Local hotels were offered to the homeless, hot food deliveries were available and the Food Banks service was used. Subsequently, wider support became available to help individuals apply for benefits and help with budgeting.

The numbers of people needing temporary accommodation has increased hugely. At the end of August 2020, there were 198 in temp accommodation, 50 of whom are in hotels.

Between April and June, the numbers of DV victims doubled to 50. And most of the requests for help were immediate ie. Accommodation was needed on that day.

From April to August, 953 households or individuals have approached the Council for housing help. And bearing in mind, there has been an eviction ban on the private sector that is a considerable increase.

GT has worked on bids for Government funding for accommodation so there is sufficient supply for those now in temporary housing. She is also working on a bid to provide new, one bed accommodation.

The council will need to continue to use hotels for the time being and need funding for an extra support worker to support these particular people.

The Council are currently showing an £18million deficit for the year.

GT hopes to reinstate the regular MAHF meetings and also the CiA funding panel hope to meet soon in order to make a further distribution of funding.

Housing First – currently being piloted in Solihull has helped 20 individuals with considerable success. Intensive support is offered to vulnerable individuals; housing is given first, followed by support such as health needs, literacy and benefit support. There is funding available for 4 more people. The service is delivered by Fry Accord.

The Lockdown period was challenging but there are many positives to be seen. Such as the prominent rough sleeper from Solihull High Street who is now living in accommodation and is taking support to maintain an independent, secure life.

11. AOB – Carol Linfield, St Philips Church, thanked SCAH for its continued efforts and is keen to stay involved with us.

Father Simon then led the closing devotions and the meeting ended at 12.35 pm.