

# The Connections Bus Project

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, held on 27th October 2009 at The Holiday Inn, Impington from 7.30 – 9.30pm

### Present

Alan Webb	Project Manager
Sam Crump	Youth Development Worker
Paul Manser	Chairperson
Chris Barrett	Treasurer/Trustee/Executive Committee Member
Pete Gillings	Sessional Worker
Russell Wilkinson	Sessional Worker
Steve White	Cambs County Council Youth Service Manger
David Reeves	Oakington Parish Council
Margaret Roberts	Former Chair of Project
John Holmes	Volunteer Driver
Paula Mayes	Locality Youth work co-ordinator for City North
Lynn Hogarth	Chief Executive Young Lives
Richard Drew	Financial Director Millers Music
Joy Holmes	Guest
Caroline Manser	Guest
Miriam Webb	Guest

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Paul Manser, Chairperson, welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular Lynn Hogarth from Young Lives who is our guest speaker tonight. Each person present then briefly introduced themselves and their organisations.

### 2. Apologies

Diane Johnson	Sessional Worker
Kirsty Lothian	Sessional Worker
Jean Langford	Sessional Worker
Jo Hampson	Sessional Worker
Mary Holder	Sessional Worker
Lucy Clark	Sessional Worker
Michaela Edwards	Sessional Worker
Fiona Swan	Senior Administrator
Wayne Talbot	Orwell Parish Council
Susannah Harris	SCDC Community Development Officer
Jon Butler	Cambs County Council Locality Manager
Jackson Nazombe	SCDC
Susanne Favell	Independent Financial Examiner
Steve Cheal	Rank Foundation
Ron Day	Histon Baptist Church
Tony Martin	PCSO for Histon
Histon & Impington Parish Councils	
Cambridge Volunteer Centre	
Romsey Mill	

### 3. Minutes of the 2008 Annual General Meeting

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate representation of the meeting and were signed as correct.

## **4. Elections**

### **Election of Honorary Officers**

Nominations were unopposed so the following Honorary Officers were elected.

<b>Chair</b>	Paul Manser
<b>Treasurer</b>	Chris Barrett
<b>Secretary</b>	Vacant

### **Elected Members**

Nominations were unopposed so the following members were elected.

<b>HR Trustee</b>	Vacant
<b>Trustee</b>	John Holmes
<b>Youth Worker Representatives</b>	Vacant
<b>Parish Representative</b>	Wayne Talbot
<b>Independent Examiner</b>	Richard Drew

Paul thanked those standing down from the Management Committee for their hard work, particularly Pete Gillings from the role of youth worker representative and Susanne Favell from her role as Independent Examiner. Paul also took the opportunity to thank Mark Peck for his role as representative of CCC, however he is now standing down and this role will now be taken on by Sarah Ferguson. Susannah Harris continues in her role representing SCDC. John Holmes was welcomed as a new trustee, as was Richard Drew who is replacing Susanne as Independent Examiner.

## **5. Reports: November 2008 – October 2009**

### **Chairpersons Report October 2009**

Paul Manser presented his report on behalf of the Management Committee.

#### **Overview of the year**

The charity had another good year of steady progress of which the highlights included:

- Continuing to deliver our services to more young people in more locations.
- Helping one village to establish and develop its own youth club.
- The implementation on the bus of PC based system to replace the paper based method of collecting data and recording outcomes.
- Success in obtaining funds for the purchase and conversion of a second mobile youth facility, with a contract to use it to provide youth services to more communities.
- Success in obtaining funding to establish a Youth Forum.
- A sponsored cycle ride which raised about £2,000.

Our team of staff, volunteers and fellow trustees are key to making all of this happen – my thanks to you all.

#### **Strategic Plan**

This year was the first in which the Strategic Plan replaced objectives. The Plan had six main targets, each of which comprises one or more deliverables:

1. The further development of our educational, training and recreational programme.
2. Expanding our services.
3. Maintaining and increasing funding and diversity of funding sources.
4. Developing staff.
5. Further development of communications.
6. Governance and Management Committee.

It is fair to say that we are still learning how to manage and use the Plan, and ensure that it serves a useful purpose in providing future direction to the work we do in delivering the objectives of the charity.

A number of the deliverables were achieved, and the plan is now to be reviewed.

### **Trustees and the Management Committee**

One of the targets in the Strategic Plan was to review the governance of the charity. A gap analysis established that there was a need to increase both the number of trustees (to four or five), and the skills base, of the committee.

The year saw a number of changes and the Committee now comprises:

#### **Elected Members**

- Trustees: Paul Manser (chair), Chris Barrett (treasurer).  
John Gooch resigned at the end of 2008 leaving the secretary position vacant. I take this opportunity to thank John for the enthusiasm, ideas and drive that he brought to the charity.
- Pete Gillings (Youth Worker Representative).
- Wayne Talbot (Parish Representative).

#### **Non-elected ex officio members**

- Alan Webb (Project Manager), Fiona Swan (Senior Administrator).
- Sarah Ferguson (Area Manager, Cambridgeshire County Council), Susannah Harris (South Cambridgeshire District Council Community Development Officer).  
Our thanks go to Mark Peck who left this summer. Mark strongly supported what we do, and provided us with valuable advice. We welcome Sarah in his stead.

The summer also saw our Independent Examiner (financial auditor) Susanne Favell leave after providing an essential role in checking the accounts. In her place we are pleased to welcome Richard Drew.

The committee met five times during the year, with additional meetings of subcommittees to discuss issues relating to the second bus, finance and fundraising.

### **Staff**

Our Rank funded Trainee Youth Worker, Sam Crump, successfully completed his foundation year at the YMCA George Williams College. Sam has made a major contribution in helping us develop and introduce themes for use on the bus. Fiona Swan provided essential administrative support as well as her major role in fundraising, in what continued to be a difficult economic climate. Our loyal team of part time youth workers again showed their commitment and enthusiasm, and willingly adapted to the new technologies introduced on the bus.

Holding it all together, as always, was Project Manager Alan Webb. Alan's hard work, skills and enthusiasm have been instrumental in helping us to expand, and involving staff in the process. This included a staff meeting in May.

### **Administration**

There was little change over the year. The project continued to be based at the Histon Baptist Church, an arrangement that works well. Performance reviews of staff are in place, and the work underpinned by a system of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

### **Finance**

Much work was done by Chris Barrett and Alan Webb to move our finances to zero-based budgeting in time for the 09-10 financial year. This provided us with an opportunity to look carefully at our costs, and establish a sounder basis for setting charges to those to whom we provide services. The year also saw one of the councils

moving from a Service Level Agreement (SLA) to a contract, a process that is likely to be adopted by others.

The financial crisis has remained difficult with many of the trusts and grant awarding bodies reducing or ceasing their financial support. This meant that the proportion of the costs raised from communities increased, and will continue to do so. Ideally the charity needs a fundraiser to help in this area, but meantime small fundraising initiatives, such as the sponsored cycle ride, have been undertaken as time has allowed.

### **The future**

It has been heartening to see the confidence others have in our future, particularly the councils (county, district and parish) which are supporting both the existing youth facility and the additional bus, and the Big Lottery for the Youth Forum. So whilst funding will remain difficult I remain confident that the valuable work the team does with the young people in our communities will continue and expand.

### **Treasurer's Report 2008/9**

Chris Barrett (Honorary Treasurer) presented the Treasurer's Report

#### **Accounts for 1st April 2008 – 31 March 2009**

Chris explained that our income over the above period was £81,528 of which £10,438 had come from Council funding, £26,000 from the Rank Foundation, £9,874 from other Trusts and £34,674 from fees.

Our expenditure over the same period was £76,934 of which £59,000 was for staff wages, £10k for servicing, insurance and fuel, £2,000 for activities support and £4,500 for office costs, travel and equipment. This left a surplus for the year of £4,595 and funds of £34,455 in the bank.

Annual Income	£81,528
Annual expenditure	<u>£76,934</u>
Surplus for the year	£ 4,595

Funds in hand                    £34,455

The meeting then approved the accounts for 2008-2009.

#### **Current half-year financial situation April 2009 – September 2009**

Figures are complicated by the arrival of bus 2. However the purchasing and running costs of bus 2 are being paid for by a grant from South Cambridgeshire District council, so the following figures will refer to bus 1

So far this year we have received £61,000 in income which includes £30,000 from the Rank Foundation to train our new Youth Development worker. Our expenditure has been £40,000 and we currently have £45,000 in our reserves.

However budgeted expenditure for this financial year is £89,000. We therefore expect to spend a further £49,000 this financial year. Current available cash is £45,000 and we expect to raise a further £22,000. So our reserves are likely to fall to £18,000 at the end of the financial year.

Chris clarified the amount of income received from fees and Council grants in response to a question from Steve White. He also emphasized the fact that our reserves are now lower than they have been for the last 4 years.



This increase in numbers is also a testament to the work Sam has put into providing a programme of themes that have interested the young people and in the hard work that all the youth workers are doing in creating good positive relationships with young people. It is always thrilling when I fill in for a youth worker in a village and the first thing I hear is the young people asking after the youth worker that isn't there.

Another big input to this increase in numbers has been the exciting project in Orwell of which I would like to give you some more detail.

### **Orwell Project**

At this very meeting last year, were Wayne Talbot and Bob Bryant from Orwell Parish Council. We had visited Orwell with the bus over the previous summer and they were keen to see something continue in the village. Unfortunately we did not have the capacity to provide a term time bus session, so I agreed to meet with the young people to see what they would like. On two occasions Wayne, another volunteer from the village and I met with 18 young people and gave them a blank sheet asking what they would like in their village. They then whittled these suggestions down to three ideas, one of which was a regular youth club. In order to move this idea forward, they elected a committee of 6 young people who over the next 6 months worked to find a venue and find the funding to set this up. They also obtained training from Young Lives on the skills and roles they needed on a committee.

As a result, April this year they launched a weekly youth club in the Pavillion with the support of a youth worker from the Bus Project and 2 volunteers from the village. That youth club has had never less than 20 young people attend and usually sees over 30 young people every week. And it hasn't stopped there. The committee have recently been working on drafting a constitution, seeking more adult volunteers and the possibility of becoming a Junior Parish Council.

I can honestly say it has been a pleasure to be involved in this project and the youth committee have developed some very good skills over the last 12 months, and can be both challenging and inspirational. Never a dull moment in those committee meetings!

And continuing on this theme of working with others, I'd like to highlight some of the partnership work that has happened this year.

### **Partnership Work**

As mentioned before, Sam has worked hard on providing a programme of themed sessions and in particular on involving specialists from other organisations. This has included:

- Drinksense – who were able to send out a worker on to the bus over the summer holidays to cover the dangers of alcohol
- DialDrugLink – who attended each of our term time villages with very credible and accessible discussions about drug use
- Wood Green – who have again attended each of our term time villages to promote good pet care

We have also forged closer links with the Cambridgeshire County Council Locality Youth Work teams, and in both Orchard Park, Histon and Fen Drayton, we are joint providing venues and youth workers in different ways.

But perhaps the most important partnership work we are improving is with the young people. As Paul has already mentioned, the project has been successful in receiving funding to assist in something that we have been trying to do for some time. The Young

People's Fund of the Big Lottery grant has enabled us to have a major go at launching a Youth Forum for the project. This will be a group of young people representing all the users of the bus, who will assist in the running and improving of the project through links with the Management Committee and with their local communities.

This all kicked off on 16 October when we took a group of interested young people to Grafham Water for a residential weekend, where we had a tremendous time learning how to work together as a team and learning more about what the youth forum is about. As a result, 18 of the 22 young people there, volunteered to be on the Youth Forum and we are currently holding elections during our bus sessions. There is so much more that happened at the residential that I can't include it here but there is a report available if you are interested.

The thinking and planning for the Youth Forum has come partly from the young people themselves as expressed in our user survey in May this year.

### **Survey**

This is the second year that we have used this particular survey and I am pleased to report that the young people's opinions of the service, the project and the staff has improved in all areas covered.

Three highlights from this year's survey, are increases in the percentage of young people that agreed

1. That they enjoy coming to the bus
2. That the bus is a great place to meet friends
3. That the staff are friendly and helpful

It should be noted that the County Council set a target of 70% of young people expressing satisfaction with the service has been well surpassed. We achieved a 94% satisfaction rating.

To finish with, I would like to mention a few of my highlights from the year.

### **Highlights**

- Residential – the first is the most recent and so is fresh in my mind. It is about the experience of Helen (name changed) at our residential. Helen is 14 and can be the stereotypical teenager most of the time; apathetic, bit of a bully of those younger, and full of excuses. During the raft building session she had continued to show this behaviour, but the group got a raft built, got kitted out in their wetsuits and buoyancy aids and headed out onto the lake. In her group was an 11 year old boy (David) who was not a competent swimmer. At one point David slipped off the side of the raft and into the water. When he popped back up to the surface – his face was a picture of shock, but he reached out to the edge of the raft and grabbed on. Then the tears started to form in his eyes and it wasn't long until he was quite agitated and calling to be let onto the rescue craft. At this point Helen leapt into the water, swam round to David and helped him round to the back of the raft (encouraging him all the way). She then climbed back on herself and pulled David back on too. She then stood up in the middle of the raft and took leadership, giving instructions to the entire group and it wasn't long until they had paddled to their destination. During this whole event I was on the rescue craft with the instructors and mouths were spread in the widest grins you have ever seen. We had just witnessed the potential in a young person that so often stays hidden.

- Advice and information work - Where there is need we have provided in-depth support for a few young people, with successful referrals to suitable agencies for specialist services. This has included referring a few young people to Connexions for intensive careers advice, one of these has now completed the Princes Trust award following our advice, and is now back in college continuing with her studies. We are also supporting a young person by working with social services while some fairly serious family issues are sorted out.
- Work experience placements – two young people who are studying at a local college have been assisting on the bus as part of their work experience placements. One of these has gone on to become a volunteer and is hoping to progress with some youth work training in the future.
- Rank Foundation and Sam – Sam has been an excellent addition to our team, quickly taking responsibility for most of our sessions and developing strong positive relationships with many of the young people. Much of the advice and information work already mentioned is as a result of these.

So finally, enough of this year, what is coming up?

### **What next?**

Two things that will be high on the agenda over the next few months:

1. Youth Forum – following the successful first residential, another will be held shortly for those elected on to the Youth Forum. This will provide the young people with the opportunity to learn and practise the skills they will need on the forum. Then 6 meetings over the next 12 months.
2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Bus – very nearly completed now, the second bus, jointly supported by Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council, will be put in to action in new venues from January. Over the coming year its use will grow to 4 nights a week in South Cambs and 2 nights in the City.

In reply to a question about the reach and ambition of the youth forum, Alan explained that the youth forum is primarily connected to the bus but the information can be used for wider purposes and the young people will be encouraged to use the youth forum to link to the parish councils and other local and district organisation. It is a youth led project, the young people will decide how and when this will happen.

### **6. Guest Speaker: Lynn Hogarth Chief Executive of Young Lives**

Lynn Hogarth gave us a very interesting talk about the history of Young Lives before moving on to speak about the current structure and work that the Organisation is involved in and why. She finished with an interesting insight in to some future changes in the way that Young Lives will work.

### **7. AOB and date of next AGM**

There was no other business.

The date for the next AGM has yet to be agreed.

Paul ended the meeting by thanking all his colleagues for their help and support over the past year, and everyone at the meeting for their participation