



## Sway Welfare Aid Group

Registered Charity No. 261220

### Minutes of SWAG AGM held on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2021

Attendees: David Golby – Organiser, Jeremy Stevens – Treasurer. Trustees: Pat Fleat, Sally Smith, Sue Cornwell and Jane Self

Grete Steen, Sue Young, Clarissa Evans, Barry Cornwell, Mike Green, Stephen Self, Sue and Mike Gent, Ted Watts, Deborah Walker, Jonathan Elliott-Jones, Paul Caneparo, Gillian Colsell, Mary Llewellyn, Dave Hyde, Hugh Marchant, S. Molavi, Katie Walding, Colin Denman, Jane Pitts, Peter Mann, Nicky Bowler, Mr and Mrs M Monaghan, Mr and Mrs Seacombe, plus one other

1. Apologies : Jonathan Hartley, Chairman, Clive Potter, Trustee, Barry Rickman, Sandra Williams
2. Approval of Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting, which was held by Zoom with online voting: The minutes were approved without modification. Proposed by Deborah Walker and seconded by Mike Green. There were no matters arising.
3. Organiser's Report :

This will be my last report as, after ten demanding but fulfilling and enjoyable years as Organiser, I will be retiring at our AGM and will not be standing for re-election as a Trustee.

The unprecedented challenges we faced in the previous year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, whilst abating somewhat during the latter part of the current year, still caused both operational and organisational issues with many of our services. We continued to operate and offer as many activities as possible that were consistent with the ever-changing legislation in respect of lockdowns, social distancing, and other restrictions during the year. We even managed under the SWAG banner to re-establish a desperately needed Community Café within the village, which I will comment on further later in this report. None of this would have been possible without the continuing support of the local community and the unwavering commitment of our volunteers.

#### *Fund Raising*

During the year we received donations of £12,312, including £3,993 from our annual appeal and £4,759 from our transport clients. Whilst this is 1.6% lower than last year, excluding the exceptional single donation that we received then, it is a considerable achievement taking into account the financial pressures on family incomes caused by the ongoing economic impact of the pandemic. We were again unable to hold any other fund-raising events due to ongoing restrictions which in other years have raised significant donations.

Fortunately, the investment portfolio that we prudently manage on behalf of the charity saw a rebound in performance during the year after the dramatic falls in the stock market witnessed at the start of the pandemic. This rebound in performance contributed £14,987 to our income in the year, an increase of £2,049 over the previous year.

## *Charitable Activities*

Despite the ongoing impact of restrictions, we have been able to maintain and, in some cases, re-establish virtually all our activities during the course of the year.

Our medical transport activity continued to provide a covid safe service and undertook a significant number of journeys transporting 75 different clients to vital hospital appointments. Several of these trips involved transport for covid vaccination appointments that clients would otherwise have been unable to attend. We have been a virtual fourth emergency service for many residents over the year and significant credit must go to Mike, his fellow coordinators Richard, Colin and Hugh, together with our transport volunteers, in maintaining this essential service under such difficult circumstances.

Lunch Club was eventually allowed to meet again in August when the complex rules on indoor social gatherings for these groups were removed after almost 18 months of suspension. Currently we have 27-30 people who attend lunch club many of whom are socially isolated and are reliant of these meetings for both companionship and a nicely cooked hot meal. Deborah, Jane and several of their lunch club volunteers have been outstanding in ensuring that social contact has been maintained with a regular telephone call to these clients together with a doorstep delivery of home baked treats and latterly hot meals. It is staggering to report that, in total 332 home deliveries have been made during the last year.

Presently lunch club are meeting at the village hall as the cooking facilities at the church rooms are currently out of service. Grateful thanks must go to the village hall trustees who stepped into the breach and so kindly offered to us the use of their facilities at no charge other than a contribution to the utility costs.

As mentioned earlier, we were asked to become involved and to help with the re-launch of a weekly coffee morning activity in the village previously operated by Sue Young under the "Open House" banner. Following discussions with Sue Cornwell & Grete Steen, who were prepared to become coordinators of this venture, Community Café, under the SWAG umbrella of activities was launched in July of this year. This is a voluntary donation community service offering coffee, tea and biscuits in a social setting to local residents. All are welcome to attend and is particularly aimed at providing social contact to all age ranges in the village. Many volunteers have already come forward to help with this new venture and presently we have 28 active clients. Our hope is that the client base will grow over the coming year and Community Café will become a central hub for social contact and other charitable activities within the village. Sue Cornwell has been co-opted as a trustee to represent this new activity and will stand for election at the AGM.

We have continued to develop our media presence and, in addition to our website and articles in Sway News, we launched our own Facebook page during the year. Facebook is an increasing popular way of sharing and obtaining local news and information within the village community. Our recent postings have been viewed by 500 to 900 readers directly and probably considerably more as it is regularly shared on the Sway Hearsay Facebook page. Such postings should also encourage readers to learn more about the charity's wider activities, and we hope that among other benefits this will reinforce the message that the charity caters for, and is approachable by, villagers of all age groups.

Our financial grant activities have continued at a pace during the year. We have provided grants to five individuals or families under our Covid-19 Emergency grant scheme amounting to £9,800. Several of these cases have been critical in enabling people to literally survive financially following income loss due to the pandemic. This said, the number of new cases has declined during the latter part of the year and the trustees have recently decided to close this specific scheme at the end of the financial year in the belief that any future applications can be managed within our normal emergency grant activities. We have also seen an increase in requests for emergency help under our normal grant programme. We have helped eight families with such grants totalling £3,835, including three £100 payments to families under a small Christmas grant scheme initiated in conjunction with Sway Family Network.

We have continued to pay heating grants of £560 per applicant, in two £280 instalments to help with ever increasing utility costs faced by many families on low income. This year we have paid such grants to eleven families totalling £6,160. I will comment further on the impact of drastically increasing utility costs later under Future Outlook.

In addition to the above we have made grants of £500 towards the essential work undertaken by the New Forest Basics Bank which has benefited several Sway residents; £220 to the WI in Sway to support membership fees for members who otherwise would be unable to afford payment and £50 to Sway's Over Sixties Club to cover their room hire costs once they were able to restart their meetings in the last month of our financial year.

Finally, it is pleasing to report that St. Luke's School have utilised a further £3,593 of our multi-year grant to them that we made last financial year. With this expenditure, mainly spent on computer tablets and items of school uniform, they have been able to assist thirteen pupils from nine families.

### *Future Outlook*

We continue to remain in uncharted territory. Whilst the vaccination programme has undoubtedly been a success and has saved many lives it is still too early to judge if the pandemic is fully under control and whether society will return to any form of pre-pandemic normality. At the same time, we are seeing the problems and stress lines in the economy caused both locally within the UK and globally, as the world emerges from lockdown. It is inevitable that the Covid-19 pandemic and resultant economic problems will continue to impact all our lives, medically, financially and emotionally for quite a while. We anticipate a continued demand for our help during these difficult times ahead.

As previously mentioned, one of the immediate consequences of the world emerging from the economic lockdown is the unprecedented and sudden rise in energy costs. At this stage it is impossible to predict if this is a short-term issue or whether it will continue in the longer term. The trustees have therefore decided to increase SWAG's heating grant offering for next year by the full percentage uplift of the "cap" being implemented by the utility regulator. This will increase the grant that we offer from £560 to £680 for claimants currently on our heating grant list. In addition, the trustees are considering replacing the successful Covid-19 emergency grant scheme with a small grant scheme for unexpected emergencies in addition to our normal financial grant programme.

Thanks to donations from so many people over the years, we have fortunately managed to establish a healthy balance sheet and invested reserves with which to continue to support our local community in Sway during these exceptional times.

Whilst financial reserves together with donations help us pay for the work that we do, none of this would be possible without the loyalty, unstinting support, and sheer hard work from our many volunteers. This said, I would like to pay tribute to many of our volunteers who have, despite the obvious worries of catching the virus, continued to unselfishly offer their time and energy to help the most vulnerable in our village.

I would also like to sincerely thank my fellow trustees and coordinators who have spent many waking hours and on occasion sleepless nights working so diligently to enable the charity to continue its vital work under almost impossible circumstances. In addition to myself, Clive Potter has also decided to retire as a trustee and will not be standing for re-election at the AGM. I would like to pay particular tribute to Clive who has been involved in charitable activities in Sway for more than 50 years with SRISF and SWAG in addition to other organisations. Clive was also instrumental in the leadership of SRISF during the discussions leading to their successful merger with SWAG two years ago. The whole village owes Clive a vote of gratitude for his charitable work over the years. We have two new trustees, Sue Cornwell and Jane Self, who are standing together with the remaining trustees for election at the AGM. I'm sure that Sue and Jane will bring new energy, fresh thinking and ideas to the group.

I leave SWAG with a heavy heart but very fond memories of what we have been accomplished over the last ten years. SWAG like most successful organisations is a team effort which enables people to come and go without impacting the charity. I leave in the absolute knowledge that the best team is in place to take the organisation forward for many years to come.

#### 4. Treasurer's Report and Adoption of Accounts :

Jeremy presented the Charity's Statement of Financial Activities for the year to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and the Balance Sheet as at same date. He advised that these documents had been approved by the Independent Inspector of Accounts.

After an explanation of the figures adoption of the accounts was proposed by Jane Pitts and seconded by Colin Denman. All were in favour.

The Organiser thanked the Treasurer for his report, and invited questions from the floor, there was just one question from a lady who asked if we used charity funds for our investments and Jeremy confirmed that we did.

A full financial report is available within the 2021 Annual Report and Accounts.

#### 5. Election of Trustees :

The Organiser indicated that both he and Clive Potter would be retiring following this AGM.

Two new proposed Trustees, Sue Cornwell and Jane Self, introduced themselves and gave a short précis of their time in the Village and before they move to Sway

Following this, the meeting elected the trustees – Chairman Jonathan Hartley, Treasurer Jeremy Stevens, Trustees Pat Fleat, Sally Smith, Sue Cornwell and Jane Self. Proposed by Mike Green and seconded by Hugh Marchant. All were in favour.

#### 6. Election of the Independent Inspector of Accounts :

Sandra Williams has been auditing the accounts for the last two years and had stated that she was willing to continue. Proposed by David Golby and seconded by Colin Denman. All were in favour.

#### 7. Lunch Club Report :

It has been an extremely difficult 20 months for us all with the COVID virus causing the country to go into lockdowns thus causing often despair and anxiety to many.

Our lunch club members all live alone and therefore during lockdown it became impossible for them to have family and friends visit them. During this time we made regular phone calls to them to find out how they were coping etc and to make sure that if they needed anything we would do our best to get it to them.

However, once we were able to go out a little more Jane and I decided that the phone calls would still happen but we would also once a month deliver to them a hot lunch with a main course and a pudding. This was extremely well received and was delivered free of charge thanks to donations from Swag and the Co-Op in the village.

Our members also received a full Christmas lunch with all the trimmings and for this we must thank John Coast who prepared and cooked 32 lunches which Jane & I delivered along with a goodie bag, decorated by the infants at St Luke's school which contained homemade mince pies, an individual Christmas cake, biscuits, chocolates and sweets.

We always buy our turkey from David West in the village and because of the different circumstances chose to go with turkey crowns for ease of preparation. When I went to collect the crowns, pigs in blankets etc David so very generously offered everything to us for free. Such a wonderful gesture and we would like to once again thank him for his kindness to our members.

The lunches continued being delivered to our members once a month until we were able once again to invite them to eat together on August 4th. Sadly the Church Rooms could not accommodate us as their oven had been disconnected after an inspection and so we approached the Village Hall who very kindly offered us our regular twice monthly dates.

It was such a joyful time seeing everyone back together, catching up with their friends and finding out how they had all coped with lockdown etc. We were delighted that everyone of our members returned to lunch club.

So far we have served 8 lunches in the hall since returning but our next lunch which will be our Christmas Party Lunch, when we will once again return to the Church Rooms. They now have a new oven and our members are delighted to be returning there. Access though for our members was actually easier at the Village Hall as with those unable to walk far could be driven right up to the door which isn't quite so easy at the Church Rooms if one's car is large and getting through the lychgate can be difficult.

So Christmas lunch on December 1st, with our usual turkey feast, crackers and a glass of wine, will be a most welcome celebration and we hope that it won't be too long into 2022 when will be fully back to normal. We're all keeping our fingers crossed.

A huge thank you must go out to our team of cooks & helpers who without their help and support the Lunch Club wouldn't be able to function.

Finally, Deborah and Jane made a call for more cooks. Lunch Club meet 23 times a year and four cooks are required for each session. However Deborah and Jane have had to cover 10 sessions themselves through lack of cooks.

## 8. Community Café Report :

For many years an 'Open House' coffee morning took place every Tuesday morning in St Luke's Church Rooms, but, during the summer of 2020, the wonderful host, Sue Young, decided to resign from her role. This was during the year of the first pandemic lock downs.

Sad to see this valuable activity come to an end, myself and Grete felt we could re-introduce the café, with the intent of reaching out to all Sway village people.

The 'Community Café' made it's debut on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June. We had a rocky start, closing for 2 weeks due to a Covid contact, but restarting July 13<sup>th</sup>, we have successfully met every week since then.

We have a lovely set of volunteers helping with coffee and refreshments, and setting up the room. Through the summer months we made full use of the large gazebo in the church room's garden.

We are incredibly fortunate to have SWAG supporting us with our room hire and other costs. The café runs on a donation only format.

In time we would like to introduce ideas that will reach out to younger members of our village. At present the atmosphere each Tuesday morning is heart warming with an average of 28/30 people attending.

## 9. Transport Coordinator's Report :

Mike reported that the drivers had been 100% committed to SWAG during lockdown and thanked them for their dedication. Furloughed people also came forward to help with the collection and delivery of prescriptions around the Village. Mike said that the Lunch Club had caused more drives per session when it started up again as only two people could be carried in each car. At the moment there are 50 drivers. Mike welcomed Hugh Marchant to the team.

#### 10. Public Forum :

Jonathan Elliott-Jones said that he volunteered at the CAP cafe in Lymington, which helps people looking for jobs. However it was expensive for Sway people to travel to Lymington and would SWAG drivers be able to help with the cost of people visiting the cafe. David said that this was something for the Trustees to discuss at their next meeting.

David wound up the meeting by saying that it had been a privilege to serve with SWAG and thanked Jeremy for his great help during his ten years. He also thanked Barry Rickman who was institutional in getting David involved in the Parish Council and SWAG.

Pat then thanked David for his time with SWAG and presented him with a card and two bottles of wine from the Trustees.

There being no further matters for the business of the AGM, the Organiser thanked all the participants, and the meeting was closed at 3.40 p.m.