



## Sway Welfare Aid Group

Registered Charity No. 261220

Minutes of the SWAG 2023 AGM held on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at 7.15pm

**Attendees:** Jon Hartley – Chairman, Sharon Millett – Treasurer, Pat Fleat – Secretary.  
**Trustees:** Jeremy Stevens, Sally Smith, Sue Cornwell, Jane Self, Angela Willows.

**Present :** Luncheon Club - Jane Pitts, SWAG – Barry Cornwell, Sandie Williams, Margaret Heavens, Russell Fry, Marion Loveridge, Mike Butler, Steve Self, Colin Denman, David Herrod, Mike Perrett, Hugh Marchant, Charles Fay, Emma O’Grady, Paul O’Grady, Sheila Butler

1. **Apologies :** Janet Kirk, Rev Jane Mitchell, Mike and Sheila Green, Deborah and Richard Walker, Malcolm Clayton, David Moynagh, Derek Grant
2. **Approval of the minutes of the last AGM** held on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022, proposed by Hugh Marchant and seconded by Sheila Butler. There were no matters arising.
3. **Chairman’s Report :** Jon Hartley

### **Achievements and Performance**

During 2022/2023, SWAG continued its work to support the residents of Sway and most especially those in our community who are most vulnerable. Despite an economic environment which has been more challenging than most expected, and thanks to the hard work and dedication of our volunteers and activity coordinators, SWAG was able to respond quickly with financial support to those most in need. We helped a record number of residents with medical transport to their hospital and clinic appointments, and provided valued social opportunities for elderly residents living alone. Given the volatile financial markets, your trustees have continued to invest the funds of the charity cautiously. Thanks to the support and generosity of the people of Sway, the charity has finished the year with a secure financial position which will ensure the charity’s ability to continue providing these services in future years.

### **Grants**

Once again, the charity has concentrated its grant resources on individuals and families. The charity has been in a position to respond to all requests for financial assistance received which were commensurate with our charitable objects.

In December of 2022, trustees increased the amount of SWAG’s traditional heating grant payments to £748 per year for each client. This was a response to the unprecedented rise in household energy costs resulting from insecurity in world energy supply.

Incidentally, just before Christmas 2023, the heating grant amount was further increased to £800 per year. Ten residents of the village benefitted from heating grants in the year we are reporting on today.

Approaches received from Sway residents for financial help in an emergency were unexpectedly lower than the previous year, however through our grant support to St. Luke's Primary School, a greater number of families in need did receive much needed help thanks to the charity. Sharon, our Treasurer, will mention the key financial numbers in her report.

### **Community Café**

The Community Café had an extremely successful year thanks to the leadership of Sue Cornwell and Grete Steen and their committed team of helpers. The Café met 48 times and welcomed an average of 22 guests per session, providing a highly valued social mixing opportunity for a loyal group of local clients, many of whom live alone. In 2023, the Café was successful in its bid to participate in the Co-operative Group's community fund raising efforts in our area. The sum raised from this source was a very welcome £2,026, received on the 21<sup>st</sup> November after the closing date of last year's accounts year and so this will be reported in next year's accounts.

### **Lunch Club**

The Lunch Club met on 23 occasions and attracted an average of 26 members, who enjoyed a nourishing two course hot meal and a much-anticipated social mingling opportunity. Transport is also provided to those members who need it by SWAG volunteer drivers. The trustees' sincere thanks go to the two Coordinators, Jane Pitts and Deborah Walker, and their dedicated team of volunteer cooks and helpers.

### **Medical Transport Service**

SWAG's medical transport service achieved an impressive 496 hospital and clinic transfers, providing a highly valued service to 94 residents of the village. The trustees' thanks are due to the five members of the volunteer team of transport service coordinators led by Mike Green who give up their free time to run the service, in addition to themselves acting as volunteer drivers. We have been very fortunate to attract a number of new volunteer drivers this year. This was vital in enabling us to maintain our driver strength, after taking in to account retirements, volunteer drivers who have moved away from the village, and those who for health or other reasons been unavailable for long periods. The trustees' thanks go to all our volunteer drivers, whose efforts are so appreciated by the residents who rely on this service to be able to get to their medical appointments.

### **Support for Sway community activities**

SWAG has, again, in 2022/2023 granted to the Sway Thursday Afternoon Club a sum of money sufficient to cover entirely the group's venue hire costs. I have already mentioned earlier on the grant support provided to the village primary school. As in previous years, the charity also made a financial contribution to the New Forest Basics Bank in Lymington. This reflects our role as a village agent for this crucial service. The total sum granted to such organisations who support residents of the village was just over £5,000, a significant increase over the previous year. Over the period of this report, SWAG made 10 referrals for Sway residents to the New Forest Basics Bank.

## **Future Outlook**

Many members of our village community continue to struggle with this year's inflationary pressures. It's to be expected that those residents who have been hardest hit will continue to turn to SWAG for help in 2024.

Thanks to the donations from, and the support of, so many Sway residents over the years, and the prudent management of our invested reserves, your trustees are confident that the charity will continue to be in a strong position to support our local community during these exceptional times.

On a personal note, this will be my last report as Chair of the Group, however I am standing for re-election as a Trustee, and I look forward to providing help and support to our new Chair, Sally Smith. Sally is already well known to everyone here as a committed SWAG volunteer and a long-standing trustee both with SWAG and previously as a trustee of the Sway Relief in Sickness Fund.

Two of our longest-serving trustee colleagues, Jeremy Stevens and Pat Fleat, have decided to stand down at this AGM. As I mentioned, Jeremy and Pat have been long-time and very active members of the trustee group, in Pat's case since 2016 and in the case of Jeremy, since 2007 if my research is correct, an incredible 16 years of service to our charity! Jeremy has contributed so much more to the charity than his key role as Treasurer, and I am very grateful that he has said that he will continue to be available to us to help with certain technical support matters, especially in relation to our driver service data base.

Before passing over to Sharon for the Financial Report, I want to thank personally all our volunteers who, despite the many pressures on their own lives and those of their families, have continued unselfishly to give their time, energy and enthusiasm to our charity. These are of course, the critical commodities which will ensure the future of the charity.

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

This is my first full year of being Treasurer and I'd like to thank Jeremy, who, I might add, is a tough act to follow, but he's always been there at the other end of the phone and guiding me along the way, and I hope he will assist in answering any tricky questions that you may fire at me.

#### **Our sources of income**

We were very fortunate to receive a legacy of £5,000 from the Estate of the late Pamela Donaldson and further donations totalling £562 in memory of another deceased Sway resident.

Our clients being transported to medical appointments donated £6,115, which is up 13% on the previous year.

The Christmas appeal generated donations of £6,433 which included a single generous donation of £2,500. This single donation rather distorts the 70% increase and if we exclude that £2,500 our increase is 4%.

The Community Café donations amounted to £1,046, an increase of 11% on the previous year.

All of the above figures include gift aid claimed at 25% where appropriate.

Overall donations increased by 15%, however excluding the single £2,500, this brings it down to a 3% increase.

Although not part of donations and fundraising, the income generated from our investments was £16,823 which amounts to 40% of our total income.

### **Charitable Activities**

We increased our regular heating grants again this year to £748, which is paid in two equal instalments of £374 in December and March. This benefitted 10 families.

Requests under the normal hardship scheme fell by two thirds from last year. Six families benefitted from this scheme and this totalled £3,351.

The organisations that benefitted were:

The New Forest Basics Bank which received £1,000 up from £750 in the previous year.

St Luke's Primary School received £3,500 – this supports vulnerable families.

And the Thursday afternoon club received £525.

The donations received from the medical transport service of £6,115 was enough to cover the mileage expenses of £5,694, paid to our drivers, which left a surplus of £421.

The Luncheon Club members pay £4 for their food and SWAG continues to meet the room hire costs and other support costs which amounted to £924.

The cost to operate the Community Café was £1,144 and it generated donations of £1,046, therefore a small loss of £98.

### **Investment Performance**

Our investments generated an income of £16,823.

The Equity funds have grown but the fixed interest fund has shown a small reduction in value, largely due to the high interest rates, therefore our total funds have shown a 5% growth for the year.

As there was less demand on the charity's resources this financial year, we had a surplus of £15,000 which the trustees agreed to invest into M&G Charifund to maximise income for the future.

### **The Overall Position**

SWAG has ended the year with income exceeding expenditure, creating a surplus of £16,220, which is up 8% on last year.

Expenditure on charitable activities was down by 20% and the total reserves in the Unrestricted Fund was £54,286.

In round terms total funds for the charity have grown from £433,000 to £469,000, an 8½ % increase.

Overall, I'm pleased to report a much stronger position than last year.

The members unanimously approved the Annual Accounts, as presented, proposed by Colin Denman and seconded by Stephen Self.

#### **5. Election of Trustees :**

Jeremy Stevens and Pat Fleat will step down from SWAG at this meeting, however Jeremy will continue to aid with the technical side of the charity.

Two people had offered themselves as Trustees, namely Janet Kirk, who probably needs no introduction to the Village and Angela Willows who introduced herself.

Jon also announced that he would be stepping down as Chairman and that position will be taken over by Sally Smith, however Jon did stand for re-election as a Trustee.

The following persons therefore offered themselves for election as Trustees :

Jon Hartley, Sally Smith, Sharon Millett, Sue Cornwall, Jane Self, Janet Kirk, Angela Willows.

The members approved unanimously the election of the named trustee candidates, proposed by Colin Denman and seconded by Sheila Butler.

Colin asked if Trustees had specific roles to play. Jon explained that the Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary do and that each month there was a duty trustee to deal with incoming phone calls and emails. Other roles were divided between the rest of the Trustees.

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

Sandie Williams has served as SWAG's Independent Examiner for the past five years and had communicated to the Chair that she felt that it was opportune for a fresh set of eyes to take on this role. The Chair recorded his grateful thanks for the professional job Sandie had done, on behalf of both the Trustees and the members of the Charity. The Charity is very fortunate to be able to welcome Mike Butler, who has put his name forward for election. The members approved unanimously the election of Mr Mike Butler as Independent Examiner of the Charity, proposed by Hugh Marchant and seconded by Barry Cornwell.

#### **7. Lunch Club Report : Jane Pitts**

First the vital statistics! We served 594 meals last year on 23 occasions, with an average of 26 members per session. Membership has grown to 38. We now feel that we are at capacity for both the space available and for our cooks to cope with.

Again we had a lovely Christmas celebration with 36 of our members attending. Our thanks go to David West for his supply, at a reduced rate, of a splendid turkey, to the lovely couple who always supply the wine and to all our 15 helpers who worked so well together on the day. We were able to gift a small Christmas goody bag to all our members, using our surplus funds at the end of the year.

Our financial situation is sound. SWAG supports our club with the cost of the rental of the church rooms. We are able to provide, for the present charge of £4, a two course meal with tea and coffee. We even have chocolates thanks to the continuing generosity of a former member, Derek Grant, and we thank him. At the moment we do not see the need to raise our prices.

Much thanks, of course, must go to our drivers, welcomers and cooks. Without their wonderful support, our club could not function. We have 23 SWAG drivers on our rota, 5 welcomers and 32 cooks. We have had a number of new cooks this year, which has meant that Deborah and I, although we try to attend all the sessions, are not having to cook some 15/16 times a year.

In November of last year, we held two tea parties for our cooks and welcomers. This allows us to thank them for their services, to get to know one another in a social setting, and to hear any of their concerns and to bring everyone up to date with health and safety practices. All cooks / welcomers have copies of "Managing Food Safety for Voluntary Lunch Clubs" and of the 14 allergens. In addition it makes it easier for our volunteers to sign up for next year's rota.

On November 15th, we were visited by an Environment and Health officer to inspect our premises and our practices. We are pleased to report that we received the top grade of 5 and that we will not need to be inspected for another 2 years.

And lastly, Deborah and I need to let you know that we are giving much thought to our eventual replacements. We love running the lunch club and will continue as long as we are able to cook for it, but we both intend to stand down in the next year and a half. I have been cooking for the lunch club since 1983 and Deborah has since her arrival in the village. Together we have organised this club for 15 years - this is our 16th year. We are actively looking for preferably 2 people to take over (we have found the sharing of tasks to be very useful and effective). We are prepared to have our replacements shadow us for our final year. So far no one has stepped forward and we are asking for your help in our search.

It has been both a privilege and a pleasure to organise the luncheon club in Sway but all good things must eventually come to an end. Let us hope another duo will come forward to keep this vital club going.

## **8. Community Café Report : Sue Cornwell**

This is the third year of the Community Cafe and is well attended, mainly by the elderly and we would like to see more people attend.

We are open every Tuesday from 10.30 to 11.30 with the exception of two weeks off at Christmas.

Grete suggested we also occasionally offered homemade soup and sandwiches. Following this suggestion, Grete has been off for three months so I thank those people who have helped me during this time, especially those who have been making the soup. So far we have had three sessions and the Cafe is open for an extra hour to accommodate this. This has proved popular with increased number. There is no charge, just a voluntary donation. We will stop the soup and sandwiches after Easter and continue again in September. There is no need to book for this and so far we have not run out of soup.

A donation of £2,026 was received from the Co-op, which was greatly appreciated.

We feel that the Community Cafe is not just a place for people to come to socialise it also gives us a chance to check on our neighbours and friends i.e. if a regular user has not attended for a few weeks then we get in touch with them to make sure that everything is ok with them.

## **9. Transport Coordinator's Report : Hugh Marchant**

First, Mike Green who would normally be giving this chat, sends his apologies from half-way round the world! It seems a bit extreme even for him to travel that far just to avoid this moment!

A big welcome to Sheila Butler who joined our coordinator team last year. The other members as you all know are Mike Green, Colin Denman, Rick Walker and myself.

A big thank-you to all our drivers who continue to ensure that SWAG provides such an effective essential service to Sway residents. In the last SWAG financial year, 59 drivers travelled 9,760 miles on 496 journeys helping 94 Sway residents. (*that's 2/5<sup>th</sup> of the circumference of the earth!*) The overall number of SWAG drivers has not increased significantly for many years unlike the workload which last year was 44% higher than BC (Before Covid), so we really do need more drivers. Please everyone, spread the word so we can spread the load. Anyone interested can talk to any of us, or contact us through the SWAG helpline option 1.

I recently sent an email to our drivers regarding notifying us in advance of their unavailability. I hope you all received it! I suspect that, like me, you may sometimes breathe a deep sigh as the phone rings and caller display shows it's one of us coordinators calling! But please spare a thought for us coordinators. Each one of those journeys you performed last year took on average 3 or 4 phone calls to arrange – rarely just the one and occasionally as many as a dozen! That's around 2,000 calls in total! The extra ones were not answered or were intercepted by an answerphone, or they were answered by people who were unable to take on that particular drive - all for excellent reasons. You can help reduce the number of excess calls by telling us as far in advance as you can if you are not going to be available for driving for a week or more. That way we will not try phoning you until you are available again. You can inform any of us of this directly or by leaving a message on the SWAG line option 1.

Before I finish, I would like to extend enormous thanks to Jeremy for keeping our IT systems ticking along and to our trustees for ensuring that SWAG is kept on track. What a great team!

I think that was more or less what Mike would have said!

## 10. **Public Forum :**

Colin Denman asked if SWAG could help with emergency alarm systems and Jon replied that yes they can support them and suggested the Appletree Careline system. He asked drivers to be aware of this when speaking to clients.

Jon reported that the Blue Badge had been renewed after it was originally refused. Previously this was kept at Mike Green's for drivers to collect when it was required, but as Mike is away Colin and Hugh will monitor its use.

There being no further matters the meeting closed at 8.00pm.