

**SYDENHAM GARDEN (“SG”)
MINUTES OF THE 2022 AGM
HELD AT SYDENHAM GARDEN, WYNELL ROAD AT 19.00 ON 23rd
NOVEMBER 2022**

Present:

Members: Graeme Thomson*, Kehinde Adeogun*, Jon Sherman*, Alona Sheridan, Jim Sikorski, Deborah Lader, Natasha Ratter*, Fran Bristow*, Anne Sykes*, Laura Reynolds*, Gill Stephenson, Morwena Nadar, Nitia Nadar

In attendance: Beth Jaichand

Apologies Julia Brandreth, Maria Devereaux, Steve Bullock, Arthur Ngoka

*Trustee

1. Graeme Thomson (GT), Vice Chair, introduced himself as leading the meeting in the absence of Julia Brandreth (Chair) and asked Trustees, Staff, Volunteers, Co-workers and other guests or Members in turn to introduce themselves. He noted that the Meeting was quorate, there being more than ten Members present by proxy or in person.
2. GT highlighted key items from the Minutes of the 2021 AGM, which had previously been posted on the SG website in December 2021. In particular he noted:
 - that it had been held online owing to Covid-19.
 - the appointment of Beth (BJ) as Director in November 2021.
 - all resolutions had been passed unanimously.
3. GT turned to the 2022 Notice of Meeting which had been on the website for some weeks and said this should be taken as read, but that each Resolution would be read out in full.
4. GT said that Resolution 1 was “To receive the accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2022, including the Trustees’ report on the Charity’s activities since the previous AGM”. He noted that these had been on the website since the Independent Examiner had concluded their work (without requiring any changes to the Annual Report) and it had been approved by Trustees on 27 October.
 - JS went through accounts – he highlighted the reduction in income to £362k from the previous year’s £483k was largely due to COVID

funding received in the previous year which was spent in this year. This led to a loss of £86k compared with a surplus of £88k in the prior year so reserves have reduced, but cash was still a healthy position at end of year at £254k.

- A current year progress report is included in the financial statements – the main message is that we are making substantial funding applications but are awaiting the outcomes of these. We have a new Trustee, Natasha Ratter (NR), with a focus on fundraising. GT noted that as with all small charities funding is always uncertain and there is more demand but less money around due to wider crises eg Ukraine, cost of living. NR concurred.
- JS noted that a considerable amount of detailed work had gone into the Report and gave special thanks to Sue Moye, Jermaine Bennett, Beth Jaichand and GT. He asked if there were any questions on these accounts or other matters; there were none.

The Resolution 1 was put to the Meeting with Kehinde Adeogun (KA) proposing it and Alona Sheridan (AS) seconding it; the votes cast, together with Proxies received, carried it unanimously.

5. GT said that Resolution 2 was “To elect Natasha Ratter as a Trustee”.

He said that NR had already made a good contribution to the Charity and it was pleasing to be able to welcome an experienced younger person to the Board. He asked NR to give some background on herself, which she did, including noting she is currently working for an environmental charity and about her fundraising experience.

The Resolution 2 was put to the Meeting with KA proposing it and Morwenna Nadar (MN) seconding it; the votes cast, together with Proxies received, carried it unanimously.

6. GT said that Resolution 3 was “To elect Laura Reynolds as a Trustee”.

GT said that Laura runs garden sessions at Coin Street and has experience on the services side. She had made a positive contribution in these areas and was also a welcome younger Trustee.

The Resolution was put to the Meeting with Gill Stephenson (GS) proposing it and Jim Sikorski (JSk) seconding it; the votes cast, together with Proxies received, carried it unanimously.

7. GT said that Resolution 4 was “To re-elect Kehinde Adeogun as a Trustee”.

GT praised KA for her sound advice and contributions over previous years, particularly on legal work and more recently as a Vice-Chair.

The Resolution was put to the Meeting with GT proposing it and Fran Bristow (FB) seconding it; the votes cast, together with Proxies received, carried it unanimously.

8. JB said that Resolution 5 was “To re-elect Steve Bullock (SB) as a Trustee”.

GT praised SB for his sage advice and pragmatic solutions since he joined in Dec 2018.

The Resolution was put to the Meeting with Anne Sykes (AS) proposing it and FB seconding it; the votes cast, together with Proxies received, carried it unanimously.

9. JB said that Resolution 6 was “To re-elect Jullen Gordon (JG) as a Trustee”.

GT praised JG for her background in gardening (she has won a medal at a Chelsea flower show) and explained how she'd begun as a co-worker and then volunteered.

The Resolution was put to the Meeting with MN proposing it and GT seconding it; the votes cast, together with Proxies received, carried it unanimously.

10. GT said that he reluctantly proposed Resolution 7, which was “To accept the retirement of Maria Deveraux (MD) as a Trustee after the maximum nine years as a Trustee”.

GT described MD as that rare person who lights up a room or a conversation, and that she had been a helpful, supportive, positive and dynamic trustee. Always ready with a smile she has helped the Charity through hard times, including recently as Chair of the Services Committee and especially with her help for our co-workers. She was instrumental in its recovery and development, always speaking her mind with clear and well thought-through suggestions and actions.

Whilst she has not been able to participate as much as she would have liked in the last year she has assured us that she will continue to help in one way or another. GT said to quote her “the Charity is close to my heart”, as she is to all of ours. SG was indebted to her for all she had given to the organisation and achieved. She will be missed by the Board but we are all grateful that she plans to continue to help as a volunteer.

MD was unable to attend the AGM but sent a message which was read out including to say that it was a privilege to have been a volunteer and trustee over the years. She noted that she was proud that SG is a shining example of social prescribing and well regarded.

The Resolution 7 was put to the Meeting with Nitia Nadar (NN) proposing it and AS seconding it; the votes cast, together with Proxies received, carried it unanimously.

11. GT said that Resolution 8 was “To re-appoint Carley Partnership as Independent Examiner”.

GT thanked Sue Moye the former Finance Manager for her sterling work on the annual report even after she had retired. He reported that SG’s finances are in good hands with our new Finance Manager, Vani Nirajan, in place.

The Resolution 8 was put to the Meeting with Alona Sheridan (ASh) proposing it and AS seconding it; the votes cast, together with Proxies received, carried it unanimously.

12. Beth Jaichand (BJ) gave a presentation (attached) on the highlights of her first year at SG and some of its future plans.

BJ highlighted the many activities which SG carries out, including the less-well known wellbeing wanderers, transitions groups and newer projects eg young persons project group and a practical organic gardening group offering a qualification. Online groups, which had been adopted during Covid, have now been ceased.

Some other highlights of her first year have included first aid training, events being back in-person after the pandemic, painting of the Sydenham Garden mural, more visits as the gates are open again eg from Sir Norman Lamb (Chair of SLAM), an African print workshop as part of Black History Month and post Pride tea & cake which was an opportunity to share work and experiences with other organisations.

BJ showed photos and a video of the 2022 De Frene Summer Festival – she gave credit especially to Steve Prowse and David Lloyd’s organisation and to music of the ‘Heart of Steel’ band.

Looking forward BJ highlighted areas such as services, support, looking outwards and environment as all part of the SG mission of promoting the physical and mental wellbeing of residents in South London. GT added that the 3-year plan expires in April 2023 so SG is starting to think ahead about its strategy. Consultations would be held over the coming months with the aim of ensuring we maximise the outcomes for our co-workers with the resources we have available.

BJ noted that frontline volunteers are very important to SG and showed a positive quote from a co-worker including reference to the care and support received. This resonated with the Meeting and showed how SG helps co-workers. GT stressed the importance of SG’s culture of caring and healing which drives all of our efforts.

BJ ended with a slide on the Sydenham artists trail and flower farm.

GT appreciated the presentation and Beth’s work since she joined in November 2021: he said it was her first job as a Director and he noted that the staff respected her. He said she is growing into the role and that she had particularly been instrumental in the introduction of new processes and ensured policies were regularly updated. He thanked her on behalf of the Trustees.

GT also thanked the staff for how they had dealt with Covid, not least adapting to working online, and then during the period coming out of the worst of Covid. He said it exemplified the spirit of the team at SG and that we also need to remember the toll that Covid had taken on our people. GT also thanked the volunteers for their unstinting energy and positivity.

He noted that the demand for SG’s services has risen dramatically and so it is more important than ever to utilise its resources to gain the maximum positive effect. GT paid tribute to the Trustees for their support of the organisation through recent periods, especially with a number of changes in the Director role and with the challenges of Covid over the last few years.

13. GT thanked everyone for coming to the AGM and helping to create the unique culture of SG. He asked if anyone had any questions or wanted to pass any comments: there were none.

14. In closing GT said a big thanks to all for their dedicated work on behalf of our co-workers. Looking forward he said SG will seek to implement the key strands of its plans, that it was in a healthy condition, intends to increasingly reflect the communities we serve and to go from strength-to- strength.

15. There being no other business the Meeting closed at 19.49.

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Graeme Thomson

Chair

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