

Malvern Welcomes AGM Minutes: 14 October 2019

50 people attended the AGM in Lansdowne Church. Baklava was made by one of the resettled families and enjoyed by all.

1. Our speaker Amanda Jones. Ruth Forecast as chair welcomed all and introduced the guest speaker, Amanda Jones from *Shropshire Refugee Support Group*.

Amanda Jones (AJ) shared her story about the establishment of the Refugee Support Group in her region. She had previously been involved in helping assist refugees in Calais. She used FaceBook (FB) initially to organise likeminded friends and now membership of the Shropshire Refugee Support FB stands at over 900. They have welcomed twenty-three families to Shropshire under the Syrian Vulnerable Person's programme (they do not have any Community Sponsorship families) She highlighted the benefits and challenges of being in an isolated rural community (for example difficult in accessing Halal meat).

AJ found her role soon became that of a facilitator of offers of help. She recognised that everyone needed to be flexible in assisting the resettled families, recognising that people have come from very difficult situations and being sensitive to this. AJ highlighted that they have a great army of volunteers from sorters to fundraisers. They run groups such as: a craft and chat group; English language groups; men's trauma and resilience groups; bike recycling project (all of their families get bikes when they arrive); Teaching Assistance in schools (they have an Arabic speaker from Jordan). They have approached local private schools to assist with English language lessons in the summer holidays.

They have established partnerships with groups such as mental health teams, family support teams, church, individuals, inter faith groups, schools, companies, teachers.

The Shropshire group has an ethos of 'heart-led resettlement' based on instinct. It has to be flexible in order to recognise and respond to the changes in people's lives over time. It's also based on having trust and faith in the kindness of people. They currently have over 60 people befriending families in the county.

AJ highlighted the importance of psychosocial support and providing opportunities for people to work together. As new families have arrived they have encouraged the older families to assist with buying hampers and essentials for resettlement.

Shropshire Refugee Support is trying to secure the group's future with fundraising and grants. Their local Council is very supportive of their work and has provided funding. They have now acquired a venue to help run classes and gatherings. They have established a Committee for the resettled families to provide them with a voice and allow them to give feedback. AJ also informed us that the families had organised a peace march through Ludlow in recognition of the recent fighting in Syria, with over 400 people joining.

They have found Refugee Week a useful tool for contributing ideas on community support – artists, youth based orgs, film showing (*Flix in the Stix*) – awareness raising films, poetry night in a café, psychological support groups (trauma and resilience workshops – (Seachange psychotherapy¹ – working with schools), six-week resilience course offer (a therapist who had experience working in Bosnia after the conflict), psychotherapist and counselling for volunteers as vicarious trauma should be recognised.

After running for three years AJ said that Shropshire RS now feels like a solid organisation with a grant from the Council to pay for AJ's time and help for the families. They have just secured GBP10,000 from the lottery.

The Group is entering the **School of Sanctuary** and **City of Sanctuary Awards**² to help 'spread the word'. They are working with schools and children and raise awareness.

AJ complemented Malvern Welcomes on the work they do and is taking inspiration from her time spent here. She remarked on the brilliant work being done in rural places as well as large cities.

Ruth thanked AJ for her inspiring discussion and contribution.

2. MW Annual report. Sue Wolfendale welcomed everyone to the second AGM and presented the MW Annual Report which will shortly be submitted to the Charity Commission.

2019 has been a very busy year. MW welcomed a second family under Full Community Sponsorship in December 2018 and the Group has been busy with induction and provision of English language teaching, befriending and helping them become part of the local area. All the family is making excellent progress with language. Excellent progress has also been made with all the families with two individuals now volunteering with local organisations and one working part-time. All the children are settled in school.

MW has been waiting before applying for a third CS family due to the desire not to overload volunteers and there is also no current availability of housing.

It was also decided this year to work with the other three families resettled in Malvern by Worcestershire County Council through Refugee Action. Each of these families now has a small team of Malvern Welcomes volunteers and ESOL provision.

One of MW's aims is to raise awareness and education on refugees. Ruth has travelled extensively to do this in schools, twice accompanied by Razan, who arrived in the UK as a refugee two years ago. Viv Jones gives regular updates to Churches Together.

Sue thanked Lansdowne Church for hosting MW events and for their continued financial support (MW has been their charity of choice for 2 years now). Sue also thanked St Joseph's

¹ <http://www.scpsychotherapy.co.uk/>

² <https://cityofsanctuary.org/awards/>

for the use of their buildings for meetings and events, and thanked MW volunteers for their vital support for the resettled families.

3. Treasurer's report. Dan Herbert (DH) (Chair of the Trustees/ Treasurer) – presented the Financial Report. He outlined the reserves policy guidance from the Home Office who require Organisations to have GBP9,000 in reserves to make sure they never run out of funds to support families.

Dan informed everyone of Tony Vere's work in finding grants for MW and mentioned the importance of the individual donors who have contributed (please see additional note from Tony on fundraising).

One of the largest costs for MW is translation and language services especially when people first arrive. Another large cost is buying life essentials for the families such as phone, TV licenses etc. Recuperating travel costs is also included in the costings.

There are no costs for administration listed as public liability insurance is a necessary requirement and therefore not recorded under administrative: everything else that would fall under administration is generously provided by volunteers.

4. Election of trustees. The decision has been taken to create a better governance system by having a trustee board largely separate from management and able to oversee it and the whole organisation. With this in view, Ruth Forecast and Sue Wolfendale stood down as trustees. They will continue in Management roles. Rosemary resigned from the Management team and remains as a trustee. Dan Herbert will stay on both bodies as a link. Dick Stockford and John Raine will continue as trustees and three new candidates were elected: Fiona Carmichael; Margaret Bryer; Tony Matthews (see additional sheet for bios). The meeting elected them unanimously.

DH said that if there are others who would like to become Trustees he would encourage them to put themselves forward.

Action: Trustee applications accepted

5. Report from Alison King, member of the Management Team, safeguarding lead and newsletter editor, addressed the AGM next. AK recognised that a MW newsletter is due and is preparing the next one for distribution. She informed the meeting that Sharon and Tony Vere have joined the Management Team. MW is looking for more help such as in-school support; presentations into schools; driving; driving the minibus.

Action: more volunteers required

6. Report from the fund raising coordinator. Tony Vere then spoke to the AGM in his role as fundraising coordinator. He highlighted that GBP15,000 is more of a realistic fee than the £9000 required by the Home office to help resettle a family. GBP25,000 is the current financial balance for MW. GBP11,000 has been raised from grants. He noted that it is difficult for MW to be this dependent on grants as they typically focus on funding specific projects rather than

rolling funding programmes. Therefore, MW needs to focus on local charitable support and fundraising to have a stable baseline and income such as standing orders.

Question asked by Dan Robert on whether MW has applied to Malvern Town Council. There are special grants that sit outside normal grants. TV informed that MW has applied for grants and received support and would continue to look to this source.

Ruth gave huge thanks to Tony for his fundraising and support.

7. ESOL. Sharon sent her apologies so **Ruth Forecast** gave an update on ESOL support. Ruth noted the special and dedicated support from the whole team. Sharon is with the families from the outset and customizes a learning programme for each family member. This has been a noted success with all of the families.

Ruth emphasised the importance of learning English and its empowering affect.

8. The summer programme.

Ruth discussed the importance of the social events with the families, for building friendships and confidence and encouraging integration, and highlighted the summer events. Winter months may make going out and about more difficult but as families gather confidence we hope that they will arrange events themselves.

The children had attended fun activities at Malvern Splash and summer activities at Dyson Perrins School, for which we had provided funding.

The ESOL team had arranged English lessons over the summer holidays to maintain some continuity in learning during the time when there were no formal English provision. Thanks were given to the language team for arranging (venues, teachers etc.).

The **Coming Together Programme** was a real success over the summer. Tony and Rosemary successfully applied for a Home Office grant to run a series of workshops and gatherings at Lansdowne Church. New friendships were forged. Resettled children and local children were able to socialise and take part in activities. Five sessions were held in total including events for adults and children alike. Slides from the five sessions were shown to the gathering.

Ruth read an email from one of the resettled families expressing their thanks to Ruth and MW for making them feel so welcomed following the Coming Together workshops. All agreed that it was heart warming and a real success. A credit to MW and Malvern for their compassion and welcome.

Ruth thanked **Lansdowne Church** and its Minister, Nigel, for their support and also highlighted that Nigel had personally thanked the families for coming and 'bringing light to the church' over the summer.

9. The refugee Experience: Testament from Razan who has been in the UK for two years and is now at university studying Pharmacy. Razan spoke eloquently about her experience and all agreed that she is an inspiration and a valued member of the community.

Jean informed the group that Razan and her parents have been invited by West Mercia Police to Hindlip Hall as she has been awarded the Good Citizenship of the Year award.

10. Supporting pupils in school Ruth Joynes from the Chase school has the role of providing English support for pupils at the Chase who do not speak English as a first language. She spoke about the pleasure of supporting these children and said that they are often put back a school year so they receive an extra year of education. Ruth stated that she was hugely grateful for the ESOL classes as these provide foundational support for the children. She noted the challenges in learning English properly, non-conversational such as English for subjects for GCSEs. She is flexible in responding to their needs and also provides homework assistance. The children are 'blossoming' and want to learn. She noted how resilient and remarkable the children are.

An Arabic GCSE has now started at the Chase. The senior leadership team at the School are very supportive and value the diversity. Other Muslim children are now encouraged to be open about talking about their faith since the arrival of Syrian children.

Ruth J noted that she will be in touch with AJ from Shropshire to learn of her experiences as well. She also highlighted that she had been teaching teachers as well – training in making lessons accessible to resettled children. There has been amazing progress in just one year. Children are being invited to the social events and encouraged to talk about their future careers – doctors, engineers etc. 'Stand up and shine' was an expression she used regarding their progress.

Ruth Forecast thanked Ruth J for all her work.

11. MW's Aspirations. Ruth F went on to discuss MW's current aspirations, focused on preparing to apply for a third Community Sponsorship family.

The Education in the Community programme needs to be extended but this requires more helpers to do this.

Action: request for volunteers to help with this programme please

Main focus is however on continuing to keep the resettled families healthy and safe.

Rosemary Thorp added that one of the aspirations is to make the sewing group, formed over the summer, more of a social event and called for participants and volunteers to join the women who have been enjoying this very much as a social activity.

12. AOB

Jean Bryant observed that referring to families as resettled and not refugees is tremendous progress. All agreed with this.

Dick Stockford thanked the Management Team for their work and highlighted that this was the third AGM to be held, not the second. It has been a difficult year but a huge amount achieved.

Alan Hood (membership secretary) said that membership is arranged via the newsletter and gave the email for enquiries:

Malvernwelcomes.membership@gmail.com He proposes to send out reminders once a quarter if subscriptions are due.

There was promotion of an upcoming concert – People in Motion (collecting assorted donations for Syria). November 23rd – flyers.

Ruth thanked everyone for coming and their support