



Registered charity 1174004 www.malvernwelcomes.org

Malvern Welcomes AGM Minutes 2024

Wednesday, 25th September 2024. 7pm

Lansdowne Crescent Methodist Church, Lansdowne Crescent, Malvern, WR14 2AW

Present: MW Trustee Board, supporters and volunteers of MW

Apologies: Laila Kasem, Fiona Carmichael, Richard King, Ruth Pole

Highlights from the annual report for the charity

Jane presented a summary update report from the Management Team to members. Started with a thanks to Ruth Forecast for her years of leadership and service.

The year has seen further families are being supported, and established families starting jobs, applying for citizenship, taking driving lessons, volunteering.

4th community sponsorship family has been welcomed 1 year ago. Family members have now started at University, which was their dream, they are wished every success by the MT and MW members. Families report that they feel well supported to liaise with public services and support charities such as Maximus who have helped support job finding. There is still some delay and challenges in finding appropriate educational setting for one family member.

An employment support group is established. Employment remains the most significant barrier for families. A Facebook page has been set up to share info and networks, advice for CV writing, opportunities to meet with a local employer. 3 family members have had periods of employment

Children of families have become fluent English speakers and are independent. Volunteers and ESOL tutors have made great connections with schools. Communication with the Chase needs some work. Some schools remain inflexible about providing school places outside of start of school term.

Connections with Worcester University (ESOL course) continue, through providing support for family members in their academic writing, and the University will apply for University of Sanctuary.

Jan Watts at Eden centre continues to play an important role with families.

Numbers attending Conversation Café have declined, which is a sign of success – moving to once monthly event, will be a surgery.

A sub-committee of volunteers have been convened to work on fundraising.

Forward planning day in March was very well attended (28 MW members)

- Priorities are to strengthen communication links between Trustees/MT and family representatives; also a volunteer bulletin produced; Trustee minutes are now sent to members and volunteers
- Training through Reset for volunteers has been very useful and practical, on benefits, higher education, mental health, and they provide ongoing advice
- Worcestershire Welcomes Refugees (WWR) have been an excellent resource and support, keeping MW members informed. Penny from Worcestershire Council contributes to the Management Team
- Question about what kind of information and guidance will be needed in the future, for discussion of whether it is within remit of MW to support asylum seekers. Agreed it is within remit, need to have the skills and up to date knowledge to support.
- Celebration of the many events held during the year – stall on Church Street for Refugee Week, trip to Barry Island with families, picnic in July in West Malvern, Community Inspiration Awards in Birmingham to receive a nomination among a wide spectrum of organisations, and one of the few groups to attend from outside the city. Ruth was nominated for public service award and was runner up. Congratulations to Ruth, and thank you for raising the profile of MW. Seeking a story in the Malvern Gazette to raise positive stories of resettlement.

ACTION: MT to ask Trustee David Kitcat to communicate with the Chase on the role of ESOL support, volunteers and availability of school places

Discussion:

Sometimes feels hard to plan forward as the key purpose of MW is to respond to (unpredictable) need. Makes volunteer recruitment uncertain, and many volunteers are keen to work but it is not always clear how best to use their skills and enthusiasm.

Could have some call outs for volunteers for specific roles and skills, need a bank of people ready, but sometimes they feel ready and enthused to work. Can take over 2 months to do onboarding and recruitment.

What is needed is responsive employers, idea to have an event for employers, to learn more about CV writing and overcoming barriers to finding work, to raise awareness of the eagerness of the families to find work. May need to be in Worcester, idea for a dinner, needs to be supported with an engagement strategy and joint effort with fundraising to attract institutional donors.

ACTION: Fundraising and Employment groups could consider developing a joint employer engagement strategy with the aim of supporting routes to employment and corporate donations.

Need to be aware that families who have been here long periods may still need support, as they don't have extended social support networks. MW plays an essential role in this respect. New volunteers could potentially visit families who may feel socially isolated or want to practice English. On the other hand, some of the families are very busy and active. Activity based groups can work well, e.g. a sewing group was attended in the past, or to join existing groups.

ACTION: MW members keen to offer to restart an embroidery group.

Annual financial report

Huge thanks are extended to Richard to provide the accounts and all his help.

Finances are reported to be healthy. There was a budget deficit and a new family to support.

New funds were acquired for ESOL. 2 further families were supported through Worcester Community Sponsorship scheme, and ongoing expenditure e.g. on driving lessons and activities.

Aim for equitable support among and between families, hence caps are sometimes applied. MW is mindful of gender inequalities and diverse needs.

MW also pays towards a proportion of the high cost of British citizenship, as this is an important step for families.

The charity relies a lot on member donations, fundraising, anonymous donors and church support. Grant applications weren't made during this period, because these require a specific purpose. National charities have less grant funding available following Covid. Tony reports that local charities were approached but this seemed outside their remits.

Uncertainty before the UK general election about the future of the Community Sponsorship scheme.

Richard may need to stand down as Treasurer soon, and is available to provide a handover. We give grateful thanks to Richard's help

Amendment to note on financial report that the Reserves Policy is up to date (last reviewed Nov 23)

Mary Marsh acts as an independent inspector and has approved the accounts

ACTION: Trustee Board will upload the approved accounts to charity commission

ACTION: for further discussion whether, how and when MW will work towards sponsoring a new family

Elect trustees

3 Trustees present, apologies received from 2 Trustees

5% of membership required to be quorate to elect or re-elect trustees.

Aim for this year is to co-opt MW members onto Trustee Board with knowledge of safeguarding. Suggestions were made on who might be willing to take this role. Will also look for other skills.

Trustees are aiming to co-opt a MW volunteer onto the Trustee Board to ease and improve communication and transparency.

All current Trustees are willing to be re-elected. No MW members have contacted the Chair to express an interest in joining the Trustee Board.

ACTIONED: All current Trustee Board members were nominated, seconded and all present voted to re-elect them. No objections were raised and Trustees were re-elected.

Discussion, Questions and Answers

If anyone is interested in learning Arabic, a member has a lot of learning materials. It is on the family support group agenda to share these.

Chair gave a vote of thanks to the Management Team, volunteers and members for all their excellent work. The charity is in a very good position. Ruth gave thanks to the Chair for the governance work done by the Trustee Board.

Membership remains at £10 a year, and it was proposed to raise this to £15 a year. Suggestion for a minimum donation of £10, suggested cost of £15, no maximum.

Money has also been raised through 'tea with Elgar' event.

Would like further planning days, an annual celebratory and get together event for volunteers.

Would like more general MW members to join fundraising committee

ACTION: MT to consider raising the membership fee.

ACTION: send special invite via members and volunteer newsletter to join fundraising committee.

Next AGM will be held in July 2025