



National Survivor
User Network

Annual General Meeting and Members' Event 2020

Business minutes - 24th November

National Survivor
User Network
020 7820 8982
info@nsun.org.uk
www.nsun.org.uk
Registered Charity
No. 113598
Company number:
07166851
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User Network
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The meeting this year was held via a zoom webinar. **Angela Newton**, NSUN Chair, chaired the business, with **Akiko Hart**, NSUN CEO, and **Jen Beardsley**, NSUN Finance Officer, also talking through some items.

Present (Trustees): Zoe Bennett, Alisdair Cameron, Eleni Chambers, Nic Murray, Angela Newton, Emily Reynolds, Amy Rushton, Rachel Rowan Olive
Apologies (Trustees): Jonathan Rackham, Dawn Willis

Akiko welcomed attendees and invited them to put any questions in the Q & A facility on zoom which would be answered at the end of the business, and also then to contact her directly if any questions weren't covered. Akiko introduced Angela communicating to attendees that she had 20 years' experience of working within mental health services, involvement and leadership, helping to transform lives, services, organisations and society; that she was the former Director of Services Involvement at Together for Mental Wellbeing; an advisor in the development of NSUN's 4Pi standards; the founder of Lived Experience Matters; and the Managing Director at Ten Years' Time.

Angela welcomed attendees and said that she would be chairing the AGM business. Before starting the business items, Angela wanted to acknowledge the impact that Covid-19 had had on everyone's lives this year, and that it had meant that the AGM had to be online this year but that it meant that it could be easier for some people to join this year when maybe they hadn't been able to before.

Angela explained about the new voting system, saying that usually at the in-person AGM the method is a show of hands but that due to the extenuating circumstances of Covid-19 and the Charity Commission giving leeway to charities on their voting methods, NSUN had moved its process to online voting, which had also given many members an easier way to vote. She said that one of the past criticisms of the show-of-hands method in the room was that it was not private, and that this new way had allowed for more privacy and anonymity, however there still remained a postal voting option for those members for whom NSUN only held a postal address.

Item 1

Approval of Minutes of 24th October 2019 AGM

With the minutes of the AGM 2019 having been previously sent out to members and voted on beforehand, Angela read out the results:

Online vote: Yes - 64, No - 4, Yes - 16.

0 postal votes received.

The minutes were approved.

Item 2

Trustees' Annual Report

Akiko said it was strange to talk about the annual report, the work for which ended in March 2020, and that there was a video highlighting our work on the NSUN AGM website. She said that Covid-19 had transformed our lives and our work this year, and she highlighted the Covid Fund work, where NSUN distributed £120,000 worth of small grants to user-led groups working with people living with mental ill health distress and trauma. She invited questions which would be answered at the end of business.

Item 3

Approval of Annual Accounts

Jen ran through the highlights of NSUN's annual accounts, specifically referring to the detail in pages 17 and 18, for year ended 31st March 2020 as follows:

- There was a need to adjust the financial reporting for the previous year (Apr 2018 - Mar 2019) because of a small collection of minor administrative errors in those accounts which meant that the funds reported at the end of the year needed to be increased by just over £14,000 but that the stipulations of how the funds were to be spent by donors were still followed, and that in addition new systems were in place to improve that reporting in the future.
- Total surplus for the year was £5973, nearly £35,000 better than the previous year where there was a deficit. Income was slightly improved with higher consultancy income offsetting a small fall in donation income.
- The main driver of that improvement was lower costs:
 - Staff costs fell by nearly £15,000, following the difficult need to reduce the staff team the previous year.

- o The Reigniting the Space project came to an end during the year, resulting in lower costs of £14,000
- o £8,000 less spent on consultants for projects.
- o General running costs were further reduced in that year by nearly £7,000
- These reductions were offset by some fundraising costs of nearly £8,500 to support the team to seek new sources of grant funding and slightly higher AGM costs in that year.
- Main income source was grants at 81% of total income, for which NSUN is incredibly grateful to all its donors and grant funders, details of which can be seen on page 21 of the accounts
- Total funds held at March 2020 was £33,754: restricted funds of £23,000, and unrestricted funds of nearly £11,000
- Trustees set the level of reserves and some unrestricted funds will go towards that meaning that savings will be increased in future years to provide greater financial resilience.

Angela communicated the results of the vote on the approval of the annual accounts as follows:

Yes – 46, No -1, Abstain – 14.

There were 0 postal votes received.

The annual accounts were approved.

Item 4

Election of Honorary Officers

Angela explained that NSUN recruits trustees as and when the numbers start to fall, a full quota being 12 trustees which is what is aimed for although usually it runs at roughly 80% of that figure. She said that NSUN advertises these positions on its website and through other channels, and that anyone is welcome to apply to become a trustee and applications are particularly welcomed from people from marginalised groups. Angela reported that since the last AGM in 2019, three trustees had left NSUN, namely Mark Wood who was the former was Chair, Helen Oldfield who was Treasurer, and Julia Smith who was a trustee, and thanked them very much for their valued service.

Akiko stated that NSUN's Articles of Association require that all Officers must be elected annually and talked through the nominations and results of the voting that had taken place before the AGM as follows:

Nominations for Honorary Office:

- i. Chair: Angela Newton
- ii. Secretary: Dawn Willis

i. Results for Angela Newton:

The results of the online vote were: Yes - 62, No - 2, Abstain - 6.

There were 0 postal votes received.

Angela Newton was elected as Chair.

ii. Results for Dawn Willis:

The results of the online vote were: Yes - 64, No - 1, Abstain - 4.

There were 0 postal votes received.

Dawn Willis was elected as Secretary.

Angela said that she was honoured and privileged to be in the role as NSUN Chair having worked with NSUN in various ways over some years and was excited about the future.

Item 5

Election of Trustees

Angela explained that NSUN's Articles of Association state that all trustees must retire at the end of their third-year term (but then can be re-elected) and talked through the nominations and results as follows:

a) Trustees for re-election:

i. Eleni Chambers

The results of the online vote were: Yes - 54, No - 6, Abstain - 4

There were 0 postal votes received.

Eleni Chambers was re-elected as Trustee for another three-year term.

b) New trustee nominations:

i. Amy Rushton

ii. Jonathan Rackham

i. Amy Rushton:

The results of the online vote were: Yes - 55, No - 4, Abstain - 5

There were 0 postal votes received.

Amy Rushton was elected as a Trustee for a three-year term.

ii. Jonathan Rackham:

The results of the online vote were: Yes - 49, No - 6, Abstain - 6

There were 0 postal votes received.

Jonathan Rackham was elected as a Trustee for a three-year term.

Item 6

Amendment of Articles of Association

Angela said that with NSUN having been in existence for over 10 years, it seemed timely to review its Articles of Association. Trustees and staff have done this recently, with the consultation of legal counsel, and this has resulted in some additions and amendments which were communicated to members to vote on. Angela read out the amendments and additions and communicated the results of the voting as follows:

1. Amendment of Articles - 1.1, addition

“Special Advisors’ means those persons appointed pursuant to article 23.13;”

Note: This wording (associated with the new item 23.13 below) relates to the definition of a person named a ‘Special Advisor’ which the board may invite to sit in on board meetings in an advisory capacity only e.g. for special advice on legal matters.”

The results of the online vote for this addition were: Yes – 44, No – 1, Abstain – 11.
There were 0 postal votes received.

This addition to the articles was approved.

2. Amendment of Articles - 1.1, amendment

Current wording: “Any references to “member” means a member of the Charity for the purposes of the Acts, comprising solely the Directors in accordance with Article 6.1, and “membership” shall be construed accordingly.”

Proposed new wording: “Any references to “member” means a member of the Charity for the purposes of the Acts and “membership” shall be construed accordingly.”

Note: This amended wording removes the reference to members comprising only the directors (as was the case in the nascent NSUN) but so that the wording now reflects the membership comprising all NSUN members.

The results of the online vote for this amendment were: Yes – 38, No – 3, Abstain – 14
There were 0 postal votes received.

This amendment to the articles was approved.

3. Amendment of Articles - 23.13, new item

Wording: “The Directors may appoint persons who are willing to act as Special Advisors

from time to time and may remove or replace them from time to time by notice in writing to the Special Advisor. The number of Special Advisors shall not be subject to a minimum but shall not be more than three.”

The results of the online vote for this new item were: Yes – 41, No – 0, Abstain - 14
There were 0 postal votes received.

This new item addition to the articles was approved.

4. Amendment of Articles - 23.14, new item

Wording: “The Special Advisors shall be entitled to receive notice of and to attend and speak at the meetings of Directors unless determined otherwise by the Directors. The Special Advisors shall not be entitled to vote at the meetings of Directors.”

The results of the online vote for this new item were: Yes – 40, No – 1, Abstain - 12
There were 0 postal votes received.

This new item addition to the articles was approved.

5. Adoption of these amendments to the Articles of Association

Wording of resolution: “That with effect these new resolutions be incorporated into the existing articles of association.”

The results of the online vote for this resolution were: Yes – 37, No -1, Abstain - 13
There were 0 postal votes received.

These amendments to the Articles of Association were approved. Angela said that these would now be adopted into a new version of Articles which would shortly be published.

Item 7

Any Other Business / Special Business

Angela stated that there was no special business at this meeting but said any questions about the business would now be addressed in the Q & A and also any questions about the liability of members in the unlikely event that NSUN became insolvent which members received an email about a short while ago. Responses are summarised below each question.

Question: How representative is the organisation?

Angela replied that while some communities were represented quite well, NSUN would be looking to focus on its strategy to help do more work in this area.

Question: Where can we find out about the trustees' backgrounds, interests and skills?

Akiko replied that all of that information was on the [NSUN website](#) and was sent out prior to the AGM.

Question: Why is there a limitation of three special advisors to the board?

Angela replied that the board agreed that three seemed a sensible number, and that with a full board of 12 trustees, currently ten, any larger number might not work so well.

Question: How do board members' ethnicity reflect the community most likely to be impacted by mental health?

Angela said she felt that, knowing there was a high proportion of people from black and ethnic minority communities impacted by mental ill health, NSUN could do better at being more representative of these communities that it serves and that it was something that was looking to be progressed.

Question: How can people from rural coastal communities get more involved with NSUN?

Akiko asked that these communities please contact NSUN and send in news and events etc. to be publicised in the bulletin, and to give ideas as to how NSUN could amplify these areas and their networks and work. She reminded everyone that NSUN didn't have an office and all staff worked from home.

Angela said that the digital divide also did not help in this matter and that NSUN needed to ensure that its work continued to look at this.

Question: Given that more people are being touched by mental health, what are you doing/ going to do to ensure different types of people know about the brilliant work that you do?

Akiko replied that NSUN had recruited a new Comms and Membership Officer, Amy Wells, who was really helping to increase our reach and elevate NSUN's and its members' work e.g. through the bulletin and social media. She said that NSUN had a range of publications and reports coming out later in the year and that NSUN was also focusing on accessibility e.g. easy read and different language formats, and that NSUN welcomed any feedback on how we could improve and reach even more people.

Angela encouraged members to share their thoughts and opinions with other people about NSUN's work as word-of-mouth is really powerful.

Question: Is this session being recorded?

Akiko replied that it was but that it wouldn't be broadcast because it was a closed meeting but that the minutes would be shared in due course.

Question: What steps have been taken to ensure a more diverse representation on the board for future years? Perhaps greater outreach targeting people that may be less confident but would be capable and/or empowering people at a grassroots level. Has there been any discussion on this internally already re strategy?

Angela said that this was something that NSUN was progressing and encouraged anyone considering trusteeship to get in contact, either now or when periodic recruitment adverts went out, and that NSUN would look to support keen candidates who might lack board experience. She said that NSUN wanted to strive for its board to be as representative as possible of the communities that it serves and that this was on the strategic agenda. **Amy Rushton** said that, as a white queer new trustee from a poor region, they would welcome a chat about trusteeship with anyone who thought they may not fit the typical profile for trustees.

Question: Why is Wales excluded?

Akiko replied that the simple legal answer was that NSUN's articles of association dictate that it only operates in England. She said that Wales has its own survivor services or networks, as does Scotland and Northern Ireland, and that NSUN would be interested in doing more collaborative work in partnership with services or survivor lived experience organisations in Wales.

Question: Is this Zoom webinar the right format in which to hold this meeting?

Akiko replied that, as this was the first time NSUN had done a virtual AGM, a webinar was the format it was considered would work the best and invited feedback as to whether attendees felt it had worked or not.

Angela closed the meeting with her final thoughts and comments. She said that NSUN had the power to work to help make the world better, mental health services and people's experiences better, and was something that always attracted her to work with the organisation. She thanked everyone for being an NSUN member and for sharing the AGM with the staff and board and she hoped that next year everyone could be together in person. She encouraged attendees to take part in the vibrant conversations that were going to take place over the event's forthcoming couple of days. Angela extended her big thanks to all board members who contribute their time, experience, knowledge and expertise to govern the work of the organisation. And she gave thanks to the NSUN staff, and praised their work under the new leadership of Akiko.

Akiko added her thanks to everyone and said she looked forward to seeing everyone over the next two days.

Meeting ended.