**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of**

**ECHO for Extra Choices in Herefordshire Ltd**

**Held at The Leominster Sports & Social Club Hall, Leominster**

**On Thursday 10th October 2024**

**Attendance**

115 Members and Guests were present including Nat Hone, His Majesty’s Deputy Lieutenant of Herefordshire and Patron of ECHO, Councillor Gill Murdoch, Mayor of Leominster and Hilary Hall, Corporate Director, Well Being, Herefordshire Council. Apologies for absence were received from 17 people – see attached list.

The AGM was presented by Radio ECHO – Louis Baker, Nick Haines, Dan Wall, Ian Banks, Peter Crum and Nick Baker (Project Manager).

**Welcome and introduction**

1. Mand Hamblin, Vice Chair and Caroline Arthur, Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting.
2. Bev Davies, Trustee and Rep Group Member gave a Health & Safety briefing.
3. Lindsey Evans, Rep Group Member read out the list of apologies.

**Minutes of last year’s meeting**

Marianne Simpson, Rep Group Member introduced and explained the minutes for the AGM. The minutes from 2023 were put on our website and copies were available at the meeting. It was proposed by Richard Hyde-Smith and seconded by Kevin Stuchbery that the minutes were a true record. The vote was carried unanimously.

**ECHO’s Annual Review**

The Annual Review is available to view on our website and there were some printed copies to view at the meeting. Jody Gorle ran through some of the highlights and her favourite bits of the Annual Review.

**Our News Our Views**

A member of the Our News Our Views team, Tracy Crum said that it is the 10th Birthday of Our News Our Views. They are looking for new members to join the team. Please get in contact if you are interested. Tracy thanked Mike and ECHO for covering at the project.

**Treasurer’s report**

Mike Cook, Chief Officer ran through the Management Accounts with a PowerPoint display featuring two of the abseilers – Michelle Hodnett (staff) and Sean Perks (participant) who abseiled down the tower of St Peter’s Church raising funds for ECHO.

The management accounts are based on the financial year of April 2023 to March 2024.

In April 2023 we had £621,394 in reserves.

We then over the year brought in £890,755 from fees, sales grants and donations. Every bit of money that ECHO brings in big or small goes to help run services and support the organisation.

This year we spent £968,731 made up of all the costs that we needed to keep ECHO going, this includes salaries, rent, gas, electric and water.

As we spent more than we brought in our reserves reduced £516,595.

This is above the target that we have said we need to keep as reserves but means we needed to look at income and expenditure this year as we can’t keep using reserves like this. We also want some reserves to help us develop ECHO in the future.

**Management Accounts**

Nick Burt, Rep Group Member introduced the management accounts for 2023-2024 explaining they were available to view on our website for everyone to see and there were copies available at the meeting. It was proposed by Rebecca Downs and seconded by Bev Davies that the Management accounts be accepted. The vote was carried unanimously.

**Appointment of Auditors**

Godfrey Wilson Ltd are our financial examiners of our annual accounts. It was proposed by Bev Davies and seconded by Mand Hamblin that Godfrey Wilson Ltd. be accepted as the auditors for next year for ECHO and the vote was carried unanimously.

**Chief Officer’s Report**

Mike Cook, Chief Officer welcomed everybody and thanked them for coming to the 2024 AGM.

This year, we have had a dilemma to make reviewing what we do and how we do it. This has meant changes to some services - changes that are extra hard as they don’t reflect the quality of the activity, but rather the reality of what the cost is for putting them on.

There has been lots of planning and discussion about what changes to make for ECHO going forward.

We have been successful in re-tendering for the Herefordshire Council Community Activities Framework, something that allows us to keep offering services to the widest range of participants.

Property is a big decision, and that is why the Trustees and management have been very careful in looking at the risks and opportunities it will offer - for ECHO to be exciting, fun and full of energy for Participants, Staff and Volunteers. We want to continue to be a great place to come to and for people to feel enthused and valued to be part of what we do.

To be sustainable. This means that ECHO can control its income and expenditure so we can plan better for the future

Earlier in the year we ran a free ‘planning for the future’ event with Irwin Mitchell that gave valuable information and advice. Feedback was that families and carers would like more support for what they might be entitled to or how to get it. We are therefore setting up a family and carers group to offer the opportunity for people to come together to talk about issues, share information and identify where ECHO might be able to help. By sharing and supporting each other we can help ensure that everyone has the best experiences and opportunities that they can.

Mike thanked everyone for their hard work and looks forward to 2025 and all the amazing things we will do.

**Election of trustees**

Bev Davies, Trustee explained the process for the election of trustees. Every year 25% of trustees stand down. This year it was the turn of Mand Hamblin, John Bradford and Joy House. All three agreed to stand again. Joy arrived later to the meeting and John sent his apologies, so a photo board was shown to the meeting of who they were. Mand was asked to come to the front of the hall.

Mand Hamblin – Proposed by Lindsey Evans and seconded by Gemma Golland. The vote was carried unanimously.

John Bradford – Proposed by Richard Crook and seconded by Laura Walne. The vote was carried unanimously.

Joy House - Proposed by Steph Hooper and seconded by Caroline Collins. The vote was carried unanimously.

There was one nomination – Paul Scott. Paul has been a trustee for ECHO previously and has been observing Board meetings over the past year. Paul was asked to stand up and wave to the meeting.

It was proposed by Stephen Levett and seconded by Rachel Exelby that Paul Scott be elected as an ECHO Trustee. The vote was carried unanimously.

**Vote of thanks**

Mand Hamblin, Vice Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and encouraged everyone to stay to enjoy the buffet, dance and catch up with friends.

**Other Matters**

During the meeting there were videos and performances from various ECHO projects

* Lifelinks Video
* Our News Our Views Video
* Storytelling Video
* Eaton Barn Video
* Radio ECHO – Stuck in the middle with you
* Presentation of Fundraising certificates
* StEP presentation
* Raffle
* Cooking with Company Video
* About Face – Sea Shanties (dance)
* Disco by David Riley (DJ)

There were display stands situated around the hall from ECHO projects as below:

* Weaving
* Studio Mirai
* Eaton Barn
* Consultation
* Fundraising (Raffle)
* Human Fruit Machine
* About Face Beverley Puppet Festival, Private View

**Apologies received for the AGM 10th October 2024**

Edmund Proctor

Wendy Pridie

Elaine Downs

Michelle Tilbury

Patricia Churchward, High Sheriff

Simone Thompson

Cllr Carole Gandy

Fr. Guy Cole

Sally Wilson

Edward Harley, CBE, Lord Lieutenant

Ellie Chowns, MP

Rachel Bayley

Jeanette Reid

Carol Cross

David Cross

Tessa Minton

Cllr Jenny Bartlett