

Minutes of the Visual Art Network Annual General Meeting

English Bridge Workshop, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6AD

21st September 2023: 6.30-8.30

1. Present: Pat Simon, Jasmine Sara, Julie Goldthorpe, Reg Lewis, Keith Blackburn, Jancis Vaughan, Dave Thompson, Jana Ward, Phil Langstaff, Pete Fricker, Maureen Carswell, David Holmes, Derek Richards, Isabel Bradley. I

Apologies from: Rachel Reed, Ann Jones, Jill Bagnall, Lyndley Fallon, Anne Bremridge, Baz Stokes, Katie Barrett, Caroline Barrett, Amanda Ryder, Mervyn Ryder.

Dave Thompson chaired the meeting, welcomed everybody and facilitated introductions.

2. The minutes of the previous AGM (2022) were accepted as a correct record of that meeting.

3. Matters arising from those minutes.

The following minuted actions have now been completed:

- change of registered address from the Market Hall to the Darwin Centre;
- removal of the requirement for a member of the Council to be on the board of Trustees;
- free membership for students and the under 25s;
- a £2000 donation to the Arts Trail 2023.

4. The Chair's report was presented by Phil Langstaff, and **is attached to these minutes, along with the Exhibition Schedule for 2024.**

Phil noted in particular that since Covid, volunteers seem to have swapped their preferred volunteering day from Saturdays (because busy and interesting) to weekdays (because quieter and not the weekend), and this has severely impacted VAN's ability to open every day.

5. The Treasurer's report was also presented by Phil Langstaff, who has been covering the role since the departure of Jackie Corfield, previous Treasurer, and **is attached to these minutes.**

Phil highlighted the reserve fund, which is substantial, and explained that the Trustees are keen to put some of this money back into the community (see point 7). Pete Fricker asked about the increase of charitable expenditure, Phil explained that this is due to the increase in sales - 75% of VAN's sales income is returned to the artists whose work has sold. Sales have increased with the footfall, data that is required by the Centre management, along with average basket value (£19) and total sales. Pete asked what the relationship was between sales and footfall, Reg Lewis said he had worked out it was approximately 1 sale for every 5 visitors.

Phil noted that this data is useful, Pete mentioned finding out where visitors came from, Maureen Carswell said that VAN used to record postcodes for this reason.

6. Election of Trustees. The following members were elected to the Board of Trustees:

Role	Name	Proposer	Second
Chair	Phil Langstaff	Julie Goldthorpe	Jancis Vaughan
Secretary	Dave Thompson	Jasmine Sara	Julie Goldthorpe
Treasurer	Jana Ward	Jancis Vaughan	Julie Goldthorpe

Role	Name	Proposer	Seconded
Membership Secretary	Julie Goldthorpe	Maureen Carswell	Phil Langstaff
General Trustee	Pat Simon	Dave Thompson	Julie Goldthorpe
General Trustee	Reg Lewis	Jasmine Sara	Isabel Bradley

7. Community Project Nominations.

Dave introduced the idea of a project fund. He presented 5 proposals for the meeting to vote on:

- That a fund should be created that is available to projects that are Shropshire based, arts related and for the benefit of the community. The meeting voted in favour.

- That £5000 should be set aside for the fund this year. The meeting voted in favour.

- That £2000 should be given to the Arts Trail 2024, which VAN supported last year (application by Phil Langstaff). The meeting voted in favour.

- That £1500 should be given to the Shrewsbury Open Studios, which is restarting this year (application by Jancis Vaughan). Jancis explained that this would be used to kickstart the Open Studios, which is setting up a new committee after a 4 year break, enable future sustainability and benefit the wider arts community. Plans are to run it during the Arts Trail 2024. The meeting voted in favour.

- That the Trustees should be authorised to make decisions on awarding funds, up to the annual limit, to any project nominations received after the AGM without having to consult the membership. The meeting voted in favour.

Jasmine pointed out that VAN members would get a lot of benefit from both projects, and Phil said they also both fitted well with all VAN's charitable objectives.

8. Proposal to not proceed with the CIO conversion.

Phil explained that this was approved in 2020 as it affords more protection to Trustees, but due to the pandemic and the work involved it hasn't happened. He has also looked into it for the Arts Trail and come to the conclusion that as the Charities' Commission has tightened the rules around charities, it is possible VAN may no longer qualify, due to the focus on the shop element that now exists. Therefore it would be better to remain as we are. Converting would mean a new organisation with new objectives - our current ones might not be strong enough. The meeting voted in favour.

9. Changes to the constitution.

Dave presented two changes to the constitution for the meeting to vote on:

- that a clause should be included specifying notification of Trustee resignation to be a minimum of 2 months. Maureen asked whether it made any difference as people will just go anyway if they have to. Phil pointed out that it made a difference to the paperwork. The meeting voted in favour.

- that the decision of the Special Meeting on 5 March 2020 to limit the term of Secretary and Treasurer to a maximum of 3 years, be reversed. Reg wondered why many organisations do this. Dave said it meant no-one would stay on too long, Maureen said it makes it easier to remove someone unsuitable, and encourages others to take on the roles, however she pointed out that it is rarely used in an organisation where it is hard to find volunteers. The meeting voted in favour.

10. Any Other Business.

Derek Richards wanted to know if long term uncollected work in the VAN basement could be sold. Julie said several lapsed members had been contacted but still not collected. It was agreed artists should be at least warned that non-collection by a certain date would lead to disposal.

Reg Lewis felt stewards should mention the gift vouchers more as they are best placed to do so.

Jancis Vaughan wanted the meeting to decide what to do with archival VAN material found at English Bridge Workshop. It was agreed to house it in the VAN basement.

Pete Fricker had concerns about artwork security - how to tell whether a person claiming to be an artist collecting work really was one. It was suggested stewards should check for a checkable detail like postcode, and at the very least ask for and record the identity of the person.

The meeting then closed.