

**Minutes of the 19th Annual General Meeting of
Suffolk Refugee Support
Thursday 10th October at 7.00pm
Methodist Church, Museum Street**

Attendees

Attendees – 88. Members present – 25; the meeting was therefore quorate.

Apologies

Apologies – 48.

1) Ian Stewart – Chair

Welcome and apologies

The Chair Ian Stewart (IS) introduced himself, the Charity Manager Rebecca Crerar (RC) and the Vice Chair and Treasurer Nick Feldman (NF). He welcomed and thanked people for attending including the Mayor, Sandy Martin MP, staff, volunteers, funders, clients and supporters.

2) The Mayor, Cllr Jan Parry

The Mayor said Ipswich can be proud of the warm welcome it gives to refugees.

3) Minutes of 2017 AGM

The minutes of the last AGM were agreed as a correct record

Annual Report 2018-2019

- **Chair's Report** can be found on p.13 of the Annual Report.

IS reported that this has been SRS's busiest year so far.

IS gave an overview of the organisation. There are 24 members of staff, equivalent to 14 full-time staff. The aim of SRS is to work with clients to integrate them into the local community. When the organisation started, the clients were mostly single men and now SRS is working regularly with families. Many refugees now have British nationality and are integrated into the community.

IS explained that the funding from the National Lottery, which began in 2008, will unfortunately not be available to SRS from next year. RC and Karen Lawson submit funding applications regularly, but SRS will need more support from volunteers and funders in the coming year to help fill the gap left by the National Lottery.

IS provided an overview of the range of services that SRS provides, including the Resettlement Programme and support to young asylum seekers.

IS thanked the Board of Trustees, staff, volunteers, funders, clients, members and supporters for their continued commitment.

- **Charity Manager's report** can be found on p.2 of the Annual Report.

RC welcomed Councillor Jan Parry and reminded us of the successful 20th birthday celebrations in June.

RC thanked IS and NLF and all the trustees, staff, volunteers and funders. RC explained that the National Lottery had found no fault with our bid but had to balance the needs of so many different organisations.

RC recounted some stories of particular clients SRS has supported over the last 20 years. She felt privileged to have met a lot of extraordinary people.

RC thanked the Kurdish supermarket who had donated much of the food for the evening and also Fatima Al Hamadi, who had brought a number of homemade dishes.

4) Treasurer's Report can be found on p.14 of the Annual Report

NF stated that 2018/9 was a successful year for SRS operationally and financially. We have tried to build up SRS's reserves but also to deliver the full range of activities. In March 2019, we held £169,000 to help insulate SRS from immediate cash flow problems, and these reserves will help SRS to manage the impact of the loss of the National Lottery funding.

NF requested that if any attendees knew of individuals or organisations sympathetic to funding refugees, please let him know.

NF explained that the activities for next year are being planned and he was confident that SRS will find funding to cover essential work. He thanked the management team for their strategic thinking about the future activities of SRS.

The Annual Accounts 2018-2019 were proposed by Gerry Toplis and seconded by Maggie Barradell and accepted unanimously, as was the reappointment of Foreshore Accountancy as independent reviewers.

5) Election of Trustees to the Committee

4 trustees were up for re-election:

Nick Feldman
Marian Lanyon
Danielle Waller
Pauline Lane

2 co-opted trustees were up for election:

Keith Faull
Greg Dodds

All trustees were elected unanimously.

6) Introducing the staff

All staff present identified themselves. RC thanked Marianne Walker for the outstanding coordination of the AGM. She also thanked Martin Simmonds for all his hard work to produce the annual report.

7) Inspirational people were introduced and spoke.

The meeting heard from the 12-year-old daughter of one of SRS's clients, who recited a poem she had written; from an ESOL student, who had won an award from Suffolk College for her progress, and from a volunteer who had supported her; from a lecturer at Essex University; and from a recently arrived client, who had been a dentist and journalist, and was now working as a journalist in London.

8) Questions from the floor

A benefit concert is being held in Darsham Church shortly.

Martin Simmonds outlined the community sponsorship programme and SRS's involvement with it.

RC summarised progress on renewal of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme. It is hoped that Suffolk will be involved but it was noted that housing is a real problem for the scheme. RC asked if any attendees knew someone who would rent to refugees near Ipswich, could they please talk to SRS.

9) Any Other Business

RC was congratulated on being a joint winner of this year's Suffolk Inspiring Leaders Award and for the Honorary Fellowship from the University of Suffolk that she will be receiving shortly.

10) Refreshments

Kindly cooked by Fatima Al Hamadi and, largely, donated by My Local, the Kurdish supermarket near the office.
