**YOUTH WITH A FUTURE**

**MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 24 APRIL 2017**

1. The AGM was opened in prayer by the Chair Mrs Ann Ralls
2. Everyone was warmly welcomed by Mrs Angela Yeoman, YWAF Patron
3. Present: Mrs Angela Yeoman (Patron), Ann Ralls, Nick May, Sue Crisfield, Jane Copestake, Keith Wetherill (Trustees), Carol Plenty, Teresa Muir, Dave Bingham, Gary Ralls
4. Apologies: Dave Crisfield, Ruth Lyde, Jane Vernoit, Janet Smith, Clare Coppen, Fern Pearce, Neil Laing, Jackie Garbett, Karen Deverell
5. The Minutes of the last meeting were approved and there were no matters arising
6. Chairman’s Report: Ann Ralls reported that 2016 had been an exciting year for YWAF who continued to work mainly with the Mendip YMCA (MYMCA) which holds the council contract for caring for homeless young people in the Mendip area. The main event this year was the opening of Street Foyer, with the first residents moving in on 21st April. Nick May and Ann attended the official opening in July and then the YWAF Trustees were given a guided tour during their meeting in September. The MYMCA currently has 4 supported housing projects: Frome Foyer, Street Foyer, Grace Harris House in Shepton Mallet and most recently Hazon House.

This year YWAF supported 39 individuals with moving-in grants, these are young people moving into one of the MYMCA's supported housing projects or into private rented or social housing accommodation organised by their floating support services. YWAF also provided ongoing activity funds for each house to enable activities such as cooking, outings etc, recently extending this to include Hazon House which is currently supporting 5 young Eritrean refugees.

YWAF gave every young person in the supported housing project a £20 gift card for Christmas and has also pledged financial support to the Routes drop-in cafe for 11-25 year olds in Frome.

Individual grants were made to provide suitable clothing for 2 young people for interviews; driving lessons for a young person to enable them to get a job, and a grant for safety equipment for a young person doing tree surgery; another for help with the installation of a shower and a loan for a deposit on a flat. Many young people struggle with proving their identity so funding was also made available for the purchase of new birth certificates.

The MYMCA relies heavily on volunteering and also encourages their own residents to volunteer, so this year YWAF made funds available to give a small financial gift to residents who volunteer to work within the projects as an incentive and a thank you.

Ann reminded members that YWAF wishes to offer help to all young people in need in the Mendip area aged between 16 and 25 not only those put forward by MYMCA.

As always fund raising has been a main focus for the committee. This year as usual YWAF’s main source of income was Glastonbury festival and our team of volunteers led by Jackie Garbett. This year they earned an amazing £4,400. This was the 9th, and sadly the last year that YWAF will be doing bags for life as Yeo Valley have removed their sponsorship. This will make an enormous difference to YWAF, but Ann wanted to focus on the amazing amount of money that has been raised over the years. Grateful thanks go to Jackie and all her volunteers for this incredible boost to the finances and Ann also thanked Michael Eavis and Glastonbury Festival for making it possible. Jackie has led an amazing team and the feedback from festival organisers has been very positive.

YWAF held a stall at Collett Day as usual which raised about £330.

As Ann reflected on 2016 she wanted to thank many people - Jackie Garbett and her amazing Glastonbury team; YWAF Secretary Sue Crisfield who has worked really hard this year on so many things; Nick May who year after year continues to deal with YWAF finances in such a professional way.

This year YAWF updating guidelines for grants, so Ann thanked Jane Vernoit, Sue and Carol Plenty for their input. Ann also thanked Ben Shimmin for his work on the website and Bethan Crisfield for setting up the new YWAF Somerset facebook page. She also thanked Sue, Jane Copestake and Carol for getting the Christmas gift vouchers and writing all the cards.

Ann specially thanked Carol Plenty who attends all meetings as MYMCA representative. She always brings an excellent report on what is happening within the YMCA including information about the difference that YWAF grants make. This is so encouraging to hear and gives trustees the push they need to continue doing the best they can.

Ann thanked all of the committee for giving up their valuable time to YWAF, attending the meetings, helping with fundraising and for their encouragement and support, especially to Ann in her first year as Chairman.

Ann specially thanked Clare Coppen who is standing down as a trustee, for all her years of giving to YWAF and especially for 9 years as chairman – she will be missed.

Looking ahead, YWAF need to work even harder! Austerity continues to affect the most vulnerable and young people need YWAF’s help more than ever. Ann appealed to those present to continue to support the important work of YWAF which needs more new members and trustees to serve on the committee. YWAF would appreciate help with fundraising and encourage more donations and legacies.

1. Secretary’s Report: Sue Crisfield reported that since last year’s AGM her priority has been trying to keep raising the profile of YWAF locally and finding new funding opportunities. Trustees are concerned that their main source of income is reliant on our fantastic team working at Glastonbury Festival and wanted to ensure that we looked at other avenues.

She applied to Street Parish Council and they kindly pledged £1,200 for move-in grants and we also received a cheque for £2,500 from the Bridging Fund charitable trust. We felt very fortunate to receive this because the Bridging Fund is ceasing to continue as a charity and YWAF were their last recipients!

The annual press release for YWAF’s Christmas appeal was circulated and she thanked her daughter Bethan for setting up the new Facebook page called YWAF Somerset. She encouraged people to find it and like it, share and follow us! To date there are 80 people following our page. YWAF is regularly linking with lots of local community Facebook pages to promote the charity and raise funds.

Sue reported that it was lovely to receive some feedback from some of the residents at the YMCA for their Christmas gift cards. Trustees wanted to give them gift cards so they could choose something for their rooms or for themselves and have a treat.

The highlight of her year was organising the Film and TV-themed fund-raising quiz at the end of January. The evening raised £272, hosted by the George Inn at Croscombe. Thanks to Bethan Crisfield for organising all the quiz questions and running the evening. We were completely overwhelmed by people and teams and had no room left at the inn!

Looking ahead YWAF will have its annual stall at Collett Day in June and a film premiere evening at Wells Film Centre on 2nd June for the new Wonder Woman film. Tickets available from Sue. Sue is a support worker with Mendip YMCA in Frome and sees first-hand the huge difference that YWAF funding makes to young people’s lives and it is this that spurs her on to keep flying the YWAF flag and raising funds.

1. Treasurer’s Report: Nick May reported that YWAF’s 2016 Accounts were independently examined by Richard Illidge AAT and approved by the YWAF committee.

Key numbers for the year ended 31 December 2016 can be summarised as follows:

Income - £6,371 Expenditure - £6,865 Net Deficit - £494

Cash at bank at 31 December 2016 was £18,982 (2015 - £19,476).

2016 income at £6,371 was lower (£1,059 or 14%) than the prior year.  Income was derived from three main sources: subscriptions & donations (£1,376); fund-raising (£4,820); and bank deposit interest (£75).  Thank you to all involved in donating or raising funds for YWAF throughout the year.

2016 expenditure at £6,865 was higher (£1,801 or 36%) compared with the prior year.  Money given to young people and their supporting organisations in the Mendip area was split between homelessness initiatives (87%) and other youth initiatives (13%).

Homelessness grants for all YMCA Mendip locations – Frome Foyer, Grace Harris House (Shepton), Spencer House (Wells) and Street Foyer - were sub-divided between Welcome vouchers for new residents (39 in 2016, 38 in 2015), Activity and Emergency funding, Food vouchers and Christmas gifts. Spencer House in Wells closed to residents aged 16 to 25 early in the year and was replaced by a new build at Street Foyer. With regard to other youth initiatives, there were four grants to individuals.

The YWAF committee members meet and correspond regularly to consider all funding requests. Updated financial statements are supplied at each committee meeting.

The year's deficit of £494 has been deducted from cash reserves.  Total reserves of £18,982 at the end of the year are classified as £18,658 unrestricted and £324 restricted (for Welcome vouchers). Such unrestricted reserves are estimated to represent over two years’ forward expenditure cover. Reserves cover will be variable bearing in mind the future funding requirements of YMCA Mendip and its residents, also the potential reduction in fund-raising income with Glastonbury Festival’s fallow year in 2018 and potential move away to another location in 2019.

Nick also reported that for the first quarter of 2017 there had been two donations totalling £3,299 (£2,500 from the Bridging Charitable Trust and a £500 legacy) and the quiz night in January raised £272. So far this year Every Penny Counts has raised £167.

1. Election of Committee: Clare Coppen stood down as a trustee. All trustees were duly elected again to serve for a further year – Ann Ralls, Nick May, Sue Crisfield, Keith Wetherill, Jane Vernoit and Jane Copestake.
2. Speaker – Dave Bingham – Team Leader, Mendip YMCA – Frome Foyer & Hazon House

Dave gave background to the work with five Eritrean young asylum seekers from the jungle camp in Calais which started in August 2016 when three young men arrived at the emergency pod at Frome Foyer. Across Somerset 70 young unaccompanied minors were housed and cared for. When the first three arrived they were very shy, only one could speak a little English. The two pod bedrooms are very tiny and bunk beds were purchased to accommodate them. One of the boys hugged his bed when he arrived as he had not slept on a mattress for a very long time! When they first arrived they had a mixed welcome from the other 12 residents of the foyer, however after a short time they were getting on well, and often played traditional Eritrean music on YouTube and on one occasion, 10 residents and they were dancing in the courtyard!

So, for two and a half months they lived in the pod until suitable lodgings (Hazon House) were found – a five bedded private rented house with a landlord who was happy to house five unaccompanied minors from Africa! There was a huge response to the advert for support workers and two staff, Charlie and Mary, were appointed. Two more young men came over on the day that Hazon house was opened (one was a 14 year old so had to go into foster care).

The young men living there are always finding new things to do, they have big personalities and are happy to try anything! Amongst the things they have done/are doing are: horticulture, football, boxing, swimming, trampolining, Centreparcs; they go to Strode College and do functional skills, English, maths & science. They are Orthodox Christians and attend Church in Bristol.

In January things changed slightly and felt different. There were some tensions amongst the 5 young men – they were always together and activities were planned with them always together and not as individuals; some were confident speaking English and others were not. So, their individual interests are now nurtured such as carpentry, barbering, mechanics.

Two have 5 years Leave to Remain through asylum proceedings and there seems to be no reason why they cannot have indefinite leave to remain. The project has been a huge success with lots of help from the local community in Frome – it seems to have energised a lot of people.

Questions from the meeting to Dave Bingham:

Q: What response did you get from the local people?

A: The response was generally very positive. There were a few negative comments and some neighbours were not happy – the Frome Standard had a complaint letter – but in general the locals were helpful – Rotary Club and Raise furnished the house and did gardening, Barclays Bank community charity. Rotary are well-respected group who set up some community meetings to meet the young men and staff which was helpful. The young men are polite and lovely and good company.

Q: How did you find Hazon House?

A: Carol Plenty answered this question – she recruits landlords in the private rented sector and used a local letting agent in Frome and coaxed the landlord into letting it to the YMCA. The house needed a lot of work to bring it up to health and safety standards. The contract with Somerset County Council to work with the young men is for one year – as they turn 18 they should get leave to remain and might then come through the YMCA supported housing projects.

Q: Why did the young men flee Eritrea?

A: They were fleeing perpetual civil war and conscription. They went through Sudan and Libia. When they came here the Home Office quizzed them about life in Eritrea, school, army, etc. There have been lots of meetings with interpreters. They would like to settle and work here.

Angela Yeoman thanked Dave Bingham for his talk and thanked everyone for coming.

Ann Ralls thanked Angela Yeoman for chairing the meeting and for her support.

Carol Plenty thanked YWAF on behalf of all at Mendip YMCA (staff and young people), and Dave Bingham added his thanks, especially for the Christmas gift cards and the move-in grants, which are always hugely appreciated by the residents.