

# **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of RCL held at The Avenue Centre, Conwy Close, Tilehurst, Reading on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2010**

## **Attendees:**

Chris Cutler, Ariane Cutler, Philip Bowcock, Sheila Bowcock, Toby Heskins, Patrick Stonehewer, Paula Simmonds, Kerry Williams, Jill Hughes, Paul Hughes, Helen Cornwall, Nadine Hinton, Molly Priestly, Lynn Brown, Chris Baker, Christine Viney, Sarah Viney, plus 3 children and 3 babies.

## **Apologies:**

Sandy Bowcock.

Chris Cutler welcomed everybody to the 11<sup>th</sup> AGM of RCL. There were no corrections to the minutes from last year's AGM. The minutes were then agreed.

## **Treasurer's report 2009 - 2010:**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Charity's funds support the general work of RCL which provides events for carers and their families including days out and the Christmas party, together with training and conferences. In parallel to these, the largest items of expenditure are for staffing the support line and providing the newsletter.

Following discussions in the previous twelve months with Reading Borough Council, grant funds for the 2009-10 year were provided as a single source of income. As a consequence, one of the bank accounts was closed and has reduced the overheads in maintaining the accounts.

### **INCOME & EXPENDITURE**

Total income (£13,709) for the year was in line with expectation, and almost identical to the previous year. The main source of income was a grant from Reading Borough Council, together with contributions from carers for the summer outing to Chessington World of Adventures. Expenditure (total £12,259) was higher than the previous year (£10,805) with the main increases from expenditure on training courses, Norma Howes' surgery sessions and a small increase in the cost of producing the newsletter. Spending on other items was similar to previous. As a result funds at the end of the year (£13,071) were in a strong position.

### **AUDIT**

The accounts have been examined and approved by a qualified auditor and will be submitted to the Charities' Commission in the near future.

### **SUMMARY**

The charity finished the year to 31 March 2010 in a sound financial position with good levels of reserves.

Patrick Stonehewer, Treasurer  
21 July 2010

Patrick proposed that we agree the accounts – carried unanimously.

**Secretary's report:**

The last year was my fifth as secretary and as many of you know will be my last. The time has come after 9 busy and enjoyable years on the committee to hand over to someone else. I'm continuing in my role as Family Link Carer so you will still see me at the great events that RCL put on for all carers.

The AGM last year was an attempt to try something different and we offered a half day conference with a speaker from the Fostering Network. The turn out of carers wasn't great but those that were there gained a fantastic insight into what it's actually like to be a looked after child. A care leaver talked about her life in care and what she has achieved since, it was very uplifting and motivational.

Our first event of the year was our annual summer outing. On the 5<sup>th</sup> July a packed coach of carers and children set off for Chessington world of Adventures. A great time was had by all! Next in September there was the first rugby home game of the season at the Madjeski stadium. London Irish won and the children enjoyed the free fun fair, face painting and of course Eek the Leprechaun! Rivermead was the venue for two great pool parties, one in November and one in February. About 20 carers and children enjoyed the pool, hot drinks and chocolate afterwards - all for free! The Christmas party was once again a huge success; Tricardo the Wizard entertained us all with party games and a disco. There was lots of party food which again I have to thank Chris Baker for getting organised in the kitchen with his band of helpers and thank you to everyone who attended, we all had a great time and Father Christmas put in an appearance too!

Four carers have over the last year manned the phone lines for Reading Carers Link' support line. These were Ariane Cutler, Christine Viney, Sheila Bowcock and myself. I have now stepped down from this role so Family Link Carers should now get a call from Nadine Hinton. The support line gives carers the opportunity to chat to other carers in confidence, be listened to and if necessary be pointed in the right direction for more advice.

Over the past year Chris Cutler has worked really hard to bring you up-to-date information via the 'Link' newsletter. The subjects covered are both local and national and always relevant and interesting! All the dates and information for RCL's events are published as well as RBC's training schedule. If you know someone who isn't receiving the newsletter please let Chris know their details, as they are definitely missing out!

Finally, I would like to thank all the committee members for their continued hard work and especially to Chris, as Chair for his commitment to RCL.

Lynn Brown, Secretary  
21<sup>st</sup> July 2010

## Chairs' Report

Good afternoon and welcome to our 11<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting. It is my second as Chair which means it must be two years since we said goodbye to Jill and Paul having bestowed honorary life membership on them in recognition of their tireless work for our association. In a former incarnation I lived and worked in Hong Kong where a bank manager relayed the following story: His bank was in the Wan Chai district which those of you familiar with the city is an area roughly equivalent to our Oxford Road. The prosperous banking district was transformed at night as the bars opened. The banker leaving work late found an old lady sleeping rough and about to bed down in the entrance to his bank. Concerned for the reputation of his establishment he asked her if she would not be more comfortable sleeping elsewhere. It seemed that in her prime she had been a working girl and had risen to become the "Madam" of the establishment opposite the bank. As passing years and a certain lifestyle continued to take its toll she gradually declined to the state in which the bank manager now found her. He repeated his offer to find her more comfortable accommodation. "Thank you, no. I prefer it here. You see I like to keep an eye on the place."

I am delighted to welcome Paul and Jill back this evening. The nomadic lifestyle seems to be altogether more attractive and comfortable than the one led by the lady in the story. I hope however that if they have come back to "keep an eye on the place" they will approve of our efforts to fill their shoes.

Last year I reported that Reading has been going through changes. Change it seems is a permanent state. We have worked with Reading as they faced the challenges brought about by Baby Peter. Not only are far more cases being brought before the courts, more children, particularly babies are being placed in care. This has placed new pressures on children's services which have been felt by carers. Philip has highlighted the problems that Contact Orders can cause when carers of babies have to comply with very high levels of contact.

Reading has continued to develop a more equitable form of payment for carers. The Skills and Levels scheme was first shown to carers after Christmas. The feedback from carers was very valuable to managers who realised, if nothing else, that the whole thing was a lot more complex than they originally imagined. They have continued to liaise with a working group of carers to fine tune the scheme which will reward carer competence and experience whilst adhering to the principle that no carer should be disadvantaged by the changes.

You will have seen from the meeting immediately preceding this that our continuing efforts to work with Wokingham have taken an important step forward. Whilst we welcome all carers to our association, it is clear that a large increase in membership without a commensurate increase in receipts will significantly reduce the benefit to existing members. Until now Reading has been overwhelmingly our principle source of funds. The merger of our association with Reading and Wokingham will provide us with a windfall that will enable us to extend our services to Wokingham carers without reducing the benefit to Reading Carers. This will in effect be a year's free introductory offer when we can demonstrate to Wokingham the benefits of membership, and buy us time to negotiate funding from Wokingham Council similar to that provided by Reading. The economies of scale brought by such a merger will give us more money to do things such as sponsor individual carers for training or attendance at conferences and seminars, put on more events whilst increasing the subsidy making them even better value for money for carers.

This is likely to make life more complicated for our Treasurer. I would like to thank Patrick for all his work keeping our books in order, and keeping us on the right side of the charity commission. I would like to thank him too for agreeing to continue in this role, and apologise now if in the year ahead the task is more onerous than before.

I would like to thank all the committee for their work, especially those who have been our support line carers. Lynn has been one of these and has managed the support line since Richard left. This has been the lesser of her duties as she has continued for five years to keep us in order as our Secretary. Her efficiency at keeping minutes and keeping track of who

should be doing what has kept us all on task and held us together. If I am honest I do not know how we will manage without her, but manage we will. Jill and Paul's retirement has shown me that life, and our association can go on through change. Paula has already shown herself more than capable of organising events, a task previously ably undertaken by Lynn and her partner Chris. I am delighted that Helen has volunteered to fill the secretarial void so all that remains for me is to thank Lynn again and present her with these small tokens of appreciation for her sterling work.

Chris Cutler  
21<sup>st</sup> July 10

### **Election of Officers:**

<b>Name/Position</b>	<b>Proposed by:</b>	<b>Seconded by:</b>
Chris Cutler/Chair	Lynn Brown	Paula Simmonds
Vice Chair		
Patrick Stonehewer/Treasurer	Paula Simmonds	Lynn Brown
Helen Cornwall/Secretary	Ariane Cutler	Paula Simmonds
Paula Simmonds/Committee member	Chris Cutler	Kerry Williams
Philip Bowcock/Committee member	Ariane Cutler	Kerry Williams
Christine Viney/Committee member	Paula Simmonds	Lynn Brown
Ariane Cutler/Committee member	Paula Simmonds	Patrick Stonehewer

Chris then explained that as RCL is a charity we have Trustees, with the exception of the support line workers all the committee members are also Trustees. Lynn will now step down as a Trustee.

### **A.O.B**

Chris thanked Helen and Wendy (in her absence) for holding successful coffee mornings for carers and Patrick presented vouchers as a thank you gift.

Philip asked for a vote of thanks to be given to Chris for his sterling work on the newsletter and as Chair.

Paula said that she had attended liaison meetings with RBC and that better links are being established through these meetings. The fees and levels have been put on hold but Paula is on the working group for this and hopefully it will be sorted soon.

Chris asked if anyone else wanted to come onto the committee they were more than welcome to come along to a meeting to see how we work before committing themselves!

The meeting was declared closed.