

Petersfield Counselling Service

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at St Peter's Church Hall, Petersfield 9th March 2017 at 12.07pm

Present: Robert Gussman, Kerrie Jones, Terri Thewlis, Regina Zander, Dorothy Harte, Rhona Anderson, Jill Watts, Paul Cawkill, Florence Little, Councillor James Deane (Mayor), Clare Bosley, Revd John Owen, Fr Peter Hollins, Revd Judith Bee, Lisa McReynolds, Tina Fitzpatrick, Claire Cox, Frances Nickell, Ros Draper, Brian Ellis, Christine Day, George Day, Louise Benzimra, Salma Mousavi, Jenny Hogg.

1. Welcome by Chairman: Robert warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded them that this year marks the 30th anniversary of PCS's inception. He also expressed thanks to St Peter's for the use of their Church Hall

2. Apologies: Lisa Rasulian, Revd Canon Will Hughes, Simon Mackarness, Toria Mackarness, Gerry Arnold, Jackie Blower, Sheryl Jones, Jean Wells, Stephen Parry, Joy Easlick, Alison Watson, Chris Webster, Revd Chris Williams, Revd Richard Saunders, Joyce Perry, Sarah Rose.

3. Minutes of the 2016 AGM: The minutes of the AGM held on 10th March 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters arising: There were none.

5. Chairman's report:

Robert said he had great pleasure in reporting that, in its 30th year, PCS is still in remarkably good heart, and continuing to fulfil its objectives of providing counselling to those who are experiencing emotional difficulties and/or mental health issues, and training and developing practitioners in counselling skills through high quality supervision, training and support.

From his first involvement in PCS as a counsellor, he recognised the value of counselling and the importance of addressing the stigma and problems faced by people with MH issues. PCS goes about its business effectively and without any fuss, and is one of Petersfield's 'best kept secrets'. As we celebrate its 30th anniversary this year, he recognised that some of the people present at the AGM have been working with/alongside PCS for all that time, and he thanked them personally for their commitment and support.

He reflected that we are lucky still to be here, in spite of the significant financial issues which beset PCS during the previous year, and a reduction in referrals. There had been real concerns about its future, but happily we have been able to turn things round with help from our Director, Trustees, medical colleagues and the whole team. A review had helped to identify some important issues to address, including under-selling and insufficient funding. Subsequent funding initiatives had elicited very good responses from individuals, churches and other organisations, and a sponsored walk had raised additional donations. PCS reserves are currently in excess of £10,000, and the PCS bank account stands at £2,700 today.

He was sad to report that Chris Webster, our Treasurer, has recently been diagnosed with cancer of the spine. Chris is bright, positive and keen to get back to his job, but due to pain and physical weakness, he has had to hand over our accounts to others for the time being. In addition, our Independent Examiner has had his computer hacked, which has prevented him from fulfilling that role. Very fortunately for us, Paul Nickell (Frances' husband) has stood in to draw up the accounts, and someone has been found to act as IE for the 2016 accounts and temporary Treasurer for the moment. Robert reported that PCS's secretary, Lisa Port, has had to stand down as a result of bereavement. He was grateful for all that she had brought to PCS and its Trustees, especially her expertise in marketing. He announced that Dorothy Harte will be retiring from her role as Supervisor in the summer, and Jill Watts gave notice that having provided accommodation for supervision and counselling for 30 years since the foundation of PCS she would stop in the summer. He thanked them both warmly for their outstanding loyal support and input. He said that there are plans to mark PCS's anniversary with a reception and quiz evening in September. James Deane (Mayor) suggested that the John Goodyer Charity might be a good source for help. In conclusion, he thanked the Board of Trustees and all members of the team, and commended the Service to the continuing support of the wider community.

6. Director's report:

Kerrie reported that PCS had continued its essential professional work throughout 2016, offering short and long term counselling to adults of 18yrs and over in the local community. During 2016 PCS has delivered just under 1200 hours of counselling, and has continued to prove a valuable and much relied-on resource for GPs and residents of Petersfield and the surrounding area.

Our struggles with finances have been shared by our client group. Some have been able to continue paying their fees, others have struggled; but PCS has managed to continue providing counselling clients irrespective of their capacity to pay. The sponsored walk was an excellent and enjoyable source of fundraising (and very good cake! – thanks to Claire); and Kerrie congratulated and thanked Robert and Terri for their excellent fund-raising.

She reflected on some positive thoughts and plans for the future:

- PCS currently has 16 volunteer counsellors, who keep PCS going with huge commitment. Kerrie has been a PCS counsellor herself, and recognises the value, pressures and rewards of the job.
- She thanked Dorothy and Jill as they leave PCS and move on to pastures new. They will be missed.
- For the coming year there are plans to work more closely with GPs in and around Petersfield. Dr Brian Ellis and Dr Claire Cox have been invaluable in taking this forward and making sure that the right people know about PCS and what it can offer.

Kerrie thanked everybody for supporting PCS. She expressed her appreciation for Dorothy's contribution to the service as supervisor since 1994 and gave notice that Jill's impending departure will result in the need for new accommodation for supervision meetings. [Offers of meeting space were made before the end of the AGM].

Questions from the floor

1. *Is the IAPT programme still affecting referrals to PCS?* The reduction in numbers has proved less than expected, and some people who have been on the IAPT programme are now coming to us.
2. *Have posters advertising PCS been made available to churches, GP surgeries etc?* Robert has taken posters round to locations in Petersfield and to local churches.
3. *Are there any plans for PCS to 'go paperless' (online)?* Not at this stage.
4. *Have you thought about making links with U3A, or advertisement to run on a loop at film nights etc?* We had not thought of these possibilities, but will follow them up.

7. Supervisors' report:

Regina gave a very powerful 'taster' of a counselling scenario in which a client presented with complex issues which resulted in them attempting suicide. She explored the impact that this had had on the intake counsellor and then on the counsellor who worked with this individual (eg stress, self-doubt or false guilt), and highlighted the crucial role of supervision in giving support and enabling the counsellors to be effective in their work. Within the supervision group, counsellors are there to support one another, and to help meet each other's needs.

She recognised that there is a need for PCS to be more wide-reaching: for people to continue to learn, to be more diverse, to use resources from within, and to engage more effectively with IT. Very encouraging progress has been made and important issues and development needs identified. A key issue is for Supervisors to have access to supervision themselves, in order to support their own wellbeing and development.

Regina was thanked for her positive and challenging input, which had given an authentic and thought-provoking flavour of the nature of PCS's important work.

8. Counsellors' report: Lisa McReynolds reiterated and reinforced all that had been said by the Director and Supervisors, and said that she and the counsellors felt very much affirmed and supported. She thanked Sheryl for doing her job so well and providing counsellors with all the information that they needed before their first meeting with clients.

9. Treasurer's report: Robert reported that, due to Chris Webster's illness and the Independent Examiner's unforeseen IT problems, the PCS accounts were not yet available to be presented for approval. The meeting would therefore need to be adjourned, and reconvened for this purpose at a later date in the summer (to be arranged).

10. Appointment of Independent Examiner: Terri Thewlis introduced George Day, who has volunteered to fulfil the IE role (and has presented excellent references). It was proposed that he be

appointed as Independent Examiner for 2017, and this was passed unanimously. Robert thanked George on behalf of PCS for standing for this role.

11. Any other business: none

There being no other business, the Chairman thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting and their ongoing support, and closed the meeting at 12.48pm.