

## National Federation of Plus Groups

### Minutes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting held at Warwickshire County Council Staff Club on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2007

#### **1. Opening of AGM by National Chairman**

John Smith (NC), National Chairman opened the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting / 66<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Federation and welcomes everyone to the meeting. He hopes this will be a positive meeting and that we make decisions to move Plus into the future as well as recognising the good work that has gone on during the year. John Smith (NC) reminded everyone that it is the Groups that are making the decisions during this meeting. John Smith (NC) also provided information regarding the evening's event.

#### **2. The Presidential address by Gerry Edwards, Vice-president.**

Francis Wallington sends his apologies but he has sent the 2 ANC banners. Also apologies from Sandra Brogan, Vice President due to work. Gerry welcomed everyone to the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting / 66<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Federation; you can say that we are born again. We are faced with a new challenge as we are fitting everything into 1 day instead of the usual 2 days, as such can people be careful of how long they speak for and come back after breaks promptly. This meeting will also be interesting due to the challenges presented by the new constitution, he hoped that the debates will be business like and friendly, some of the recent entries on the one list have not been. He hopes that everyone enjoys themselves during the day but also tonight during the disco.

#### **3. Election of Tellers**

3.1 Election of Tellers: - Phil Bettis and Kirsty Van Lieshout were suggested as tellers. Proposed by Hounslow, Seconded Thatcham. Carried Nem Com.

3.2 Voting Strength: - 30 delegates. John Smith (NC) clarified what Quoracy was for the AGM which is a quarter of groups and delegates from the federation, therefore 19 delegates would be quorate.

#### **4. Election of ballot paper counters**

Kathy Morris and Jeff Buller were suggested as counters. Proposed by Barnet, Seconded by Bradford. Carried Nem Com. Robert Jones will provide instructions at lunch time.

**5. Apologies for absence** were received by Francis Wallington, Sandra Brogan and Rothwell Group.

#### **6. Acceptance of the Minutes of the 65<sup>th</sup> Annual National Conference, held at the Britannia Hotel, Coventry on 22<sup>nd</sup> / 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2006.**

Any points of accuracy – typing error for Emma Dunning (HGS)'s HGS nomination this should be VBA not DBA. No other points of accuracy were raised.

Proposed by Bishops Stortford, Seconded by Solihull. Votes Against - 0, Abstentions – 3, Carried

#### **7. Matters arising thereon**

Steven Geary (Reading Group Delegate). He had to abstain as he did not have chance to read them, could they be sent out earlier in future?

No other matters regarding the minutes were raised.

#### **8. Presentation and Acceptance of the Federations Report for the year 2006.**

John Smith (NC) asked if there were any questions regarding this report. Richard Morton (Southampton Friends Delegate) asked regarding the Southern Area Report that he and others both within the Area and on the committee were not aware of a Quest Group being opened in the Berkshire / Oxford Area, he asked for more information on this. John Smith (NC) asked Tina Bunyan (SAC) to respond on this question, she informed that it was discussed at the last Area Committee meeting regarding opening of this Quest Group and that this is in the Area Minutes.

Janet Rintoul (Reading Group Delegate) also raised a question regarding the Southern Area report and the information provided the rise in membership should be disputed. Janet provided statistics as

the Southern Area Membership Officer. In 2005 there were 93 members and now there are only 80 which is not a rise in membership. Tina Bunyan (SAC) said this was wrong. Janet said that the Area Chair's report was not accurate and that she has sent the membership report to the Area Chair before this AGM.

Richard Morton (Southampton Friends Delegate). He has checked the Area Committee minutes and there is no mention of opening a Quest Group in the Berkshire / Oxford Area. Tina Bunyan (SAC) disagreed with this but Richard said he has checked this with the Area Administrator.

John Smith (NC) thanked those for making a contribution to this item.

Kirsty Van Lieshout – (Southampton Observer) had a question for the HGS. The current role of HGS is for 2 years and asked why Emma Dunning (HGS) is standing down after a year. Emma responded that the reasons for her standing down is that she feels she cannot work with Joe Gurney due to him being rude, condescending and that he has constantly undermined her in her capacity of HGS. This treatment has forced her to make this decision. Emma will be working on the NEC in a different capacity as she was elected as the Constitutional Sub Committee Chairman this morning.

*Procedural Motion: Richard Morton (Southampton Friends Delegate) asked that the Southern Area Report be voted on separately to the other NEC reports. Seconded by Thatcham Group. Votes for 19, Abstentions 2, Against 6. Motion Carried.*

Acceptance of the NEC report minus the Southern Area Report. Proposed by Thatcham, Seconded by Solihull. Carried Nem Com

Acceptance of the Southern Area Report. Proposed by Bradford, Seconded by Leeds. Votes for 5, Abstentions 14, Against 10. Southern Area report is not accepted.

## **9. Presentation and Acceptance of the Federations Accounts for the Year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2005.**

John Smith (NC) explained that the under Item 10 we are presenting a National Finance Officer's report and this will be explained by Adrian Barnard (NFO) and assisted by Alison Jones. Adrian gave the history that at the ANC in 2005 the accounts were rejected. The accountants were also not re-appointed. The NEC decided that the best way forward was to have these accounts checked and subsequently elected Alison Jones and Glenn Anderson in this capacity. Alison has a background as a qualified book keep. Glen Anderson is an ex-member from Leeds who is an auditor with a local authority. Alison took the rejected accounts are re-prepared them from the books which were then audited by Glen. Some of the key areas were very simple errors but there were issues regarding pre-payments and accruals which are for services that are yet to be paid. There was a large pre-payment for the ANC 2006 which was made at the end of 2005; this value should not have appeared in the Profit and Loss Accounts. Another issue raised was regarding the property owned by Plus value showed, the accounts had taken the original value, put it back on and then de-valued it back to zero. It was a silly error that should not have been made by the Accountants. All the accruals were shown as one lump sum and not broken down into money owned and by whom. There is also an issue regarding the accounts for Brean 2005 but there were no submitted accounts by the Brean 2005 committee. A thorough examination of the accounts has been carried out since the ANC 2006.

Andy Campbell (Barkingside Observer) said that as one of the people who raised the issues at the ANC 2006 he is aware of the hard work that Adrian and Alison has done over the last year to investigate the errors and correct them and that he is happy with the outcome and urged people to accept these.

Dave Filer (Coventry Observer) asked about the auditing of the accounts and how we can audit the accounts for 2007. Alison responded that if the 2006 accounts are accepted today then the 2007 audited accounts can be accepted through the Area Conferences and brought back to the NEC.

Adam Redshaw as Brean Co-ordinator highlighted that there is concern over the lack of Brean 2005 accounts and that he has asked for these in the past, he said that there is now a separate account

for Brean which required 2 signatories and if anyone has specific questions regarding Brean to talk to him outside of the meeting.

Proposed by Chiswick, Seconded by Sheffield. Votes for 28. Abstentions 1. Report is accepted.

John Smith (NC) thanked Alison and Glen for their hard work on this.

#### **10. Presentation and Acceptance of the Federations Accounts for the Year ending 31<sup>st</sup>**

**December 2006.** John Smith (NC) said this is the presentation of a report and that it is not necessary to vote on this today. Adrian Barnard (NFO) went over the report saying it showed the payments in and out over the year. It has VAT, national insurance payment and expenses. There are sheets for membership monies, ANC payments and area membership fees received since the start of Area Lead, there is also money shown for the final bills of amenities before the office was closed. The SADY £1900 money is shown as well as Brean £1500 which are both on separate sheets. Both of these figures are national's money which is loaned to the events. Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) asked regarding the Area Levies and if it had been considered that larger area's pays more than smaller area's? Adrian advised that this could be put forward as a motion at any NEC meeting via their Area Chairs. John Smith (NC) said that we will now be auditing these accounts as soon as possible and that they will be presented at Area Meetings.

Tea Break for 15 Minutes

#### **11. Election of the National Chairman to serve from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007**

John Smith (NC) handed over to Emma Dunning (HGS) (HGS). Emma informed the AGM that there was one nomination for this post which is John Smith (NC), Proposed by Leeds and Seconded by Bishops Stortford. John gave a speech for his nomination. He would like a few things moved forward in the next year if he was elected, one of these would be a training event similar to Inspire with less of a training focus but more emphasis on recruitment. Another thing would be the National Plan which would included all parts of the Federation with everyone's input, where do we see Plus is 5 years and how do we get there. John would also like to see brought back is the interactive website and that he hopes we will get an Internet Co-ordinator. John is still very keen that the big issue for Plus is recruitment so that we can get new members and that we have national scale events as well as Area & Group events.

There were no questions for John (he got off lightly). Emma advised that the election would be by ballot paper after lunch.

#### **12. Election of National Officers to serve from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007**

John advised that there was only a nomination for the post of National Finance Officer. The posts of Plus News Editor, National Activities Co-ordinator and Public Relations Officer is currently 2 years and as such would not be elected today as the holders were in the middle of their term of office. Andy Campbell (Barkingside Observer) asked what would happen if we don't elected a HGS today and is there anything in the constitution. John asked if the answer can be provided after the National Finance Officer election.

The nominee for National Finance Officer was Alison Jones. Alison was Proposed by Sheffield and Seconded by Reading Group. Alison gave her speech and said that she has held Group and Area Treasurer positions and had helped to rectify the national accounts. Alison listed her qualification to allow her to stand in this position, these being she had worked as a bookkeeper and has recently set herself up as a self registered bookkeeper; as such she has had a lot of experience. Alison knows must of the current NEC & GPC and has good relationships with them. There were no questions for Alison.

John handed over to Emma Dunning (HGS) to answer Andy Campbell's question. Emma advised that there was nothing in the constitution regarding the lack of electing a HGS. In the Area Lead document it advised that the post of HGS can be elected at any NEC meeting until someone is elected.

Steve Browning (Bishop's Stortford Delegate) gave a point of information. There is a paragraph in the Standing Order 3.2.2 that the NEC can appoint someone from a Member Area as Emma is technically resigning.

Emma Dunning (HGS) advised that the Terms of Office in the documents are a contradiction to the Area Lead document that was accepted at the ANC 2005. The Area Lead states that Terms of Office would be for 1 year but the constitution has been written to say 2 years. In her role as Constitutional Subcommittee Chair she will be doing a number of changes to correct the current problems including Terms of Office to all the documents and will bring them back to the AGM 2008 to be voted on. The AGM accepted that this proposal.

Andy Campbell (Barkingside Observer) explained why he asked the question as it states that for Area's and Groups they must elect a Chairman, Finance Officer and Administrator to be constitutional and whether a lack of a HGS would have the same affect but with the answers provided he was happy that it wouldn't. John advised that the position will be filled and that he was trying to persuade Ian Crawshaw to do it.

Andy Campbell said that it was a shame that someone who had done such a good job over the last year feels that they must resign due to the behaviour of a certain individual. John agreed and said he would continue to persuade Emma to continue.

### **13. Motions**

13.1 " To move the National AGM forward so that it sits in the first fourteen days of March every year, from 2008 onwards" Submitted by London & South East. Gemma Battrum (L&SEAC) introduced this motion and said that this was so that motions can be debated at Area Conferences and sent to the HGS to compile them for the AGM. With the closure of the office it was a lot of work for the HGS to prepare and there were time constraints but this motion would allow Area's to raise motions at their Area Conference and still be able to submit them for the AGM.

13.2

Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) advised that if we moved the AGM it would be too close to Brean and the Plus calendar would become too cluttered, he urged delegates to vote against this motion. Kirsty Van Lieshout (Southampton Friends Observer) asked when the Terms of Office would start for National and Area as this would need to be re-done if this motion passed? Gemma advised that this had not been discussed.

Alison Jones (Bradford Delegate) said that there was no point in moving the AGM by a couple of weeks as it would not make much difference.

Andy Campbell (Barkingside Observer) said that there was a second motion regarding timing as the current constitutions are defective. Some of the Area Chair's sitting at the top table such as East Anglia have only just been elected and not served during the last 12 months whereas it should be the outgoing Area Chair that is at AGM to answer questions regarding business conducted within the last year. Some Area's have recognised this problem for today and allow the outgoing Area Chair to represent their Area whereas East Anglia could not be this diplomatic.

John provided a point of information that this morning as previously mentioned, Emma Dunning (HGS) has been elected as Constitutional Sub Committee Chairman to work of these issues and that she will be bring revised documents to the next AGM to be voted upon.

Steven Geary (Reading delegate) said that the AGM would not be held next year as it had not been voted upon that there would be an AGM as such he is against the proposed motion.

Andy Campbell advised that this is inaccurate and that the motion at the ANC 2006 to allow for the AGM and delegates to participate was not just for this year but for ever year.

Adrian Barnard (NFO) advised that Area's should hold there Conference and then an AGM is held after which positions are taken up and what has been written in the constitution regarding Terms of Office was not what was intended as part of Area Lead and that it was a screw up.

John Smith (NC) gave a ruling regarding the AGM and that is that delegates are both invited and mandated to attend the AGM in 2008.

Gemma summed up regarding the London & South East motion. The point of the motion was not about Terms of Office but about moving the AGM so that Area Conferences did not clash with Christmas but that there was sufficient time for Area to discuss motions at their Area Conference before the AGM.

Richard Morton (Southampton Friends Delegate) asked if it was possible for the AGM paperwork to be sent out earlier?

Emma Dunning (HGS) responded that when the deadline's were sent out for submissions to this year's AGM there was up-roar but we need to remember that since the Office was closed all the work done previously by them is now being done by her and there are time constraints as she works full time. Emma would have liked to have sent the documentation out before hand but no matter how much she chased people, they didn't get reports, motions etc to her in time. The constitution states that the AGM paperwork should be sent out 2 weeks before hand and only a motion can change this. John moved to the vote. Votes against 17, Abstentions 5, Votes for 8. Motion Lost.

13.3 The following sentence is to be added to the end of Article 7.9.2 of the National Constitution. "However this does not apply if a Member Area, in breach of this or its own Constitution and / or Standing Orders, fails to vote on such a Motion at two successive Area Conferences: in this case it will be deemed to have abstained on the Motion at the NEC / AGM by default". Submitted by East Anglia. John handed over to Joe Gurney to present this motion. Joe Gurney read out the whole Article to the AGM. The reason that this is being proposed is that during the last year a potential situation could have arisen and highlighted that if an Area did not vote on a motion and then take it back to the NEC then it would potentially hold up the whole motion process as part of the Area Lead.

Andy Campbell (Barkingside Observer) advised that the problem was identified and that one person could essentially block the whole voting process and he urged people to accept this motion.

Richard Morton (Southampton Friends Delegate) said that this is a no brainer and that we should move to the vote and accept this motion.

John moved to the vote. Votes against 0, Abstentions 3, Votes for 28. Motion carried.

#### **14 Facility for National Debate**

14.1 Format of future Annual General Meetings – Dave Filer

Dave Filer introduced this item asking what people would like to see the format for future AGM's. Would people like to have a 1 day or 2 day events, accommodation etc?

Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) advised that the bar shuts at 11.00pm tonight and would like a later bar in future.

Joe Gurney said he would be in favour for 2 days which would allow for more time on national debate.

Katie Hawkins (Barnet Delegate) we have been spoilt by the organising committee in previous year in organising hotels and this year people had to do it themselves. It would be nice for advice as to hotels in the local area. Also booking forms to be sent out and who to make the cheques payable would be helpful.

Robert Jones (Northern Area Chair) said there is a big issue for 2 days which is the cost and that any future event would need to break even. There is no money at National to pay for the AGM.

Emma Dunning (HGS) is in favour in a 2 day event as it is a long day especially for the NEC who started at 8.30 this morning. Also this is the forum for members to discuss and move the federation. The cost needs to be reasonable and not as expensive as the ANC's at Coventry.

Adrian Barnard (NFO) the preference is for a 1 day event as it is not expensive and that it doesn't tie up a lot of time for the average member. He thanked everyone who has organised today and the entertainment tonight.

Martin Spruce (Solihull Delegate) said the disadvantage for a 2 day is the time people have to give up and the cost's involved, therefore the 1 day would be better.

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chair). He would like to see a weekend event where the AGM is on the Saturday, a dinner/dance on the night and then there is a training/Inspire Event such as workshops on moving the federation forward which is fun on the Sunday.

Kirsty Van Lieshout (Public Relations Officer) agreed with Adam regarding the training/Inspire idea and that Area's could help with the expense.

Robert Jones (Northern Area Chair) the time for National Debate could move to the Sunday as in Adam's suggestion as it does not need to be minuted.

Tracy Thorn (North Thames & Chiltern Area Chair) although people are saying today is cheap there are a lot of indirect costs such as accommodation. She would also like longer to discuss things instead of bitching on the one list. It would also be nice to move round the Area's like we used to instead of staying in the Midlands.

#### 14.2 Use of Plus "Life Membership Cards" – Dave Filer

Dave said that during his time setting up the membership he has been asked about the Life Membership cards and how they work. There are 3 types of Life Members, Honorary Life Members awarded at the ANC, Honorary Area Life Members and Purchased Life Members. The second 2 would need to re-do a membership card each year and where as the 1<sup>st</sup> does not.

Andy Campbell (Barkingside Observer) said that the process should be as un-bureaucratic as possible and easy to administer. What membership number should appear on a life member card? Dave said that new life members would get a new number in the 70'000 where as old life member cards are in the 400 – 500 regions and that they would keep these numbers.

Roberts Jones (Northern Area Chair) there are reasons why a life member does not re-new but to charge them again after they have either been awarded them for hard work or paid a lot of money for it would not be right and that they should be able to re-new even after a lapse.

Richard Morton (Southampton Friends Delegate) asked if someone lapsed their membership and then wanted to rejoin but were over 35 could they do so? John advised that in the constitution that they would not be able to do so.

#### 14.3 Disability Policy – Steve Browning

Steve Browning (Bishops Stortford Delegate) We are in a climate of change within the Federation and that we should take advantage of this period of change. We should not allow any form of discrimination including disability. As a Federation we should have an Equalities Statement with this in, due to the size of the Federation we would have to comply with new legislation. It would also be good for our public image and demonstration of this would be another positive marketing point. Disability is not just people in wheelchairs; there are many forms of disability. We have a responsibility to our member whatever there ability and that we establish good practice. In situations where accepting a member with a disability is not possible then we need to deal with this in a sensitive manner and possibly suggest other organisations which could be a positive point for us. There are no motions for this today but hopefully there will be one soon.

Kirsty Van Lieshout said that we should be looking at the Disability Discrimination Act. Also we should be careful of using this as a marketing point as we may not have the insurance or the skills as we are not trained professionals.

Emma Dunning (HGS) advised that this has been discussed at the NEC and that she has been asked to include an Equalities Statement and a Code of Conduct within the work she will be doing as

Constitutional Subcommittee. Also each case should be judged on a case by case basis as some cases we might not be suitable for. Also people need to be considerate about what they put on the one list as there have been some very upsetting and discriminative comments on the one list which is not acceptable.

Richard Morton (Southampton Friends Delegate) This is a difficult subject, at their group they vote in every new member and every re-newel, it allows for a representation of the local area. If there was a lot of members who are in a wheelchair this would make recruiting no-disabled people very difficult, there needs to be a balance.

Robert Jones (Northern Area Chair) he has been contacted by Social Services in the past and has dealt with this by saying anyone is welcome but they must be able to support themselves as we are not carers, this is not being discriminative. Robert disagreed with Richard's comments about controlling who becomes a member of this federation.

Martin Spruce (Solihull Delegate) did not agree with Southampton Friends mafia style of voting people in or out.

Richard Morton (Southampton Friends Delegate) advised that there reason this was brought in was because of past problems with a member who would not leave and that this was the way the Committee felt best to deal with it.

Tracy Thorn (NT&CAC) advised that 1 in 3 people have a mental health issue; just because you are not born with a disability does not mean that you will not in the future. If this happens would we as a federation feel comfortable asking people to leave if a member does develop a disability.

Andy Campbell (Barkingside Observer) there are 2 issues here. Under no circumstance should be discriminate on any groups but also we need a mechanism to deal with people who are disruptive or who's behaviour is un-acceptable. Therefore we need a code of conduct in place to say what is acceptable which should be a positive as members know that they will be treated with respect by other members.

Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) We shouldn't worry too much about this as groups usually find their own level.

14.4 The National Federation of Plus Areas should become a registered charity – Joe Gurney 1:50

## **15. Presentation on the Federations Forthcoming Business Plan – Gerry Edwards**

Gerry Edwards asked the AGM what ideas they had for inclusion in the Business Plan. The flip chart notes are below:

- Every Group has a program
  - Double the membership (1000)
  - Double or increase the number of groups (inc. cyber Groups)
  - Start a Welsh Area
  - New Area(s) created
  - More Quest Groups
  - Larger Financial base
  - More National Holidays and events
  - More National publicity (with a budget), possible TV / Radio
  - More active committee members (new faces), encouragement by old committee members
  - Younger members (20 – 25 age group)
  - Cut out the red tape / bureaucracy
  - More Fun!!!
  - Support, training and infrastructure
- 
- Making the groups sexy
  - Groups working together and supporting

- Variety of events
- More second tier groups
- More national 1 day events like Treasure Hunt
- Improving quality at events
- Niche events like National Ski-ing
- Less restrictive for members only events
- MUST BE POSITIVE AT ALL TIMES

**16. Announcement of election results of the National Chairman to serve from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007**

John Smith (NC) handed over to Emma Dunning (HGS) to read out the election result. Emma advised that John Smith (NC) has been duly elected to server as National Chairman.

**17. Announcement of election results of National Officers to serve from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2007.**

John Smith (NC) announced that Alison Jones has been elected as National Finance Officer for a term of 2 years.

**18. National Chairman's address**

John Smith (NC) thanked everyone for their input into the National Plan. John said he was not as nervous as last years AGM as you can tell he has been enjoying himself today. John thanked Emma for all the hard work she has done over the last year inc the NEC Procedure's and promoting electronic communication. John thanks Adrian Barnard as outgoing NFO for his work over the last 2 years with the accounts, and Dave Filer as National Activities Officer as well as the AGM 2007 co-ordinator. John passed his thanks to the out going Area Chairs – Tracy Thorn (NT&CAC), Tina Bunyan (SAC) and Andy Campbell (EAAC). Following on from the business plan we are moving forward to the future which is positive, Plus to become more fun and friendly, he thanked the AGM for their contribution today.

**19. Election of Vice Presidents**

The NEC proposed Gerry Edwards and Sandra Brogan as Vice Presidents. The AGM elected both to server for the coming year. Congratulations to both Gerry and Sandra.

**20. Any Other Urgent Business (not promotion of events)**

Ian Crawshaw (Chiswick Delegate) said that John was partial the flaming sambuca and if anyone wished to show their appreciation to buy one for John later.

Adam Redshaw (Midland Area Chair) asked for people to send articles to Richard to include in Plus News as this is one of our key communication tools.

Tracy Thorn (NT&CAC) thanked people for organising Brean but asked to see it moved for future years as North Thames & Chiltern were finding it hard to attend.

**21. Announcement of the date for the Annual General Meeting 2008.**

The date, time and location for the AGM 2008 will be decided on shortly and this will be communicated via the Area Chairs and the website. Groups will be required to send delegates as mentioned previously.

**22. Presidential Closing Address by Gerry Edwards, Vice-president.**

Gerry said that today has been interesting and that we have managed to fit everything in to a day. We will be looking at the format as per the suggestions made. Gerry thanked all those for putting together the AGM including Dave Filer, Alison & Robert Jones, Emma Dunning (HGS), Mark & Katie Hawkins for the sound, Mark Hewson for videoing the AGM and anyone who he has missed. Gerry said he highlights were Andy Campbell for speaking the most, Ian for volunteering to be HGS and best speech by Tracy Thorn. He thanked everyone for coming today and contributing. We need to build the Federation up from grass routes level and build the groups up.

**23. Closure of meeting by the National Chairman.**

John Smith (NC) (NC) closed the AGM 2007. John thanked all the delegates and observers for their positive input. John thanked the NEC again for their work over the past year. This AGM has proved that Plus is a National organisation and that Area Lead has not spilt us and that this has been evident today. He hoped that next year the AGM will be equally positive and hoped people remember that this is the Groups meeting.



