

Action on Disability - Annual General Meeting
16th November 2020 at 6pm
via Zoom

1. Welcome

Victoria Brignell (Chair) welcomed everyone to AoD's online AGM, thanked everyone for attending and confirmed the meeting was quorate with 32 attendees.

2. Apologies for absence

Mike Gannon, Amanda Cosby

3. Minutes of the last AGM held on 26th November 2019

The minutes for the previous AGM were approved and accepted as a correct record. Patricia Quigley proposed; Gabriella Zepf seconded.

4. Chair's Report

Victoria Brignell, Chair of AoD, presented her report of AoD's activities. Sadly, our Welfare Benefits team leader Tom Kenny passed away this year. He made a great difference to the lives of people locally, helping around 4,000 people to claim around £25 million in benefits due to them. He won 750 tribunal cases and high court judicial disputes, indirectly helping large numbers of disabled people across the country. A room at the new centre will be named after him.

The staff have done an amazing job adapting to the Covid-19 situation and meeting needs. The Employment Service had a mix of successes and disappointments this year, losing four contracts which were taken in-house by partners to save costs, but starting three new projects. The service supported 33 former interns to continue at work and develop their careers and the new Equip project helped 45 disabled people to find employment. Young people attending Youth Services achieved both bronze and gold Duke of Edinburgh Awards, as well as taking part in 194 activities, working with partners such as the Lyric Theatre, Dance West and London Youth. Welfare Benefits continues to be in high demand, with the two staff and four volunteers supporting large numbers of people by phone, claiming more than £1.3 million in benefits. The Independent Living Service continued to offer peer support groups and was awarded the H&F Direct Payments contract, in partnership with Ruils. Sadly, we had to withdraw from the Advocacy Service bid due to changes in the contract and the staff were

transferred to TAP, which took over the contract. However, we hope to re-start our own Advocacy Service soon.

Other developments have been the launch of the new website and work on external communications – with an e-newsletter and social media posting – to help us better engage with members.

5. Treasurer's presentation of the audited accounts year ending 31st March 2020

The accounts presented by the Treasurer, Peter Harden, relate to the pre-Covid-19 period. Regardless, it was worth mentioning that AoD has weathered the pandemic relatively well. Income (£949,173) decreased by 12.4%, largely as a result of the loss of four employment contracts. However expenditure (£880,549) decreased by 14.5%.

Employment accounts for approximately half of the income and Youth Services for a quarter, with the rest split between the other services. Most income is from statutory grants and contracts (43%) and fee income (43%). The remainder is from charitable trusts and foundations. Expenditure echoes income closely.

Operating surplus increased by 22% to £68,624. We almost have three months' operating costs in hand, which is an indicator of a secure financial position.

6. Election of Trustees

There are five Trustee vacancies and three nominations have been received. Therefore, Victoria Brignell is re-elected and Mustafa Karim are duly elected. Gabriella Zepf proposed, Michael seconded. Victoria welcomed the new Trustees. Please contact David Buxton to put forward further names.

7. Special announcements

David Buxton (CEO of AoD) reported on AoD's Covid-19 response – the pandemic has changed how services and support are delivered and this is likely to continue into the future. With many service users unable to use Zoom, Teams and other online systems, we need to upskill and encourage our members to use technology, reducing social isolation. £27,000 has just been received from the Department for Civic Society via the Big Lottery for a peer support and digital inclusion project. If you know of anyone who would like free IT support to get online or on to Zoom, please let us know.

Some additional good news is the equipment budget of £3,000 for new tablets, etc, for those in greatest need.

Other Covid-19 adaptations include the Youth Service having to reduce holiday services from 40 to 25 young people to allow for social distancing. Welfare benefits is now entirely by telephone and online, with the volunteers continuing to support staff and members.

Muna Ali (Employment Service Manager) updated the meeting on the Employment Service's adaptations and future plans. All interns and staff learned to use Zoom and there was a focus on workshops, skills building and project work, allowing for successful completion. Recruitment and assessments are also now online. The service is busy developing a new supported employment service and plans a legal advice service once the move to the new building has taken place.

David shared the great news that fundraising for the new building is nearly complete, with £191,000 raised to date, leaving only £9,000 to reach our target of £200,000 We now have a landscape designer and co-production is under way. The March 2021 handover has been delayed by Covid-19 and is now due June/July 2021. It will be our permanent home for 250 years because of the underlease.

8. Vote of thanks

Thanks to all our funders and key supporters this year: the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham, John Lyon's Charity, London Community Response Fund, Youth Music, Dr Edwards & Bishops King Fulham Fund, Jack Petchey Foundation, Youth Music, Inclusion London, Baily Thomas Charitable Fund. In addition, many thanks to the GLA and Wolfson Foundation for support towards our new building.

Heartfelt thanks to staff and volunteers for their dedication, with a special thanks to Maria del Prado Fernandez Algaba, our volunteer architect who has done a tremendous amount of work on our new building plans over the past four years. Many thanks also to Patrick McVeigh, a Trustee who is standing down from the Board after nine years, including as serving as Chair but who will continue as an advisor.

And finally, many thanks to our members and supporters. Please let us know your thoughts and opinions. We look forward to welcoming you to our new centre next year and we hope to be getting back to normal by then.

The meeting closed at 19.00.