

British Humanist Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

held on Saturday 17 July 2010, 14.00 – 16.00 at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

Present: Deborah Ainger, Abe Alpren, Robert Ashby, Rene Branton, Mark Breeze, David Brittain, Geoff Browne, Peter Bruggen, Nick Carter, John Catt, Igor Choromanski, Denis Cobell, Danny Collman, Veronique Anna Corney, Julie Crow, Victoria Daines, Christopher Davies, Paul Ewans, Mike Flood, Alan Foreman, Linda Foreman, Stephen Giles Frankiss, Alice Fuller, Francesca Gage, E Garland, Peter Geroge, Anita Goldberg, Chris Gordon-Smith, James Grindrod, Bernard Halter, Gerda Hanko, Allan Hayes, Ann Hunter, Duncan Hutchinson, Michael Imison, Geroge Jelliss, John Kell, Marion Kemp, John Kennedy, Toby Keynes, Audrey King, Paul Kitchener, Sunil Krishnan, Josh Kutchinsky, Donald Langdown, John Leeson, Alec Leggatt, Pamela Leggatt, Don Liversedge, Inji Livingston, Jose Llarena, Geraldine MacLaine, Derek Marcus, Ann Marie John, David McKnight, D Mitchell, Peter David Morgan, B Morton, Richard Norman, Gordon Archer Ogilvie, Iain Paterson, Margaret Penrose, Rafael Manuel Pepiol, Mike Pictor, Stuart Pilbrow, David Pollock, Mary Porter, Richard Porter, Jeanne Rathbone, John Rayner, Michael Nial Reynolds, Francis Xavier Robinson, Patricia Rogers, Diana Rookledge, L Rosolkowska, Kenneth Charles Rudd, David Savage, Mike Savage, Kate Scott, Nathan Shickle, David Simmonds, Jonathan Simons, Laurence Smaje, Graham Smith, Barbara Smoker, Valerie Ruth Stainton, Alison Stein, Alan Stuart, Christine Seymour, Ariadne Tampion, Darrell Thomas, Richard Thompson, Marco Tranchino, David Verkaik, Phillip Vince, Rosalind Walker, Ray Ward, Mark Wardrop, David Watkins, Raymond White, David Williams, Derek Woodvine, Jane Wynne-Wilson

Staff in attendance: Bob Churchill, Andrew Copson, James Gray, Bernard Halter, Pepper Harow, David Pack, Naomi Philips, Cynthia Scott-Clark, Tana Wollen.

Apologies for Absences: Asad Abbas, Robert Ashby, John Bradshaw, James Chegwiddden, Julia Copson, John Dowdle, Michael Hart, Richard Jacques, Jack Jeffery, Billy Jenkins, Janet Keyte, Suresh Lalvani, Warren Lakin, Gerry Lewis, Ken Loach, Fokkina McDonnell, Hayward Lynn Millard, Julia Mundy, Alan Palmer, Elio Peneasy, Alec Reed, John Ricketts, Donald B. Sharpe, Chris Smith, Lee Stacy, Maggie Stevenson, Lewis Wolpert, Jack Wright

Adoption of Standing Orders: On the proposal of Robert Ashby (Chair of the Board of Trustees and the AGM), the Standing Orders were adopted by the meeting

Declarations of Interest: The chair reminded those present that members speaking should declare any potential conflict of interest.

Minutes of the AGM of Saturday 18 July 2009: On the proposal of Josh Kutchinsky, seconded by David Pollock, the minutes were approved *nem con*. There were no matters arising.

Chair's address: The chair welcomed the appointment of Andrew Copson as new Chief Executive. He paid tribute to Hanne Stinson and thanked her for her work. He drew attention to the positive achievements of Darwin's anniversary year and the Atheist Bus Campaign and the awareness of Humanism they brought. He reported that financially the BHA is more stable than it has ever been despite the costs of restructuring. He announced that the Board has begun a strategy review to rework the BHA's Vision, Mission, Values and Aims – these will be rolled out across the organisation in 2011 with a focus on cooperation, fundraising and promoting awareness of Humanism.

The Chair thanked Trisha Rogers, David Pollock, Mary Porter and the rest of their Board for their work during the new Chief Executive appointment and strategy review and it was reported that Toby Lowe has left the Board. He was thanked for his work with Ceremonies. The Chair thanked the staff for their hard work.

Jonathan Simons asked if the questions answered on the Annual Accounts could be put in the minutes of this meeting and it was agreed that they would be added (see appendix to these minutes).

There was discussion over the way in which trustees were elected, and the Chair agreed that the Board would consider ways of improving members' knowledge of candidates standing for election.

Chief Executive's Report: Andrew Copson reported briefly on the first six months of 2010. He described the organisational restructuring of the BHA and the new positions within the staff – Head of Promotions (Bob Churchill),

Head of Public Affairs (Naomi Phillips) and Head of Operations (Bernard Halter). He also reported that the National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular student Societies (AHS) had now been brought into closer relation with the BHA which will be very beneficial in bringing more young people to the BHA and supporting atheism, humanism and secularism among students. Andrew introduced Richy Thompson and Sam Corcoran, president and treasurer of the AHS, who introduced themselves and the AHS to the meeting. Andrew gave an overview of the highlights of fundraising in 2010 so far, reporting a 20% increase in membership compared with last year and a 24% increase in donations. Various comments were made from the floor including on the welcome growth in membership and how to continue growth, on improving online facilities to donate, the importance of producing BHA News at the lowest possible cost. The Chair thanked the Chief Executive and all the staff for their hard work and dedication.

Annual Report and Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2009: Using slides, John Woolhouse presented key figures from the annual accounts.

Robert Ashby thanked John Woolhouse for his report and invited questions from the members.

In the course of questions and discussion:

- it was clarified that designated funds are funds set aside for purposes such as decoration and maintenance of the building like painting the outside of the building. The reason this was not spent in 2009 was because these repairs/redecorations were not done in 2009 but have been done in early 2010.
- there was discussion of the BHA's investments. The treasurer stated that in 2008 the BHA was too heavily invested in equities and was able to recover a large portion of its losses when this moved up again but then, once a recovery was made, the Board moved to a more defensive structure after much debate and discussion.
- The treasurer explained that after very thorough discussion and research by the Board and Ceremonies it was agreed that there was a very good chance of Ceremonies breaking even in 2011/2012 and their budget was approved on this basis and timescale.
- the BHA's decreasing reserves over the past years were discussed and it was agreed by the treasurer that the deficit would have to decrease in coming years as the reduction of reserves could only continue until the ratio the Board had set was reached.

On a proposal from the Chair, the report and accounts for 2009 were accepted *nem con*.

Re-appointment of Auditor: On a proposal of David Pollock, seconded by David Savage, Knox Cropper were reappointed as auditors

Election to the Board of Trustees: The results of the election of trustees were announced. There were six candidates for four vacancies. Total number of eligible voters was 9,496. Total number of votes cast was 2,469 Turnout this was a turnout of 26% The total number of valid votes cast was 2,464 and there were 5 invalid votes. Robert Ashby, Alice Fuller, Alan Hayes and Mary Porter were all elected to the Board.

Special Resolution: The chair explained that the special resolution had been withdrawn because new provisions of the Companies Act 2006, coming into force at the end of 2009, had rendered the proposed Memorandum and Articles non-compliant. The resolution would come back to a General Meeting when compliant documents had been drafted.

Emergency Motions: No motions had been received.

Any other Business: There was none.