



Vranch House
Pinhoe Road
EXETER
EX4 8AD

Telephone: 01392 468333
Fax: 01392 463818
E-Mail: name@vranchhouse.org
Website: www.vranchhouse.org

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A Company Limited by Guarantee - Registered Number 2599511

Devon and Exeter Spastics Society (Vranch House)

Annual General Meeting

10th December 2019

In attendance:

Chairperson: Julia Tolman-May (JTM)
Charity Secretary: Colonel Graeme Wheeler (GW)
Head of Therapies: Kate Moss (KM)
Head of Education: Ian Norton (IN)

Apologies sent in advance:

Sheila Matheson, Ruth Moss, Rebecca Neary, Ruth Prowse, Clive Rendle, Jane Rendle, Sheila Rendle, Dickson Tolman, Miriam Tolman.

Proxy Voters:

Jessica Cole, Daphne Kingdon, Ken Thompson, Nola Thompson, Alice Tolman-May, Glen Tolman-May, Sarah Williams, Maureen Wiseman.

Meeting started at 19:00

Point	Speaker	Discussion
1.0 INTRODUCTION AND APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE LAST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING		

1.0	JTM	Thank you very much to the members attending for turning out tonight.
1.1	GW	The charity currently has 87 (eighty-seven) members, with the number remaining constant. Eight (8) proxy votes were sent in prior to this meeting by members unable to attend.
1.2		<i>The 2018 AGM minutes were approved by the members in attendance.</i>
1.2.1	JTM	I will sign the minutes off as agreed by the members tonight.
1.3	GW	Beverley Simcox, who has ably and efficiently taken the minutes for these meetings for many years is unfortunately unable to attend tonight's meeting due to illness.
2. REPORT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF THE SOCIETY		
2.0	JTM	This is my seventh Annual General Meeting Report. It has been another year of unblemished success at Vbranch House. The £200,000 cash surplus made in the last financial year enables competitive pay, staff training and building maintenance to continue at Vbranch House.
2.0.1		Since the last report the Secondary School has continued to be a great success. In the summer this year the library was rebuilt to serve as an assessment room, the doors in the secondary school were widened to improve access, and work was done to remodel the toilets in the primary school. In June the school undertook a voluntary Ofsted inspection resulting in the same grading of 'Outstanding'.
2.0.2		The new Innowalk machine has been so successful that we purchased two more, including a larger size so that all the school children can now use this wonderful equipment. There are only three schools in the UK with an Innowalk, but Vbranch House is the only one with three machines. Building work is about to start to provide a dedicated room for the Innowalks (which are currently housed in the school hall) and further equipment storage.
2.0.3		The average outpatient waiting time has been 7.4 weeks across the year, exceeding NHS targets. We have had no complaints for yet another year. The staff level is now at 90 (ninety), and we are impressed with, and grateful for, all that they do.
3. REPORTS BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, HEAD OF THERAPIES AND HEAD OF EDUCATION		
3.0	GW	CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

3.0.1	—	<p>This is my 27th year at Vbranch House and my last AGM Report before retiring next June.</p> <p><i>Copies of the Audit document for the year ending 31st March 2019 were handed out to all who attended, and GW reminded those who were in attendance that the financial information is commercially confidential. GW then went through the figures.</i></p>
3.0.2	GW	<p>STATEMENT:</p> <p>There was an extra £80,000 increase in donations towards the new Innnowalks (£110,000 for all three Innnowalks), the donor wishes to remain anonymous.</p>
3.0.3		<p>2018/2019 Financial statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income total: £2,106,554 • Expenditure total: £1,766 • Net income: £205,525 • Total funds carried forwards: £6,554,036
3.0.4		<p>BALANCE SHEET:</p> <p>The total increase in income from the financial year ending 31st March 2018 to the financial year ending 31st March 2019 was £289,472. Most of the income increase was derived from an increase in pupil numbers.</p>
3.0.5		<p>AUDIT FIGURES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gross income, assets and expenditure have all increased (the expenditure increase was mainly due to hiring more staff). GW pointed out that depreciation figure is not 'real' money. • The more that is built and developed, the higher the depreciation figure will be. Buildings are said to 'depreciate' but if maintained they will last. • £136,767 was spent on building, equipment and maintenance in the last financial year. • The Charity is run on a net cash basis, having more money than is actually spent. The graph shows that in years when building is taking place income isn't so much more than expenditure. On the few occasions when expenditure has exceeded income, it has been a pre-arranged plan to build.
3.0.6		<p>FORCAST:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total income predicted for this financial year is £2.5m. • The charity's running costs have remained at the same gross value for the last 10 (ten) years. • Staff are the largest cost to the charity at a total of £1,665,000 in the last financial year. • The indicated net cash total is £1.8m, and is reckoned to be at £2m by the end of this financial year.

3.0.7		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The financial target that we have registered with the Charities Commission is to have one years operating cash in the bank (£2m), and we are on target for this. It means that the charity could run for one year without any income, without the need to borrow any money. • The current NHS contract will run for a further 18 years. • Our current education contract will run for a further 10 years. • The cash reserves are in a savings account in a state-owned bank (Natwest) which is as secure an option as possible. Interest rates are unfortunately low at the moment across the financial sector. I wouldn't consider a higher risk savings option as I wouldn't be happy risking the charity's money. We have enough reserves at the moment not to need to risk a 'better' investment. Reserves can be dipped into in exceptional circumstances, for example to build the Honeylands building, which also secured us the 25 year NHS contract. <p>DEVELOPMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been an increase in the school population over the last year. • Development and construction of Innowalk 'wing' is underway, it will be at the back of the school hall (where 'Sheila's shed' was sited). The Innowalk suite will be just over two times the size of the shed, and will have two stories, with a linking corridor running alongside the Class 3 store. The Innowalk room will have a folding glass wall to make a nice environment for the patients during warmer weather, and the room will have a hoist. Work is due to start in January, and should finish late June 2020. The build will cost approximately £400,000; Planning Permission was granted last week. • The total number of staff employed by Vbranch House today is 88 (eighty-eight), it will soon be 90 (ninety) as we are in the process of recruiting two more. • The Net cash reserve is currently £2million.
3.0.8	GW	I will be available to the trustees for advice post retirement, but I have complete trust in Kate Moss to take over his role.
3.0.9	KM	There is a long hand-over of the role taking place between GW and myself to ensure a smooth transition for the charity.
3.1	KM	THERAPY DEPARTMENT REPORT
3.1.1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of the 88 current employees, 20 (twenty) are therapists spread over five sites (Vbranch House and Honeylands, Barnstaple Health Centre, ERADE [the Deaf Academy], Millwater special school and Ellen Tinkham special school).

3.1.2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lucy Wills (physiotherapist) is continuing to work across the North Devon (Barnstaple Health Centre) and Vranth House sites, helping to link working practices between the two sites. • Our therapists have seven assistants and four administration staff supporting them. • We have a team of two nurses and a Nursing Assistant, who are in the process are meeting with the dieticians to lead blended feeding practice in Devon. Our nursing team is well respected by the Community Nurses.
3.1.3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Therapy department continues to try hard to beat the NHS waiting time target of 18 weeks. • The Therapy Department has supported two main research projects in the area this year, and we have a board in the Vranth House reception waiting area featuring current research projects. • We have sent our clinical staff on a variety of training courses this year, including courses on sensory integration, and to the SWIM conference. • We will be looking at carrying out our own research in this coming year, particularly looking at the effectiveness of the Innowalk. One of our new physiotherapists (who joined us in September) comes to us with a research background.
3.1.4	VH Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Innowalk has been amazing this year, with the children's initial assessment on the equipment being carried out by a therapist, but then the follow-up sessions are run by our physiotherapy assistants. IW staff couldn't believe how competent our assistants are. Fantastic to work w/ colleagues who are expert in their area. • We now have a full time dedicated Vranth House school Physiotherapist, a part time Speech and Language Therapist and Occupational Therapist. plus three school therapy assistants. • The school Christmas production will be put online for parents to view, and it is a very good example of how well integrated therapy is into the school day. • A new full time school Physiotherapist started with us in September, she is very motivated and has worked hard to get to know all the children and to Assess their needs.
3.1.5	KM	<p>We always share information with parents and professionals where appropriate. Pupil medical notes are now kept in nurses' room for easier</p>

3.1.6	GW	<p>access for the nurses, and letters received from other professionals (or parents) are shared with all relevant staff. Therapists discuss with the team any research that has come to their attention. There is definitely a whole-team approach the care of VH pupils and out patients.</p> <p>The service heads have continued to develop ways to assess, share and store information within the team, with parents, and with external professionals where appropriate.</p>
3.1.7	VH Member	How much is the Innowalk being used for mainstream children?
3.1.8	KM	Four outpatient Innowalk slots are available <i>per week</i> at the moment, this will be expanded to two dedicated afternoons <i>per week</i> soon. Children from Millwater School have already attended Innowalk sessions post-surgery.
3.2	IN	EDUCATION REPORT
3.2.1		<p>There have been lots of developments across the board, as my colleagues have already mentioned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vranth House School had three classes in 2016, there are now seven classes. There were 17 school pupils in 2016, and there are 39 now. • The biggest expansion area this year has been in the secondary school, which has opened a second class. We have had a couple of pupils joining the secondary school from mainstream schools, and we have pupils with a wider spread of needs at the school now. • Nursery provision has also grown this year, starting at age two; is not much provision elsewhere in Devon for this age group of disabled children. The Honeylands Group involvement has reduced over the last couple of years, so being able to offer nursery places is very important. There are now seven children in nursery, so the benefit/appeal is being seen by parents. Vranth House may at some point need to run two nursery classrooms because of the limited alternatives elsewhere for parents/pupils. • Earlier in the year we agreed to take part in a Voluntary Ofsted to try out the new education inspection framework. The inspection was sold to us as a 'light touch' inspection, but turned out to be a 'pressure test' resulting in a full and thorough three-day inspection, going through all 94 standards for independent schools as well as the rest of the framework. No formal result/report was given at it was not a formal inspection, but the debrief indicated that we would have remained 'Outstanding'. • Vranth House School is continuing to develop its operating procedures and evolve to meet the needs of the pupils it serves. 'Why' has to be at the core of everything we do, and be able to justify that what is being

		<p>done is being done to meet the individual child's need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Vbranch House School curriculum has three main parts: communication and cognition (continuing to develop), and the curriculum is completely individualised for each pupil. • Some more able pupils have joined the school in the last year, so Zoe (the Head of the Senior School) has been looking at appropriate functional skills (numeracy/literacy/IT) in terms of the bits they will need as an adult, such as maths for buying things. • There has been a big focus nationally on mental health and wellbeing. The school held a coffee morning for parents with a staff 'bake off' competition at the beginning of this term in aid of Young Minds. We recognise that it is tough for a person with physical disabilities in a largely un-adapted world, and recognising this will continue to be part of what VH does.
3.2.2	VH Member	Is there likely to be any post 19 provision at VH in the future?
3.2.3	GW	It would depend on whether the demand was there from Devon County Council (DCC). Our expansion into secondary provision came from DCC recognising that it was significantly more expensive to continue to send secondary pupils out of the county than developing provision within Devon (at VH).
3.2.4	IN	Zoe is forming links with post-18 placements to help inform parents and pupils regarding where their children may go when leaving VH.
3.2.5	VH Member	Are the pupils coming to Vbranch House School from mainstream schools now more physically able?
3.2.6	IN	Not necessarily, they have a range of needs. The most able pupil has been with us for less than two years and is now looking at going back into a mainstream education setting.
3.2.7	VH Member	Historically there were worries about being able to provide a secondary environment at VH where children could form friends.
3.2.8	IN	The Secondary School cohort is currently 11 (eleven), and the group is also mixed up for different lessons with some of the primary pupils, according to ability. Zoe has forged links with at least three other specialist providers enabling the pupils to meet other children, and to develop a larger peer group.
3.2.9	VH Member	My son, who is in the Secondary School, has formed friendships within his class.
4.0 ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF THE BOARD		

4.0	GW	We now need to elect our officers. The Chairwoman is currently Julia Tolman-May, our Deputy Chairman Anthony griffin has stood down and Rebecca Neary has stood up to take his place. These Offices were Proposed by Penny Hale (Trustee), Seconded by Claire Rendle (member) and passed by the remaining members (and the Proxy Voters).
4.0.1	GW	We are grateful for Julia and Rebecca's service in these roles.
4.1	GW	Penny Hale and Anthony Griffin are standing for re-election as Trustees; they were Proposed by Claire Rendle (Member) and Seconded by Rosemary Pavitt (Trustee), and the motion was passed by the Members attending (and the Proxy Voters).
4.1.1	GW	There are no other Trustees up for re-election at this time. We hope that Clive Rendle is well and will be able to attend future meetings.
4.2	GW	The members are required to appoint the Auditors for the charity: the Members attending (and the Proxy Voters) approved the re-appointment of Kirk Hills of Exeter in this role. The Solicitors Foot Anstey were also duly reappointed by the members attending (and the Proxy Voters).
5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS		
5.0	GW	I would like to give thanks to the Chairwoman.
5.0.1	JTM	Thank you for everyone's help. The work of all the employees is greatly appreciated.
5.0.2	GW	And thanks to Julia, who attends the full staff meetings every month as well as the monthly Management Meetings.

Meeting ended at 20:25