



Notes of Annual General Meeting 2021
Thursday 21st October at 3.30pm, via Zoom

1. The meeting opened at 3.30pm
2. Sharron Spindler (SS), Chief Executive, welcomed attendees
3. Apologies were received from Andrew Carmichael (Trustee), Graham Lewis (Volunteer), Grant Chambers (Volunteer)
4. Susan Walker (SW), Chair of Trustees, asked the floor if anyone had any comments on the notes of the 2020 AGM. No comments were raised and the notes were accepted as being true and accurate.
5. SW introduced Matthew Pettifer from Staffords Accountants (the accountants for Diverse 2020-21) and asked him to give an overview of our accounts for year ending 31 March 2021, and our financial position.

6. Report from Matthew Pettifer

2021 has seen various changes at Diverse. The main change in the accounts was the cessation of the contracts from both Public Health Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, with funding ceasing on 30 September 2020. Otherwise, the income of the charity was relatively unchanged. The loss of these contracts did mean that overall income was down £80,000 compared to the previous year. The loss of these activities has necessitated a general reduction in costs, mainly reflected in staffing. Average staff numbers reduced from 14 to 11, with only 8 people employed as at March 2021. The reduction in overheads has meant that the final position was still rather encouraging, with a small surplus of £14,000, compared to £5,000 the previous year. Unrestricted income showed another small rise and unrestricted funds as at 31/3/21 stood at £13,563, with a further £19,893 of restricted funds as at 31/3/21, including £7,449 of surplus funds from the public health contracts which can be used to offset core costs. This means that despite the loss of the public health contracts, the balance sheet is still as strong as can reasonably be expected and other grant income means the charity is in a good position to continue with its work in the year ended 31 March 2022. Diverse does of course remain vulnerable to loss of grant income, but the balance sheet, while showing funds of £33,000, and cash of £64,000 (albeit including a significant amount of grant funds received in advance), is still the strongest it has been for some years.

All in all, and particularly taking into account the loss of key Public Health Contracts, the finances of Diverse remain healthy, although it remains important, as always, to continue

to seek out additional unrestricted income, and grant funding, to continue to the work of the charity.

7. SW proposed the adoption of the 2020-21 accounts and this was seconded by Jeffrey Grierson (Trustee). Susan asked if anyone had any objections or comments; none were raised and the accounts were adopted.
8. SW proposed the re-appointment of Staffords as our accountants, this was seconded by Gaby Clements (GC) (Trustee). Susan asked if anyone had any objections or comments; none were raised and Staffords were re-appointed.
9. SW reported that:
 - Rob Turner, who had been on the Board for over 6 years had stood down in January 2021. The Board thanked Rob for his contribution.
 - GC joined the Board in May 2021 and welcomed her to her first AGM. GC introduced herself and mentioned that she is a secondary school teacher in Cambridgeshire.
 - Izzy Rose joined the Board in May 2021, but unfortunately, due to other commitments, she stepped down in September.

Following Rob's resignation, the Board and SS made the decision to adopt a rotating Chair arrangement i.e. a Board member who has been on the Board for 2 or more years can be elected as Chair for a period of 6 months. It was felt that this arrangement would enable trustees who have full time jobs/commitments outside of Diverse, to have the opportunity to lead the Board for a set period of time and to feel that they could be focussed on their duties for that period. Our first Chair under the new arrangement was JG and his term came to an end in September. The Board thanked JG for his input and leadership. In September, SW was elected to take on the position until March 2022.

SW mentioned that applications for new Trustees are now open until the 26th November and details are on the Diverse website. She said that Diverse is interested to hear from people with skills and experience around, but not limited to, fundraising, working with young people and working with people with learning difficulties. As Diverse would also like to further develop sexual health and related provision for the LGBTQ+ community, we would welcome interest from people who have an insight and understanding into where the gaps in provision might be, and where funding for this provision might come from.

10. SW proposed the re-election of all current Trustees for a further year, this was seconded by JG and all Trustees at the meeting voted in favour. SW asked the floor if anyone had any objections or comments; none were raised and all Trustees were re-elected.
11. SW said that the full Trustees Report and Accounts for 2020-21 are filed with the Charity Commission and Companies House, and are also available on our website.

12. Report from Susan Walker, Chair of Trustees:

As for many, 2020-21 was a challenging year for Dhiverse. Not only did we have the challenge of managing our provision and working arrangements throughout the lockdowns and restrictions of COVID, but following the loss of funding from Public Health (as reported at the last AGM) we had to adjust to operating on a reduced budget and with a loss of both key provision and staff. However, through good financial and operational management, with the support of a dedicated staff team and the support of some of our suppliers such as Staffords and Camb IT, to whom we're very grateful, we were able to start the new financial year (2021-22) with a balanced budget. As Matthew Pettifer reported, we expect our financial position to remain, at the very least, stable for the next couple of years.

During this time we will focus on delivering our new strategy document and in light of the fact that our provision around HIV support and education, which used to be our key provision, is now much reduced, due not only to a loss of funding but also a change in need for people living with HIV, we will undertake a review of our charitable aims.

Our ABC Project, SLIP Programme, Counselling, Mainstream RSE, Sexual Health Trainings and our MSM work, all of which have been designed and developed over the last 5 years continue to be very much in demand, and these are the areas of work we aim to build on for the future.

On behalf of the Board, SW thanked SS and the team for their hard work and commitment over the last year.

SW asked the floor for questions and comments; none were raised.

13. Update from Sharron Spindler, Chief Executive:

HIV

In 2010, around 80% of the charity's work was HIV focused - primarily supporting people living with HIV but also training and campaigning. In 2021 only 15% - 20% of the charity's work is specifically related to HIV, through Counselling, Emotional Support, Training and Education.

Although the loss of the Public Health contract contributed to this change in our work, the greatest contributory factor is the significant fall in new HIV diagnoses in the UK, and that people living with HIV who achieve and maintain an undetectable viral load (the amount of HIV in the blood), by taking and adhering to antiretroviral therapy (ART) as prescribed, cannot sexually transmit the virus to others. This is great news and what the sector has been working towards, and continues to work

towards. However, with only 9 years to go to achieve the government's commitment to end new HIV transmissions in the UK by 2030, there is still work to be done. Many people living with HIV still need support to manage the psychological impact of being HIV positive. The stigma, prejudice, blame, isolation and not to mention growing older with HIV, are all difficult issues for many people to manage, and it is also these issues that in some cases, prevent people from getting tested. The decline in funding for HIV is adversely impacting on the need for more psychological support and better education around HIV. This is why it is so important to Dhiverse to be able maintain our psychological provision (counselling and emotional support), and to support the ongoing campaigning for more funding for this type of provision.

Dhiverse's shift in focus

In view of the changing needs of people living with HIV, if Dhiverse is to survive, we have to shift our focus. This change really started 5 years ago with the introduction of the ABC Project, followed by the SLIP Programme and Counselling service (all very high demand provisions with with waiting lists), and more recently the development of our RSE curriculum and new training programme.

Dhiverse's new strategy document for 2021-23 shows how the charity will continue to develop and grow these provisions along with plans for new areas of work, and what our successes were over the last 3 years. The document can be downloaded from our website.

Everyone has a right to have consensual sexual relationships and the charity's aim is for everyone to have the opportunity to be equipped to make informed decisions around these relationships, which is why we want to expand our provision to cover more key topics relevant to the 21st Century and to support more seldom heard groups.

It is important for us to remember that sexual health, like physical, mental and emotional health, is one important dimension of our overall health and social wellbeing. Being sexually healthy is much more than just being free of sexually transmitted infections. Being sexually healthy is also about sexual rights, sexual relationships and communication around sex, the ability to enjoy sexual pleasure, respecting all sexual genders, orientations and identities.

Unfortunately in 2021 many people are still unaware of how important it is to keep sexually healthy. Poor sexual health is much more common amongst people who already experience inequalities. Not having the opportunities to find or receive support, can often lead to poor mental and physical health. As we see far too often through their work, this lack of opportunity can also lead to misunderstandings, challenging behaviours and attitudes towards sex and relationships and risky behaviour, which in turn, can, and does, lead to police intervention.

Being unable to make informed decisions when online, can bring its own risks, such as accessing misinformation, accessing and sending inappropriate content and communicating with people who have negative reasons for being online. Referrals to our programmes and the interest in our RSE Package and Training Programme, have risen significantly over the last couple of years. Due to people accessing and sharing inappropriate content and or displaying challenging behaviours and attitudes towards sex and relationships, around 50% of referrals to our ABC and SLIP Programmes are from the police.

These are some of the reasons that Dhiverse's work remains important and very relevant in 2021 and beyond.

Challenges

Whilst we hope to have opportunities to develop and grow our work over the next couple of years, we also know that we'll face some challenges:

- To position ourselves so that we remain financially stable post 2023-24
- Being able to manage the increase in demand for our services – this means that we will need more staff/more funding
- Ensuring that our RSE Curriculum Package and our Training Programme remain unique, up to date and relevant to the 21st century
- Navigating the ever changing landscape of sexual health related needs and priorities

We're excited at the prospect of the work we've set ourselves for the next couple of years.

Thank you to a fantastic team for everything you've achieved in the last year and for remaining optimistic and cheerful throughout. Dhiverse is only as good as its staff. A special thank you to staff who lost their jobs in September 2020, but chose to remain connected to Dhiverse. Graham Lewis who was employed as our MSM Worker chose to carry on as a volunteer. Grant Chambers is now our volunteer treasurer and Meg Veit and Mel Sanderson are with us as sessional trainers. This has really helped Dhiverse to provide a level of continuity to those we work with.

14. SW said that Andy Bell, who had been a patron of Dhiverse for over 5 years had recently made the decision to step down due to pressures in his role as a performer. Andy will remain a 'friend' of Dhiverse and help out whenever he can. SW said that everyone at Dhiverse would like to thank Andy for his support and to wish him well.
15. SW asked the floor if they had any questions or comments; none were raised. SW thanked everyone for attending.
16. The meeting closed at 4.30pm