

## AGM 2017

Our 19<sup>th</sup> AGM was attended by about 45 members and supporters, and we were particularly delighted to welcome Michele Jennings, CEO, and Andrew Jones, Head of Fund Raising of our Charity, as well as Michelle Sapwell, Community Fund Raising Manager for the Northern Home Counties. Also in attendance were five hearing dogs and one hearing dog puppy, Winston, whilst six other dogs barked their apologies! We have 38 working dogs in the Branch, so where were all the others?

Our new Branch Chairman, Angus Blackwell, introduced himself and conducted the business meeting with the help of slides, with great efficiency. To keep the meeting reasonably short, all the reports and the annual accounts were available in the form of a booklet, copies of which are available from the Branch Secretary if anyone was unable to attend the meeting and would like one.

When it came to the elections, Angus formally stood down, only to be re-elected unanimously by the membership. Jack Alvarez was re-elected as Treasurer and the vacant post of Branch secretary was filled by Liz Arendt. We were pleased to welcome a new member, Linda Redfern, a speaker for the Branch, onto the Committee. A full Committee list appears opposite.

Angus then thanked everyone for their support, specially mentioning retired Speaker Secretary, Sue Hickson, for all her hard work in fulfilling the many request from groups for a speaker.

CEO Michelle Jennings was invited to address the meeting and with the help of a very interesting slide presentation, took us through “How are we doing?” for the previous year and the Charity’s aims for the future.

Some of the points she mentioned are as follows:

- ❁ The Charity’s aim is to train 200 dogs a year by 2020.
- ❁ The waiting list is now 6 – 18 months.
- ❁ The Charity is on a sound financial footing, debt free and raising sufficient to cover outgoings.
- ❁ Of all the dogs trained last year, only 4 could not be placed in some working capacity and were rehomed as pets.
- ❁ The charity is widening the scope of the dogs that are placed to include companion and support dogs for adults and children. These dogs are not fully accredited hearing dogs but they play an important role in supporting people with hearing impairment.
- ❁ The number of administrative staff has been decreased in favour of more training staff.
- ❁ The number of volunteers, without whom the charity could not function, continues to rise.

Michele then spoke about the new Welcome Centre, which is currently being built at The Grange. It will include a restaurant, shop and a hall that can be hired out to other organisations. It is being carefully fitted out with the needs of deaf people in mind, with acoustically friendly finish, furniture and fittings. It is hoped that it will be ready for use in November this year.

Andrew Jones, Head of Fund Raising, gave us an update on some of the major fundraising activities that are currently taking place.

The Great British Dog walks are attracting about 300 walkers/dogs on average, and next walk is at Stowe on June 4th (see page 15). He said that the GBDW was a great way of recognising the Charity and, from it, six new volunteers/speakers have been recruited. Specsavers, with 130 branches, is teaming up with Hearing Dogs and are hoping to raise between £100-£200 per branch.

There were questions from the floor, in particular as to how we can get more of the recipients to become involved.

After the meeting everyone was invited to partake of refreshments.



## Branch Committee 2017 – 18

### Honorary Officers

Hon. Chairman	Angus Blackwood
Hon. Secretary	Liz Arendt
Hon. Treasurer	Jack Alvarez

### Committee Members

Diana Bell	Lorna Hagen
Barbara Davidov	Hilary Gold
David Dickson	Linda Redfern
Linda Gair	Davina Robins

Associate member: Lynne Oppenheimer - Membership Secretary



## Treasurer's Report

In the last few weeks, we have raised some £1919.16 with expenses of only £42.40. This means that in the calendar year 2017, our finances are as below:

Income in 2017	12700.25
Soft credits	253.75
Total monies raised in 2017	12954.00
Expenditure in 2017	262.66
Transferred to HQ in 2017	10923.89
Excess of income over expenditure	12691.34
<b>Expenditure/Income</b>	<b><u>2.0%</u></b>

“Soft credits” are the monies, paid direct to The Grange, that do not pass through the Branch Bank account. The £253.75 above is the tax reclaimed on Gift Aided subscriptions and donations. I will be transferring further funds to Headquarters when we have enough in our account to meet the “minimum £2000” set by the charity. (It used to be £1000; recently raised.)

## Financial Summary for the calendar year 2016

Bank account at 5/1/17	1845.57
Change since December 2015	+600.31

### Monies raised in 2016

Income	25836.60
Soft Credits	129.72
Gift Aid	1070.76
	<u>27037.08</u>

Expenses / Income	5.2%
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If you would like a copy of the AGM booklet, including the detailed accounts for the year 2016, please contact the Branch Secretary.

Jack Alvarez, Hon. Treasurer