South Devon Steiner School Association
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
17 June 2015

Present – Trustees: Marcus Link (Chair), Juliet Crittenden, Edwina Ratcliffe, Christopher Cooper, Mark Drewell, Ian Powell
Present - Association members: Angela Martinot, Eloi Cardon, Jeremy Beck, Mark Jefferys, Martin Whitlock, Tim Barnden, Joe Kelly, Kate Amehllett, Siân Walton, Alan Houston, Ruby Starheart, Sandra Crawford, David Kemp-Gee, Wendy Holdstock, Donald Young, Paul Evans, Mark Eyers, Marian Rudd, Sarah Houghton, Mark Hunt, Elizabeth Elsholtz, Gaby Watson, Cathy Day, Andrew Venning, John Platt, Rowena Norris, Tatiana Cant, Duncan McCanlis,
Present – guests: Tilly Meredith, Matt Farrah, Caroline McDonald, Jacqueline Ellis, Kaycee Fordham, Stuart Gray, James Purssell, Kevin Jones, Glenn Woodcock, James Regan

Apologies: Jonathan Liddle, Dave & Susanna Chapman, Rita Meszaros, Jim Pilkington, Anne-Marie Stibbe

1. The meeting opened with a welcome from the Chair who also introduced the individual trustees. A verse by Rudolf Steiner was said by all present.

2. The Minutes of last year's AGM held on 17 April 2014 were agreed and signed.

3. Chairman's Report of 2013/14
   The chair set the frame of his report to the School Association by outlining the legal framework within which the school operates and a presentation of the trustees perspective on the balance between the charity’s objects, its activities and the requirement to provide access to public benefit for those below average means. This included a reference to the school’s resulting ethos, summarised in the “Three Golden Threads”, which have guided the school since its inception. These are: 1) To be socially inclusive, 2) To rely on the full Waldorf curriculum, 3) To encourage parental involvement.

   The chair also brought into focus the school's possibility of developing its activities so that it could offer Waldorf education from its early years' provision through to access to university via the Steiner School Certificate (SSC) coming out of New Zealand.

   The school year 2013/14 saw pupil numbers in the 290s with an average of 294 which was up from 291 in 2012/13. Our payroll was down 1 from 43 to 42 members of staff. Our GCSE results were above national average with 47 passes ranging from C to A*. It was also the first year that pupils were graded for their efforts working with the SSC model which was then still known as the International Steiner School Certificate (ISSC). The summer school in that year saw a sharp decrease of some 50%.

   Also, a concern had been the opening of the Exeter Steiner Academy but we saw less than a dozen pupils move, some of which have since returned.

   At the end of the year, the trustees reached a unanimous decision to go ahead with the Gateway project.

   2013/14 also brought with it changes in the Finance Office due to resignations and illness. Kevin Jones and Caroline Skelton were thanked for holding the management of the finance office whilst a more stable solution was sought.

4. Presentation of Accounts for year-ending 31 August 2014.
   Mark Drewell presented the accounts which had been approved by Council. There had been an increase in the bad debt write-offs, particularly deferrals, for the year but the expectation remained that aged debts would be repaid. The auditors advised that we examine the balance between bursaries and deferments.
There were questions from the floor asking why the Association members do not have the opportunity to approve the Accounts. The chair referred the questioner to the procedure as stipulated in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Further to another supplementary question, Council agreed that in future, adequate notice of the AGM would be sent to individual School Association members in addition to the notice in the Friday Flier and the emails.

5. **Mannington’s** were reappointed as the Auditors for a fee expected in the region of, £6,000, with a vote of 32 in favour and 2 abstentions.

6. **Election of Trustees.**
   Marcus Link and Edwina Ratcliffe standing for re-election following the procedure laid out in the Articles of Memorandum.

**Election Results:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Abstain</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marcus Link (for re-election)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwina Ratcliffe (for re-election)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Points were raised during the process of the election and an additional vote was held on the use of a secret ballot for the election of Trustees. The result of this further vote was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should we have a secret ballot</th>
<th>Retain Show of hands</th>
<th>Abstain</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, School Association members requested a profile in the Flier of those being elected/re-elected.

It was also reported that there is currently a vacancy for one parent trustee and, since our statutes allow us nine trustees who currently are neither employed by nor parents of the school, we have vacancies for one or two more trustees in this category. The Chair encouraged School Association members to contact Edwina, (currently acting as secretary) if they would like to suggest any suitable candidates.

There was a break for refreshments

7. **Overview of current state of the School by the Chair**
   Reference was made to the five items set out in the Trustees’ Report from 2013/14 under the heading “Plans for the Future” and the chair confirmed how all of these items had been progressed:
   a) Further review of management structure
   b) Stabilisation of financial situation including recruitment of experienced personnel
   c) Heating system to reach all areas by end of 2014
   d) Further work on SSC
   e) Exploration of extending school to classes 11/12

Updates of all of these were made during the evening.

Reference was then made to the EGM held in November 2014 which had been called by Council to update the School Association on progress with regard to the Gateway project, the management structure and the SSC. Following this meeting, Council decided to make
its proceedings more transparent and, starting with the minutes of the November EGM, Council has published all its meeting minutes on the school's website. Council had also worked with a list of likes and issues which had been raised at the EGM and focussed on bringing about clarity around the school's organisational structure and decision making processes by engaging actively in the process beginning in November. Council had also taken the request seriously to provide refreshments at School Association meetings.

8. **Update on Gateway project**
   Kevin Jones (Estates Manager and Senior Administrator) reported that the new woodchip boiler had been commissioned before Christmas in time for the higher rate of RHI payments to be made and that these should start being paid in the near future. The 3 phase electrical system was installed successfully. The lower site is almost finished. The Bunkhouse was rendered and the scaffolding would be taken down soon. Windows would be installed in the near future. There had been good cooperation with South Devon College. The project had been challenging but rewarding. Huge thanks to Mark Daley and Alan Houston for their input and commitment.

   The Chair added thanks from us all to Kevin. He has worked tirelessly to hold all these things together.

9. **Steiner School Certificate and Classes 11 & 12**
   Ian Powell reported that the pilot programme was run last year (2013/14). This year's results have been very successful, and this has been endorsed by an Inspector from New Zealand. Comments included that it was a tightly run and well moderated system. This year 80 per cent achieved Level 1. There are no failures, all move forward using the Credits they have achieved. Level 2 will be run in 2016. Courses are well-tailored to the students and we have a good team of fully engaged people.

   Other schools involved are Norwich, St. Michael's and Ringwood.

   Points for the SSC can be acquired through apprenticeships and vocational courses (e.g. at Bicton College) and exchanges with participating schools in Europe.

   Other local colleges have visited this school and have shown great interest in what we are doing and made very positive comments. Interest in the Certificate is growing including Cardiff, Michael Hall and several in Germany.

   The Chair thanked Ian for his passion and dedication behind these developments.

10. **Revised Management Structure**
    Starting in November the trustees decided to take an active role in the evolving management structure. Mark Drewell undertook a series of interviews. A meeting was held on 20th March which was an open discussion. A further meeting was held on 1st May and a proposal on a new structure was agreed to be taken forward for further consultation at Collegiate. Final agreement was then given by Collegiate.

    **Kevin Jones and Elizabeth Elsholtz then updated the meeting on progress with the new structure**
    Collegiate will continue for pedagogical matters and study. A new College has been formed. Anyone employed by the school is invited to become part of this and give a deeper commitment supporting the school moving forward.

    A better clarity has been reached on who does what. A Senior Management Team (SMT) of three has been appointed: all must be and are members of College. The Senior Administrator has a mandatory role and two teachers, Elizabeth Elsholtz and Jonathan Hobbs have been elected by College. Jonathan is currently on a short sabbatical so Cathy Day is deputising until he returns in September. Kevin wanted to thank Cathy for all she has done to support the new structure. The SMT is the Executive decision making body; their decision is final after consultation with College and the Operational Management Group (Administration). Feedback from Council will sometimes be required.
11. The Chair also thanked Cathy Day for all her work over 22 years in so many different capacities. Soon she will take on her new remit in a Teacher Training role.

12. Questions from the floor.
   Some questions had come earlier in the meeting and those not already noted are included here.
   Is the Governance Structure fit for purpose?

   Should Trustees receive regular training in Trusteeship?
   Several suggestions of where this might happen were made. Council will certainly consider this and find the most appropriate solutions.

   Why are numbers for Summer Language School down? This was last year. Quite healthy for this year but more of a struggle finding host families. More are being sourced.

   Can the bunkhouse be used for Summer Language students? No this was never the intention. Host families are part of the deal.

   Is the Gateway on budget? Timings were over-optimistic, but the project is on budget.

   What are we doing to retain children at the school? Cathy Dayspoke about recommendations for teachers and the finance office based on insights from Exit interviews. Should we be asking College/SMT to look into this. We now have an excellent Admissions Officer. And there will be a more integrated approach linking Admissions and Income. Concern that there is damage to the Golden Thread of inclusivity. It is up to parents to pay what they have agreed. There is no Bursary pot. It was stressed that if parents pay what they have agreed when it is due, the amount available for Bursaries and/or deferments could increase.

   There seem to be quite a lot of leavers? Any leaving is always sad – no one wants a child to leave. However, overall numbers are on the increase.

   Where will Classes 11 & 12 be situated? This is still being discussed along with the costings.

   Why is the financial position of school such a focus? During the transition between Mark Eyers and Michelle Parker leaving and now, the focus was lost for a while. The Finance Office is now getting back on track. A vigorous approach is being made to non-payers.

   What is the interest rate on our loan for the Gateway Project? The interest rate was fixed at 4.84% over 20 years.

   What is happening to the additional funding streams? Where are the volunteers among the parent body to help establish these? This could be part of the brief of the parents' forum/council. Where are we with parental involvement? Elizabeth Elsholtz to take this to SMT/College.

13. Closing comments were made by the Chair and the meeting closed with the verse.