



THE LISTENING SERVICE Edinburgh (TLSe)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING on Zoom

10 SEPTEMBER 2020

Present Trustees: Margaret Walker (Chair), Dominic Tooley (Treasurer), Tony Bryer, Judith Sischy

Volunteer Representative: Norman Craig

Administrator: Alison Allen

11 Volunteer Listeners

Apologies Dave Young and James Parkinson, Edinburgh Sheriff Court and a number of volunteer listeners

Welcome

The Chair welcomed those present to the first Annual General Meeting of The Listening Service Edinburgh, since it became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) in September 2019.

Chair's Annual Report (see <https://listeningservice.org>)

The Chair reported on the year's key events, including a presence at the annual Edinburgh Volunteer Fair and Doors Open Day at Edinburgh Sheriff Court, both in September 2019.

The recruitment, appointment and training of listener volunteers had continued during the year, bringing the current number to around 30, the aim being to have a pool of 40 regular volunteers. The Listening Service had operated successfully until coronavirus led to a national lockdown in March 2020 when the Service had been suspended. Dave Young had advised that the Service should remain suspended until further notice.

The Board had continued to meet and consider how it might operate in the future in the light of Covid 19 restrictions, maintaining contact with the Court, but dependent on the position nationally. The Chair hoped that it would be possible to resume the Service at some point, whatever form it might take.

The Chair recorded her sincere thanks to the Board, the Administrator, the volunteers and the Court Officials for their unstinting support throughout the year.

Treasurer's Support

The Treasurer presented the accounts for the period 5 September 2019, being date of becoming a SCIO, to 31 March 2020. He indicated that the surplus on the income and expenditure account was £2,681, bringing the reserves to £4,348. The Treasurer expressed appreciation of the donations received, from legal firms and others, and of the limited expenses charged by the volunteers. The Service was healthy in financial terms for the time being.

The Treasurer confirmed that the accounts had been accepted by OSCR (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator) and were on the TLSe website as part of the Trustees Annual Report.

The Chair thanked the Treasurer for his report and for his work throughout the year.

Appointment of Trustees

In accordance with the TLSe constitution whereby one trustee was required to retire each year, Tony Bryer's retirement was noted. The Chair explained that the retiring trustee was eligible for re-appointment and hoped that Tony would be so appointed at the next Board meeting.

The Treasurer explained that as a single tier SCIO, there could be a maximum of 5 Trustees and a minimum of 3.

Appointment of Volunteer Representative

The Chair thanked Norman Craig for serving as a Volunteer Representative over the past year and for his work on insurance and policies.

The Chair was pleased to report that Jo Andrews had been appointed as a Volunteer Representative and would be attending future Board meetings.

Report from Edinburgh Sheriff Court, May 2020

The Chair referred to the report received from Dave Young regarding the suspension of The Listening Service, as summarised in the following extracts:

I think we are a long way from returning to anything like normality and with specific reference to the Listening Service the one issue that is going to remain for the Courthouse is social distancing. We hear reports daily that this will be the last condition to be lifted and if that is so (and I readily understand why it would be) then there is simply no way your volunteers could operate given the confidentiality of most of your dealings with court users and the resultant need to be in closer proximity than 2 metres when speaking with them.

Taking all of the above into account I cannot see the Listening Service resuming for a number of weeks if not months yet but would greatly appreciate you staying in touch electronically perhaps once a fortnight so that you are at least kept up to date with the position regarding general business arrangements in the Courthouse.

It was clear that the Service could not be resumed meantime.

Discussion

The Chair invited comments when a number of issues were raised, including the need for new t-shirts, how other organisations were operating under Covid restrictions, the search for volunteers in a diverse age range, potential volunteers, recruitment and training, and a planned return to the service, when this becomes possible.

Concluding Remarks

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and their ongoing support. She said that the Service would remain positive about its future and that meantime it was important to keep safe.