

South East London Humanist Group Minutes and Reports of Annual General Meeting, 6th August 2020

Attending: Barbara Chandler, Sam Becker, Tony Brewer, Anna Tagliaferro, Hester Brown, Ann Pickering, Arun Muttreja, Nigel Fleet, Becky Tee, Mair Roberts, Brian Venables, Audrey Simmons

Apologies for absence: Gini Bevan

Twelve members attended the meeting, which was held virtually using Zoom, Hester Brown in the chair.

Welcome, Zoom housekeeping, notices and thanks:

- a. Hester welcomed everyone to the meeting. She said that two longstanding members, Barbara Smoker and Don Langdown, had died since the last AGM and she invited us to observe a moment's silence in their memory.
- b. She thanked Barbara Chandler, Libby Oakden, Denis Cobell and Trevor Moore, all of whom are resigning from the committee, for their service on behalf of the group.
- c. She thanked the staff at New Cross Learning, where we normally hold our meetings, for their help and support, and said that it is not yet clear when we will be able to get back to holding meetings there.
- d. She thanked David Lewis for acting as book-keeper at our meetings and for organising the book sales.
- e. She thanked David Smart for maintaining enthusiasm for our monthly Thought for the Day demonstrations at the BBC.
- f. She thanked Sam Becker for his work on the group's communications and especially for organising the newsletter each month, and Trevor Moore for the group's presence on Twitter
- g. She thanked all those who have written the meeting reports throughout the year.
- h. She thanked all the members of the committee for their advice and support.
- i. And finally, she thanked Tony Brewer for his stalwart and active service as Secretary.

Secretary's report

The job of the Secretary is to act as the group's post office. I review all of the emails that we receive & either forward them to the most appropriate person, or reply myself, or just delete them if they are irrelevant. I also send administrative emails on behalf of the group to guest speakers & anyone else who is not a personal contact of one of our members.

The monthly meetings that we've held since the last AGM are shown below.

All the meetings since April have been cancelled because of Covid-19. As can be seen, we've covered a wide range of topics. Those that were held are of two sorts:

1. Generated from within the group, such as the September session on What is Humanism & the January session on Ethical Dilemmas
2. Hearing an invited speaker. Some of these speakers are recommended by other humanists - typically they've given a good talk for another group; some are suggested by the speakers themselves; & some are suggested by our own members.

If you know someone personally or have heard of someone who might be an interesting speaker do please let us know - we're always on the lookout.

We'll be resuming our meetings from September. But they'll be Zoom meetings until community restrictions are lifted. Even after that we may make them both physical & on-line using Zoom.

Both Mike Flood in September & Robin Launder in October have agreed to do Zoom presentations & hopefully Ariane Sherine will also.

SELHuG Meetings 2019-20

September 2019	What is Humanism? Short presentations by SELHuG members on what Humanism means to them
October	Anti-Semitism Presentation by David Rosenberg, followed by Q&A
November	Palliative & End-of-Life Care Film & discussion led by Simon O'Donoghue from Humanists UK
December	Amnesty Letter Writing session led by Sam Becker
January	Ethical Dilemmas Discussion of questions & dilemmas generated by SELHuG members
February	All the Ghosts in the Machine Presentation by Elaine Kaskett on our digital afterlives, followed by Q&A
March	Safeguarding our Children Presentation by Professor Jenny Pearce, followed by Q&A
April (cancelled)	Extinction Rebellion Presentation by Robin Launder on climate change, followed by Q&A

May (cancelled)	Judging Religion Presentation by John Holroyd, followed by Q&A
June (cancelled)	
July (cancelled)	
August (on-line)	SELHuG AGM
September	Fake News Presentation by Mike Flood
October	Extinction Rebellion Presentation by Robin Launder on climate change
November	How to Live to 100 Presentation by Ariane Sherine
December	Amnesty Letter writing

Communications report

Presented by Sam Becker - information as of 4th August

Platform	Numbers and other information
Monthly newsletter	208 subscribers
Thought for the day newsletter	116 subscribers
Meetup	201 members
Facebook	174 people 'like' 191 people follow
Twitter	1, 569 followers

Treasurer's report

The report was presented by Arun Muttreja, the Treasurer elect. Arun explained that the closing bank balance for 2017-18 (£744.48) does not reconcile with the closing bank balance for 2018-19 (£673.49) after taking account of the net movement of funds during 2018/19. This is due to the fact that provisions made in the 2018/19 accounts were not actually paid. However, the closing balance for 2018-19 (£673.49) does reconcile with the closing balance for 2019-20. The practice followed for 2019/20 will be carried forward to future years. We agreed that the donation of £100 to the Uganda Humanist Schools Trust (UHST) that was approved for both 2018-19 and 2019-20 but not paid should now be paid, £200 in total. Finally, we agreed that since we are unable to collect £2 from each

person who attends our monthly meetings, we should invite our members to voluntarily donate £2 for each monthly Zoom meeting that they attend.

2019/20 SELHuG accounts summary			
	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
INCOME			
Membership subscriptions	£140.00	£220.00	£162.00
Monthly attendance subs	£188.00	£317.80	£306.61
Christmas booksale	£0.00	£18.90	£28.50
Nunhead booksale	£0.00	£90.00	£102.91
David's book sales	£122.04	£0.00	£0.00
General donations	£40.00	£191.00	£123.00
Donations for AFRIL	£112.00	£0.00	£0.00
Other eg Hester's Celebrant work	£0.00	£0.00	£200.00
Subs from social outings	£0.00	£22.00	£28.00
Total income	£602.04	£859.70	£951.02
EXPENDITURE			
Rent	£280.00	£400.00	£345.00
Meetup: social networking portal	£33.74	£183.69	£136.33
Affiliation fees: HUK £225 (3 years), NSS: £34	£259.00	£94.00	£94.00
Donations: Action For Refugees In Lewisham (AFRIL) * This included £100 for Ugandan Humanist Schools Trust	£112.00	£100.00	£200.00*
Stand at Nunhead Cemetery Open Day (Considered donation this year as event cancelled)	£30.00	£25.00	£20.00
Web upkeep	£31.28	£88.00	£0.00
Expenses	£0.00	£0.00	£12.00
Total expenditure	£746.02	£890.69	£807.33
Transfer of funds (+/-)	-£143.98	-£30.99	£143.69
Bank Balance at end of financial year 30 June (As per Bank Statement)	£529.51	£673.49	£744.48

Notes

1. Changes this year
 - Showing finances from year starting 1 July to year ending 30 June, rather than up to the day of the AGM.
2. Reduced income explained:
 - We didn't collect attendance subs in Jan 2020, when we met at the Rose pub. We did the previous year and ought to in future;
 - Covid 19 meant no meetings were held from April to June 2020 and therefore no subs collected. But we saved on rent too.
 - David managed singlehandedly to alleviate the problem of no Nunhead booksale by selling books online!
3. Donations
 - The Christmas donation to AFRIL of £112 consisted of £62 by bank transfer and £50 in cash, along with 5 bags of food.
 - This year the donations collected for AFRIL are shown separately in Income. In previous years they were included in the general donations category.
 - We approved a donation of £100 to the Uganda Humanist Schools Trust (UHST) in 2018-19, and 2019-20, but it was not paid.
4. Unusual expenditure
 - There is an unusually high item of expenditure, the £225 paid to Humanist UK. That covers 3 years' subs, for the calendar years 2018, 2019 and 2020. These had been provided for in previous years' accounts but never paid due to lack of system at Humanists UK end.
 - It is nice to note that the MeetUp cost has been slashed thanks to Jeremy Rodell and Sam organising for three groups to share a subscription.

Matters arising from the accounts

- How much to donate to UHST? We could send £200 now to cover 18-19 and 19-20, with intention to donate £100 in 20-21 if we can raise the money.
- We are up to date with AFRIL, but again, would be sensible to delay 20-21 donation until we have raised the money.
- How to make income going forward?

Elections to the committee:

The following having indicated their willingness to stand, they were all elected *nem con*:

- a. Ann Pickering for committee;
- b. Arun Muttreja for Treasurer
- c. Sam Becker, Hester Brown, David Smart, Anna Tagliaferro to continue as committee members and Tony Brewer as Secretary

Chair's report:

In the chair's report we look at the past year and a little ahead, into any plans for the future

The past year

- Meetings – really wide ranging and highly relevant – opportunities to learn about issues confronting us, with experts – Tony has covered
- Activities to connect locally, eg:
 - meeting our MP Vicky Foxcroft, Member of Parliament for Lewisham Deptford – productive; and led to her asking questions in Parliament about Humanist weddings on our behalf
 - lobbying Lewisham East MP and new Shadow faith minister Janet Daby and she has supported humanist weddings too
 - Building links with local Amnesty group – thank you Sam
 - Organising the end of life video meeting with Central London, and supported by local celebrants and pastoral carers
 - Earlier in the SELHuG year – ie since the last AGM, we had a stall at Deptford Pride, and
 - took part in the Southwark Interfaith Walk including giving a talk in a Peckham church.
 - Nominating the Association of Black Humanists for the Faith & Belief Community Awards.
- Socials – one a month!
 - We managed to see Rembrandt at Dulwich Picture Gallery;
 - Visit the John Soane house in town
 - Have drinks at the Catford Bridge Tavern
 - See the Troy exhibition at the British Museum
 - Take in a film at Catford Mews, and
 - Visit the Brunel Museum in Rotherhithe.
- Thought for the Day campaign: made a difference in the sense that it kept the issue in view – we know that BBC managers were aware. *Sarah Sands*, outgoing Today editor supported us, I met *Graham Ellis*, Controller of Production for BBC Radio & Music earlier this year, and Humanists UK are planning a national campaign when things get back to normal. It has also been a way to network with members of other humanist groups across and around London, and further eg Manchester, and reach some of our own supporters.
- The newsletter – high standard! Received several compliments. Kept going during lockdown – thank you for contributions from committee members.

The future

My three years as Chair have come to an end. We have advertised the vacancy several times in the last few months but no one has stood. None of us want the group to fold, so the **committee has decided to run it as a collective *for the time being*** – until we find a new Chair.

- We will play it by ear; share the duties of organising and chairing meetings and anything else that comes up

- The risk is that we will lose our sense of purpose; there is an opportunity however – to be less hidebound, to try different things, to be more collaborative. We could become a humanist eco-group, focused on climate change and economies which protect the planet – we are already focused on solutions to pressing problems. Could be more of a philosophy and discussion group. Or an interfaith and community-building group.

Open meeting to discussion.

Tony Brewer, Secretary, 10.8.2020