

**MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020**

**25 November 2020 on Zoom**

**Attendees**

Councillor Eileen Pallen

Mike Ellsmore, Chair of Trustees and Finance Director

Geoff Norris, Project Co-ordinator

Karen Larkin, Assistant Project Co-ordinator

Rosie Eaglen, Trustee

Fiona Miller, Trustee

Stefano Nocerino, prospective Trustee

Guy Tarrant, Trustee

Britta von Zweigbergk, Trustee

Jenny Watson, Trustee

15 Centrepieces artists and volunteers (Full list held by Centrepieces, and of apologies)

Mike Ellsmore opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and saying what a pleasure and privilege it was to have Councillor Eileen Pallen to speak to us. She has been Councillor for Bexleyheath Ward for 10 years and is now Vice Chair of the Children’s and Adults’ Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee, and is a former Mayor of Bexley. She is a great supporter of everything to do with Bexley and has been a long standing friend of Centrepieces.

1. **Welcome by Councillor Eileen Pallen**

Councillor Pallen thanked Mike for his enthusiastic introduction. She said she was delighted to be asked again to make the welcome speech to a Centrepieces AGM. She has been involved with Centrepieces for 10 years and has watched it grow and flourish and overcome obstacles. However, we are now in midst of the biggest challenge yet, Covid 19, just after successfully establishing the Pop Up Studio in the centre of Bexleyheath. Lockdown has not been a challenge too large for Centrepieces. Volunteers and artists have swung into action to set up groups and workshops on Zoom, and artworks are still being produced in a range of media. Artists are supporting each other at a time when millions of people are likely to need new support for mental health issues as a result of Covid 19, especially young people and Centrepieces is doing its best to reach out to them. It is working to make its premises safe to return to when permitted It is testament to what can be achieved with commitment, good people and good will and Centrepieces has all three. She welcomed everyone to the AGM.

1. **Minutes of last AGM**

The minutes of the AGM held on 16 July 2019 had been available on the Centrepieces website and circulated by email. The minutes were accepted as accurate and there were no matters arising.

1. **Chair of Trustees report**

The Chair’s Annual Report had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Mike felt we had a strong online turn out today for the AGM and reiterated what Councillor Pallen had said, that it had been a fantastic year of achievement especially with the work of the Pop Up studio, which has given us a public face and the opportunity to be visible in a busy town centre. He did not underestimate the work that went in to getting it up and running, especially by Karen Larkin, and he hoped it wouldn’t be too long before artists could work face to face again. Covid has dominated everything since last March and we have been incredibly innovative with our online programme that we hope has kept members feeling socially included. Centrepieces has had a tremendous level of financial support - Winners Chapel Dartford, Baring Foundation, London Borough of Bexley, National Lottery Community Fund and Bellway have all donated money this year and that means that financially we are in a really good place at present. We are very grateful to all these organisations.

1. **Co-ordinator’s Report**

The Project Co-ordinator’s report had been circulated before the meeting. Geoff explained that all had been going well after the last AGM in July 2019: we had just secured the lease of the Pop Up Studio, we had a great series of exhibitions there and at Creek Creative in Faversham, we were running workshops and meeting the public. We held the 2019 annual art auction at the Pop Up, which was a great success with £2700 worth of painting sales that raised money for the artists and for Centrepieces. We had plans for more projects, activities and exhibitions and then suddenly we were faced with Covid 19. A fantastic team of volunteers and artists responded quickly to set up Operation Art Lockdown, which provided many valuable opportunities for people to carry on making art and support to people stranded at home. It was amazing how everyone quickly adapted to using Zoom and other online platforms and groups as these were new to most people. In September we managed to get our Lockdown Art exhibition together in Stables Gallery at Hall Place. The pictures are still up and we are hoping it will re-open when current lockdown is lifted.

Most people are probably aware of the tremendous impact the pandemic has had on the nation’s mental health – on the old, the young, the vulnerable and those who have already experienced mental health issues. We are only just beginning to understand the ways young people are being affected and see the wider picture unravel Society in general needs to respond to what is happening. Although Centrepieces is formally a charity to help adults, we have in the past been involved with schools in projects that have been fun and educational and there is scope to continue this with renewed vigour. We had already been planning a year-long project with Year 7 at Haberdashers’ Aske’s Crayford Academy and working with Bexley Youth Service and Bexley Youth Council and planning exhibitions and workshops for next year We are seeing more younger people interested in joining Centrepieces as artists or volunteers. We are confident we can rise to the occasion and expand our work with them. As a bonus, younger people have no problem with virtual platforms and social media! The impact of COVID on BAME groups has been high, so Geoff was pleased about contributions highlighting Black Lives Matter in works in the current Stables exhibition.

Geoff thanked all our volunteers especially Karen, Jean and Lucy, without whom none of this year’s achievements would have been possible, and the Trustees for a lot of hands on support.

1. **Finance Report and Accounts**

The Finance Report and Accounts had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Mike said that Centrepieces has been in a good position at the end of the financial year and it had improved since then because of the level of grant support we have received. We have £14,400 of unrestricted funds that can be spent at our discretion and over £5,000 in restricted funds for particular projects. We had a deficit on the unrestricted funds last year because we had made a much needed large investment in IT infrastructure. Mike thanked Jean Lyons and Annie Greywoode for all their hard work again this year.

1. **Appointment of trustees**

Andrew Grieve, Mike Ellsmore and Jenny Watson stood down from the Board of Trustees in accordance with the constitution and Mike and Jenny were willing to stand for re-election. Andrew Grieve had moved to Nottingham and will not continue as a Trustee. Stefano Nocerino was standing for election as a new Trustee. The remaining Trustees, Rosie Eaglen, Fiona Miller, Guy Tarrant and Britta von Zweigbergk were all willing to continue serving on the Board. The meeting agreed the re-election of the Trustees.

1. **Any other formal business**

None

1. **Presentations about Centrepieces**

A video was shown about Centrepieces’ activities during lockdown and artists and volunteers gave short speeches.

1. **Jackie Grieve Inspire Award presentations**

The Jackie Grieve Inspire Awards were established in 2016 to recognise outstanding contributions to Centrepieces and as a lasting memorial to Jackie, a Centrepieces artist, who died of cancer.

This year’s winners:

**Dorota Chioma** For a fantastic start as an emerging artist, producing and exhibiting some great artwork throughout the Covid19 pandemic, and at times of personal difficulty. And in particular for her first solo show and book ‘Mental Health in Pictures’.

**Sue Turner** For consistent dedication and admin support to Centrepieces from home, despite all the restrictions of Lockdown 2020.

**Lucy Thomas** In recognition of her personal growth and development as an art tutor and buddy to many Centrepieces artists in her workshops. And as Social Media Organiser and help with all manner of Centrepieces projects and campaigns !

**Mala Morgan** For tireless efforts throughout 2020 in supporting Centrepieces either online in ‘Operation Art Lockdown’ or in exhibitions and real spaces whenever this has been possible.

**Nikki Lessing** For tireless efforts throughout 2020 in supporting Centrepieces either online in ‘Operation Art Lockdown’ or in exhibitions and real spaces whenever this has been possible.

**Liam Davies** For tireless efforts throughout 2020 in supporting Centrepieces either online in ‘Operation Art Lockdown’ or in exhibitions and real spaces whenever this has been possible.

**Joshna Mistry** For tireless efforts throughout 2020 in supporting Centrepieces either online in ‘Operation Art Lockdown’ or in exhibitions and real spaces whenever this has been possible.

**Peter Kent** For tireless efforts throughout 2020 in supporting Centrepieces either online in ‘Operation Art Lockdown’ or in exhibitions and real spaces whenever this has been possible.