Chopwell Regeneration CIO

Public Meeting

07.06.2025

At 4.00 p.m. at The Bank

Minutes

- **Welcome & Apologies**
  Apologies had been received from Jodie, Mark, Adrien, Sarah, Dawn, Ann
  12 people were in attendance. John welcomed everyone to the meeting.

- **Minutes of last public meeting** (attached)
  Matters arising from the minutes (re Brightening Chopwell) would be discussed later in the agenda.

- **Acceptance of new trustee** (Adrien Bischoff-Dyson)
  Adrien had sent apologies as he was unwell. Jacky outlined his involvement with CRG as a volunteer and his commitment to supporting improvements in the village.
  Jacky had received 4 email acceptances and a show of hands indicated unanimous acceptance from the meeting.
  Jacky will inform Adrien and pass on the Congratulations of the meeting.

- **Financial report** (Chris- See attached)
  Highlights:
  - The Café and Shop are generating 10-15% more income than at this time last year. The welcoming support given by staff and volunteers day in day out is the major factor, and the meeting applauded the good work taking place.
  - Friday was the best day ever with 458 people through the doors!
  - Ingredients: we spent less this on ingredients this year, hence increased profit
  - Grants received: there has been an increase in funds via grants
  - We are in a financially good position for the rest of this year, but will need to keep going to ensure next year is equally secure.

Jacky & John expressed thanks to Chris for such a detailed breakdown of information.

  - Mick asked about energy savings due to the installation of solar panels. Bob and Chris are currently looking at data over last few years so as to be able to make comparisons – work in progress. Further efficiencies to the system may be recommended: more information will come later in the year.
    Action: An update for next meeting was requested by Mick. Bob is looking at the big picture re green energy.

- **Programme Manager's report** (Sarah)

Sarah had sent apologies, but her report is attached

- The wide range of activities described in Sarah's report all received positive comments as did the Shop's nomination in the Gateshead Awards
- Faye's achievement in completing her higher level apprenticeship to such a high standard and nomination in the Gateshead Learning Skills Learner awards was applauded.
- Congratulations to Jessica on the birth of her baby daughter!
- Congratulations to the new Deputy Café Manager appointed this week.
- A very big thank you was expressed to all the volunteers for the hours that they spend in the café, the shop, delivering newsletters, collecting food and many other tasks. None of what CRG has achieved would be possible without them.

- **Brightening Chopwell update** (Bob & Barnie – powerpoint attached)

Points from the discussion:

- Benches: Mick suggested acknowledgement in situ of who is responsible for each of the benches so that people know who to speak to if repairs are needed. (Jim) Some benches have been put in place by the Men's Shed; we need a co-ordinated maintenance plan. Mick suggested a meeting with the Councillors to find out what the Council's responsibility is. Then a plan can be drawn up to cover other areas.
- Bob: the Brightening Chopwell group is engaging with the Council re training for volunteers (for safety aspects of volunteering for public spaces maintenance)
- The group is currently compiling information lists to document the state of all assets in village (signs, benches etc.)
- The replacement Arch: the school's Head Teacher is keen to involve children in the carving of the arch
- The Community Orchard: Jim expressed caution because of previous failures due to lack of long-term volunteers.
- Accessibility: Need volunteers to help improve accessibility for wheelchair & stick users around the village then present ideas to the Council.
- John expressed thanks to Bob, Barnie & all volunteers from across a range of organisations who are involved. Huge progress has been made over the last few months.

- **Update on Food Strategy**

Than was unable to be at the meeting, but Barnie gave a brief update, including the work of several groups, not necessarily CRG related.

- A number of food related projects are taking place, including at the community allotment, the Back Yard veg project , planters growing food, the fruit trees, and planting at the Methodist church
- Back 'Yarden' at The Bank – some improvements have been made. Herbs etc now growing there.
- There is a need for a village wide working group and an allotment working group to be set up
- Than asked The Bank to choose ethical groups for food for Community Market rather than supermarkets wherever practical.
- Jim asked about the beehives 'Dads n Lads' project. The allotment behind the Gaffers has now been taken over as a garden

- Action: invite Than to a future trustees meeting to see how best any of these ideas could be progressed by working with a range of organisations

- **Pump track & Lockout events**
  Jacky highlighted the fact that these events start next weekend. The Little Moscow events are the biggest co-operative exercise the village has seen with 20 organisations / groups involved.
  Thanks were expressed to Cllr Lynne Caffrey for her work in co-ordinating everything.

- **AOB & next meeting date** (06.09.25)
  - Jim asked what is happening with the hotel? It is for sale again, for £80k (lowest price yet). John replied that it is unrealistic at the present time to think that CRG could fundraise for the massive amount for refurbishment that would be needed. CRG would support a partnership project, or work with Council. Mick asked what people would want to see done with it? A really strong idea of how it could be used for the benefit of the village would be needed for any potential application for funding to have a chance of success. Some are now even suggesting it should be demolished despite the special place it holds for many long-established Chopwell residents.
  - Action: to see what the Council's position is re the hotel when next CRG trustees meet with Councillors.
  - Bob pointed out that (apart from the hotel) CRG trustees already have many other ideas – more than can realistically be coped with. Jim said he saw expanding The Bank's existing activities as a high priority e.g. there is a lot of demand in the village for the café being open 5 days per week so that people have somewhere to go, or more availability for meetings etc.
  - Chris & Fraser promoted the Bankfest as a big upcoming big event on July 12th at a new venue (below The Red House)
  - Thanks to trustees for all their hard work from Ronnie.

The meeting closed at 5.10.