

The Coalition of Carers in Scotland

Annual General Meeting

Minutes 26th November 2014

1. Annual General Meeting

The minutes from the A.G.M on the 27th of November 2013 were agreed as an accurate record.

Proposed by: Tony Fitzpatrick, COCIS Executive and North Lanarkshire Carers Together
Seconded by: Pat Gallagher, Falkirk Carers Centre

Convenor's Report

Sheena Munro, Joint Convenor, provided the following overview of the years activities:

Our work over 2013 - 14 demonstrates the breadth and depth of the capabilities of COCIS. In the Annual report you will see examples of how COCIS works at the following different levels:

- Helping to shape policy and legislation - Self directed Support; Integration; Welfare Reform; and the Carers Bill;
- Producing readily understandable briefings on key aspects of health and social care - particularly important over the last year with the scale and number of actual and proposed changes
- Producing best practice standards on how carers should be involved - with the pace of change and demands on public service the need to involve carers at an early stage and at all levels can be sometimes be overlooked.
- Supporting local developments - often ones that are considered too marginal to attract outside funding at the outset.

In essence our work is founded on building local relationships thereby helping to build local capacity.

Our job in COCIS is to maintain the balance between these different strands of work because that is the way you earn credibility - locally and nationally. And this is a challenge with just one worker - Claire is to be commended on achieving and maintaining such high standards - as are the members of the Executive committee who are active in their own communities and on various national committees.

Policy makers (and politicians) know that the perspective we supply is based on

reliable grounded information (and intelligence); local groups trust us to remain true to their experiences.

Looking ahead there are unparalleled opportunities with more devolved powers for Scotland and the Carers Bill but the prospect of much deeper cuts in public services is very real. A strong Carer Movement is essential.

I am stepping down this year but am confident that COCIS is in good shape to support the Carer Movement to play its full and equal part in forthcoming debate and decisions at all levels.

An annual report on the work of the Coalition throughout 2012/2013, was provided in the Information Pack.

Treasurer's Report

Seb Fischer, Treasurer, gave a financial report and also provided a summary of financial activities for the current financial year. A copy of the full accounts was made available.

The accounts were audited by John Norman

The accounts were accepted as they stand –

Proposed by: Mary Stewart, Fife Carers

Seconded by: Tony Fitzpatrick, COCIS Executive and North Lanarkshire Carers Together

Election of Committee

The returning members and new members were elected as follows:

Returning Members:

- Bill Addies, a carer and Vice Chairperson of South Lanarkshire Carers Network
- Ann Anderson, a former carer from Edinburgh and member of the Board of VOCAL
- James Bell, a carer from Dunoon on the Management Committee of Crossroads Cowal and Bute
- Sebastian Fischer, Chief Executive of VOCAL
- Tony Fitzpatrick, a carer from Lanarkshire
- Lynn Gallacher, Operations Manager, Borders Carers Centre
- Alan Gow, a carer from Glasgow and Chair of CAST Carers
- Suzanne Munday, Manager of MECOPP, Minority Ethnic Carers Project
- Catherine Paterson, a carer from Argyll and Bute and founder of the Dochas Foundation
- Jennifer Roe, Manager of Carers Link, East Dunbartonshire

- Alan Scougal, former carer from Wester Ross and Chair of Gairloch and District Community Care Forum

New members:

- Dr Emma Miller and Dr Gilliam McIntyre (Shared Post on the Executive Committee and NCO Research Group)
- Dr Gillian McIntyre, a Senior Lecturer at Strathclyde University
- Dr Emma Miller, a senior researcher at Strathclyde University
- Donald MacLeod, a carer from the Highlands on the Board of the Highland Community Care Forum
- Terence Walsh, a carer from Dundee and a member of Dundee's Carers Voice
- Lucinda Godfrey, Manager, Dundee Carers Centre
- May Kirkwood, Manager, Stirling Carers Centre

The full committee was Proposed by: Ian Kirkman, Falkirk Carers Centre

Seconded by: Maureen Summers, carer from Perth

There were no questions following the A.G.M

Main Meeting

2. Lucy McTernan, SCVO

Lucy provided input on what impact there is likely to be for the third sector and carers in relation to additional devolved powers for the Scottish Government and the Smith Commission report. Her presentation is available at www.carersnet.org

3. Willie Sullivan, the Electoral Reform Society

Willie explained what options are on the table and what the likely outcomes will be from more devolved powers. His presentation is available on our Website at www.carersnet.org

4. Questions and Discussion

Alan Gow: Things have changed following the referendum. There has been a stigma over the last 20 years, the idea that politics is a dirty business. Now more than 75,000 people have joined political parties – this is really encouraging. There is the opportunity to not just negotiate from the outside, but also from the inside. Carers are currently members of political parties, we need to engage them through political processes to make change

Willie Sullivan - Political parties are part of the political process, the referendum operated outside the normal way politics operates. It expanded out the way people were involved and there is a desire to continue with this optimism. This could change

political parties, involve people in how they are run, relinquish power to them. Or it could disempower people if nothing changes

Lucy McTernon – I recently spoke at a conference at Belgrade for policy officers from across the Balkans. Politics there is so widely diverged. Slovenia is progressive with good interaction with politicians. Belgrade is autocratic with no engagement. The conclusion I came to was get stuck in to politics. We need to champion causes from the inside - changing the parties making them more porous to ideas

Iain Kirkman - Local authorities are looking at budgets for next year. There will be £40 million of cuts over the next year. They are looking at duties only. Smith is well into the future. How do we defend people we represent over the next weeks and months with huge cuts planned,

Lucy McTernon – This is an ongoing agenda – we can't just get excited at new agendas. Local Authorities will seek to cut things they can, not things they should, All the task groups have proved the way to address poverty and ill health is by building community capacity, but politics and policy collide. The temptation is for politics to defend the NHS, the public perceives this as hospital. We need to take some of this budget and give it to communities - but small grants to communities will be what is cut. SCVO will be there fighting cuts

Jimmy Bell – At the moment it feels there is a common feel on justice. The referendum is the biggest conversation Scotland has ever had. I was at a St Andrews night event with a friend of 86, She spoke to Nicola Sturgeon, it is the first time she has ever been in a political party, she is the oldest new member - this is what has shifted. If we stick together we can have influence

Willie Sullivan – We have lost our hierarchies, the referendum is a great example of how technology has changed things. The best way to understand the change is the change of power - we have communication that we didn't have before. COCIS has power as a Coalition. These new times lend themselves to new ways

Maureen Summers – I am the carer representative on Integration in my area. The last meeting was a disaster. We were told there were too many people around the table who were not professionals and they are setting up a sub group which will feed in to the main group – which should only be professionals. I challenged this and said carers need to be round the table, as equal partners making the decisions. We need a change in attitude

Lucy McTernon - I'm sorry to hear this but not surprised. Integration is like two big beasts crashing together – its not about systems, its about people. We need to continue lobbying to make sure carers are involved and respected and their contribution is seen

as equal. At the moment we have the challenge of the dominance of GPs in the system – they are very influential in how budgets are spent - their views are given priority

Willie Sullivan - There is an ongoing debate about the power of the experts. We need engineers to build a bridge – this argument is used to claim power. We need to challenge this, carers are experts too. Everyone is an expert in their own community and in their own lives - their experience is just as valuable

Tony Fitzpatrick - An independent Scotland would raise carers allowance, but gaining welfare isn't about tweaking a bad system. I'd prefer to look at a living wage for carers. I'd rather have a conversation about how we value carers - not increasing Carers Allowance by £11

Terry Welsh – There have been several references to politics – the main thrust needs to be attitude change, a change of attitude to carers, its not about joining political parties

Lucy McTernon - All three contributions are about how we view ourselves and how the state views us. There is still an assumption that carers are beneficiaries of a system instead of contributors. We need to look at power relationships. It's not about those that give and those that take

Willie Sullivan - Talking about culture change – it doesn't matter what policy is - culture eats strategy for breakfast. Its about how we treat each other - how we relate to each other, not about where power is concentrated. We can argue for these things and point them out – we need to behave in this way in our own organisations and encourage others at the top to behave in the same way as well

Sheena Munro - Summing up – There is strength together in being around the table and not being relegated to sub-groups. We can take great heart in some of the opportunities available to us and be positive about the influence COCIS can have as a Coalition

5. Seb Fischer, VOCAL Carers Centre

Seb put forward proposals on what we can hope to gain for carers through further devolved powers and The Carers Bill. His presentation is available at www.carersnet.org

6. Claire Cairns, Coalition of Carers in Scotland

Claire outlined what the key issues are in relation to the next stage of The Carers Bill and what our campaign priorities are in the future. Her presentation is available at www.carersnet.org

7. Discussion Groups

Members discussed what our campaign aims are over the next few years in relation to

devolved powers and the Carers Bill. A separate report of the discussion groups is available at www.carersnet.org

8. Close of the meeting

Sheena thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting