



Bedford
MS Therapy Centre
40th Anniversary 1983 - 2023

Annual General Meeting 2023

Wednesday 21 June 2pm

Minutes

Held at the MS Therapy Centre.

1. Welcome & Apologies

Kay welcome to everyone to the Annual General Meeting in our 40th anniversary year, All of our staff and volunteers were thanked for this huge achievement. Special mention was made to Val and Sue who founded the Centre 40 years ago, and remain greatly involved.

We were very pleased to have our patrons Helen Nellis and Roger Jefcoate present.

Apologies: Alastair Compston (patron) Melanie Hawman, Huseyin Huseyin,

2. Minutes of the AGM held in 2022 were approved.

Proposed – Laurence Culhane

Seconded – Jean-Pierre Brown

3. Report on Audited Accounts for 2022 –

Kevin Traynor – treasurer

First of all, I would like to welcome Denise McDonald to the finance team, she joined in December and has made a great contribution to managing the accounts which has helped me a great deal.

This was the first full year of operations following the restrictions forced upon us by Covid. Full details of revenues and costs are given in the audited accounts but may be summarised as follows:

- there was a deficit for the year of £35,000 compared to a surplus of £31,000 in 2021
- total revenue increased by £10,000 to £293,000
 - member donations fell by £4,000 to £79,000
 - trust funding increased by £20,000 to £83,000
- the art event produced a profit of almost £10,000
- total expenditure increased by £51,000 to £299,000
 - therapy and staff costs rose by £40,000
- the financial turmoil in the second half of the year resulted in a £28,000 fall in the valuation of the long-term investments

Towards the end of the year more than £50,000 was spent on the new hydro pool with a further £60,000-£70,000 payable in 2023. These costs are capitalised at the point they are invoiced and will appear as a charge in the accounts as depreciation from 2023 to 2028. We are thankful that the cost of the pool has since been fully covered by our supporters and we are very grateful for their generosity.

Members' donations that help meet our running costs totalled £79,000 and allowed the Centre to claim a further £11,000. Whilst the Centre continues to look for other sources of income, the members are its *raison d'être* and its mainstay regarding revenue. Simply put, the members are the MS Centre and their contribution cannot be understated. Your commitment in keeping the Centre financed is so important and appreciated.

We understand the financial difficulties everyone is experiencing with record levels of inflation across all aspects of our lives. The Centre will not be immune from these rising costs and for 2023 has budgeted for a deficit of £88,500. This mostly arises from an increase in costs of £46,000 with total revenue budgeted £5,000 lower than 2022 at £288,000.

Since the start of the current financial year, we have seen a significant increase in trust funding received which should ensure that this deficit is turned into a surplus by the end of 2023, so well done Swarupa.

Reserves

At the end of December 2022 total reserves (or total funds) were £719,172, see table below.

Simply put, if 2023 results in a deficit of £10,000 the total reserves would fall to £709,172. And with a £10,000 surplus they would rise to £729,172. They comprise the total value of the centre's assets less the total value of the Centre's creditors and liabilities.

Restricted reserves come about when a donor makes a voluntary contribution for a specific project such as the hydro pool. This means the received funds may only be spent on that project.

The Centre's long-term investments are not restricted funds as the Centre purchased them from general funds. However, they are not viewed as general reserves, although in an emergency the Centre could access them as needs dictate.

Designated reserves have arisen as the Centre is "allocating" general reserves for a specific project, in this case the installation of fireproof lifts at some future date.

The balance of the reserves are known as Free or General reserves and are in line with Centre's reserves policy.

	£
Restricted Reserves	78,311
Long Term Investments	210,809
Designated Reserves	100,000
General Reserves	330,052
Total Reserves	<hr/> 719,172

The Centre continues to provide a wide range of services and therapies for the benefit of people with MS in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire.

The Centre receives no statutory funding and exists because of the continued support and generosity of its members and donors, and the unfailing dedication of its volunteers and staff. This is why we are able to celebrate our 40th anniversary in 2023.

Thankfully, we have emerged from the bleak years that were Covid and although there are still difficult financial times ahead, we should take pride in what we have achieved so far.

The donations made by members and the associated gift aid the Centre claimed, accounted for almost a third of our total income. We are so grateful for this unselfish giving and understand that many people may be stretching themselves to pay. A very big thank you to you all.

Elsewhere we are putting additional resource into raising funds from local and national trusts. Apart from helping to defray day to day costs we have been fortunate to get additional help which helped the Centre meet the full cost of the hydro pool.

Finally, a big thank you to all the volunteers who give of their time and make so much happen.

4. The audited accounts were adopted.
5. Proposed- Liz Toogood
6. Seconded- Michael Fage

7. Chair's report – Kay Taylor

It has taken a while since the lockdowns in 2019 and 2020, but I am pleased to say that 2022 saw a further return of members compared with last year, and, with the option to socialise now possible, the Centre has felt a lot more like it did in the old days.

The impact of the pandemic is still being felt by members whose condition worsened during that time, and we are glad that we can support our community to regain some of their strength and confidence. We actively keep in touch with anyone on our books, whether they attend or not, so that they can gain from information provided in our monthly newsletters.

The number of people who are accessing us for the first time, mostly because they are newly diagnosed, has now reached the levels seen pre-pandemic. We engaged with 48 people in 2022, of whom over half have taken up opportunities to receive therapy.

We provided 7,356 sessions of therapy over the year, and this is increasing in the current year.

We developed our service provision during 2022 in a number of ways. We are now open on a Saturday once a month when we provide physio, the gym and Pilates for people who cannot get to the Centre during the week.

We have been pleased to welcome Carl Field, our new assistant manager, who is trained in benefits advice, and who is able to support members with this. Carl has helped a number of people to access the benefits that they are entitled to.

We have also employed Teresa who has been involved with the Centre over many years in different ways, and is now running our gym and APS service as well as encouraging members to take up the services on offer.

Emma's role has changed to be the Wellbeing advisor, covering a whole range of therapies to support members with both physical issues and their mental health.

And last, but certainly not least, we commenced a huge project to replace the hydrotherapy pool. The sparkling, state of the art pool is now ready for use, thank you to Swarupa for her work in raising the funds from Charitable Trusts. The pool is available to be admired after this meeting. We are privileged to have this facility when others have closed, and we will make very good use of it.

So, turning to the current year, things are looking very exciting. As we have said, this is our 40th year, and we have LOTS of fundraising activities happening, thank you to our Ruby steering group and our fundraising volunteers for working so hard to celebrate and raise funds. BTW, we need helpers at the park concerts next week – see Carl. And, in July, we have a very special afternoon tea when Helen will be auctioning some of her hats worn during her time as Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant.

We are responding to comments raised by members in our most recent survey in a number of ways:

- To further improve support for wellbeing we have launched a series of **mindfulness workshops** run by one of our members. The first session this month was very well-received.
- Discussions within the wellbeing star project highlighted a need for more counselling provision, so we have increased capacity in this area to **5 counsellors** supporting members. ·

On the 4th of July, we will hold our first **Bladder Chat** This will be an informal chat hosted by Emma and Katie, one of our physios, and is a chance to hear and ask questions about strategies to cope with bladder issues.

- We'll be further encouraging socialising by having **volunteers in the servery** who will make drinks and chat with members.
- Our Art Team volunteers who organise our annual Pop Up Art Exhibition, taking place in October, are also planning to run a range of **creative workshops**. These workshops will cover photography and various craft activities, and are planned to start in July.

In the medium term, we are working on a number of strategic areas that fall under the following headings:

Improve outcomes for members – this involves continually reviewing the therapies and services that we offer, and responding to comments received from members, as described above.

We would like to support more people. This includes making sure that we are reaching as much of the MS community as we can, not only in Bedfordshire, but in the surrounding counties as well.

Beyond this, we have a vision for the Centre as a modern, vibrant environment that provides an expanding range of high-quality therapies and other services. We want the Centre to be highly valued by members and the local community.

To realise this, one thing that we need to consider is the potential of increasing the range of conditions we support. Opening to other conditions may give us the opportunity to increase membership and potentially open up new sources of funding. Currently we have opened our doors to people with rare neurological conditions where symptoms are very similar to those of MS.

To explore this further, we have engaged with Parkinson's UK and have agreed to run a limited 6 month trial with up to 10 members living with Parkinson's. This will give them the opportunity to see if what we offer is beneficial to them and for us to understand whether supporting other condition enables us to enhance the services that we provide to all.

We intend to add to our resources in the form of a new therapeutic exercise professional who will work one to one with members with MS and Parkinson's, helping them to create exercise plans to meet their goals, and supporting them with their exercises.

They will also be run additional group exercise sessions.

We will also be adding extra Pilates sessions that will be available to all members. We hope you will agree that this move is very valuable, not only to the lives of people living with Parkinson's disease, but also for the long-term sustainability of the MS Therapy Centre.

Part of sustainability is financial viability. We hope that increased membership will bring additional donations, but we are also examining ways to increase our commercial activities, such as renting out our pool when it is not being used by our members.

We have spoken already about the need for improvements to the building in terms of fire-safe lifts, but there are other improvements that could be made. This is a big project that is carrying on in the background, and is designed to ensure that our building and our Centre are fit for our needs for the next 25 years.

I'd like to say a big thank you to all of our hard working and dedicated staff, who work in a professional and approachable manner to make our members feel welcome and supported.

And also our incredible committed volunteers who are over 50 in number, and help us by running the oxygen therapy service, carrying out various regular admin tasks, doing gardening, odd jobs and a huge amount of fundraising activities from running

our charity shops, sales and organising annual events. Additional volunteers are heavily involved in representing us at the local Bedford Park Concerts (80) and our Pop-Up Art Exhibition and Sale (45).
Thank you all.

And finally, I'd like to read the words of one service user who summed up our Centre by saying

"The MS Therapy Centre has given me hope. If I need help, it's the first port of call. It is always nice to know that the therapies are there if I ever need any of them. It feels like a family unit and provides the kindest most professional people who always make you feel so welcome on a personal level."

8. Retiring Trustees – Nicholas Widdowson, John O'Mahoney, due to illness
9. Michael Street – moved away
10. Election of prospective Trustees – two trustees were introduced.

Kevin Traynor – Kevin said "I finished paid employment in 2021 having worked in finance and accounting for more than 50 years with the final ten years specialising in charity accounting. When I read about the treasurer role here at Bedford, I thought it would be a great opportunity for me to give something back to a deserving community. I am very pleased to have been appointed. I joined a very hard-working team of volunteers and staff and have been quickly swept along with their enthusiasm, determination and enterprise. I hope that I too can contribute to a long and successful future for the MS Therapy Centre."

Huseyin Huseyin – is an MS advanced nurse practitioner and clinical operational lead at Luton and Dunstable hospital. He is very familiar with treatments for MS through the NHS, and can advise on how we can complement, and work together with, the NHS>

Proposal to elect the two trustees onto the committee –
Proposed – Laurence Culhane
Seconded- Liz Toogood

11. Election of returning Trustees: The following trustees were re-elected as a block.

Kay Taylor
Susan Napper
Jean-Pierre Brown

Alex Scott
Melanie Hawman
Laurence Culhane
Elizabeth Toogood
Maggie Marshall

Motion was proposed by Peter Kimber
Seconded- Kevin Traynor

12. Appointment of Auditors – It was explained that we would be putting the audit work out to tender this year.

13. Any other business

Liz Toogood suggested that we say something about the building project. Carl explained that we have had some potential plans drawn up by an architect, and then have spoken to a Trust about funding. They felt that in order to invest a significant amount of money, we need to extend the lease of the land. We are currently in talks with Bedford Borough Council regarding this.

14. Conclusion of AGM. Kay thanked everyone for coming.

A tree planting ceremony took place with Patrons Helen Nellis and Roger Jefcoate followed by tea and cake