

**Minutes of SPiRiT Advocacy AGM
held at the Merkinch Centre, Inverness and on Zoom
on Wednesday 1st November 2023**

Draft

1. Welcome

Bill welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Present and Apologies

Bill Cook (Chair), Sue Lyons (Treasurer), Mairi Hill (Trustee), Levanah Rowell (Trustee), Emma Grant (Trustee), Gill Terry (Trustee), Jamie Bird (Volunteer), John Gallon (Member), Margo Neilly (Individual), Mags Macdonald (Member), Helen Cook (Individual), Kim Cousin (Individual), Michael Bedard (Member), George Paton (Member), Joanna Kerr (Member), Joanna Higgs (Member), Karen Mohan (Member), Marina Patience (Staff) and John Beaton (Member) were present at the meeting.

Peter Todd (Member), Daniel Mackenzie-winters (Member) and Daniel Polombo (Ritsons Accountants) were present over Zoom.

Apologies were received from Marianne Morritt, Chris Evans and John Macleod (All Members).

3. Minutes of the AGM held on Tuesday 30th August 2022 & Minutes of the EGM held on Monday 25th September 2023

The minutes of the 2022 AGM were proposed as a correct record by Mags Macdonald and seconded by Joanna Higgs. The Minutes of the EGM were proposed as a correct record by Gill Terry and seconded by Joanna Higgs

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4. Chairman's Report – William Cook

Bill and the board gave thanks to the previous Chair, Alan Bithell, for his work including the trustees report (available separately), during a difficult time, especially through the pandemic. Bill highlighted that he has been a board member since 2011 and that SPIRIT is a unique organisation. He also highlighted the need for more board members and referred to the difficulties around the NHS funding and the current uncertainties of future funding. We have limited reserves and our position is uncertain after March 2024.

SPIRIT needs to find alternative sources of funding and have to this aim, have recruited a new manager, John Beaton initially for 3 months to try and secure the position of the organisation. John then gave some background of his experience and also referring to his own mental health diagnosis. He assured the board and the membership that he will hit the ground running and take immediate steps to try and secure further funding for SPIRIT to enable the organisation to continue. He stated that his turning point was walking away from the private sector and getting involved with HUG in the first instance and having meaningful peer support.

Bill also gave thanks to the work of the staff and the volunteers during the difficult time that SPIRIT found itself in over the last few months. On a personal note, Bill stated that he would not be staying on the board indefinitely but would remain until more board members are recruited.

5. Treasurer's Report – Susan Lyons

Sue highlighted the main points from our accounts and referred to our main funders for the last year; NHS Highland for our main funding and funding from Birchwood Highland (now Centred) for peer support work that HUG has undertaken. We have used some of our reserves to shore up the shortfall in funding, however there is a meeting scheduled for the following week and we are optimistic that we will get our second payment from

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NHS which takes us up to March 2024. There was discussion and agreement within the membership of possible alternative funding streams and the need for match funding is crucial. Joanna asked whether SPEAK was part of the NHS funding and the board confirmed that SPEAK was always funded separately and that SPEAK is not active at the moment and that funding for SPEAK had finished.

6. Adoption of Annual Accounts 22-23

The accounts were adopted; proposed by Joanna Higgs and seconded by John Gallon.

7. Appointment of Accountant for 23-24

The board and membership agreed to retain Ritsons as our accountant and this was proposed by Mags Macdonald and seconded by Mairi Hill. Daniel thanked SPIRIT and stated that SPIRIT is a worthy charity and he hopes things improve going forward.

8. SPIRIT Constitution: Consideration of possible changes in the make-up of the SPIRIT Board

Sue gave some background to this. There were changes made to the constitution at the 2019 AGM however this needs clarified. The board currently has places for 3 HUG members, 3 People First members, 3 SPEAK members and the external places on the board needs to be clarified if it is 5 or 6 external parties. The quorum for board meetings is 5 board members. The board asked the membership to agree to clarify that it is 6 external parties which would be 15 available places on the board in total. This was agreed, proposed by Gill Terry and seconded by Joanna Higgs.

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9. Election to Board of Directors

There was discussion around election to the board of directors. Directors serve for 3 years and then stand down and can be re-elected. Sue stated that all board members have an equal say and an equal voice within the board and that SPIRIT are actively looking to recruit further board members. The HUG Advisory Group and People First Advisory Groups will meet regarding recruitment of members onto the board.

10. AOCB

Mags asked whether there was any money left in the See Me funding (Hear Me Project) and it was confirmed how much was left from the accounts going forward into this year.

There was discussion amongst people first members regarding getting together for social outings.

Sue referred to training for the board of directors around the governance of the organization. Recent events within the board were referred to and that it is imperative that this does not occur again. She gave thanks to John Beaton for coming onboard to help stabilise the organization.

There was discussion amongst members regarding recent events within the previous board and around the board's decision to recruit a Manager without advertising the post. Margo stated that because of what happened in the past that she had no faith in the board. Marina referred to the recent situation which had impacted directly on her post and stated that she was confident of the new board to ensure this would not happen again. The board responded by saying that they made the decision to secure a manager who is extremely experienced and not to go through the lengthy recruitment process due to time constraints and the current position that SPIRIT is in as regards funding going forward and the recent risk to the organisation.

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It should also be noted that SPIRIT has only ever recruited without going through the formal process in extreme circumstances.

Joanna proposed a vote of thanks to the new board.

Bill thanked everyone for attending the AGM and the meeting closed at 4.10pm.

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