



THE IBS NETWORK AGM

6:30-7.30pm Monday 10 October 2022

Virtual AGM held via Teams

MINUTES

Present: Trustees: Simon Smale (SS), Dan Laver, Jenny Brown (JB), Alison Reid (AR) CEO, Non-Exec. Advisory Board members: Gillian Goddard, Core team: Liz Champion, Sam Yardy (minutes). Members observing: Bronwen Barber, Joanna Evans. Antonia Gooder

Apologies: Janet Tomlin, Matthew Chaddock

Welcome and Introduction

AR welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded them that this was a meeting held in public and not a public meeting. Only Trustees and Advisory Board members were able to ask questions and vote. Community members who were there to observe were able to ask questions in the chat area, and Liz would compile all the questions, and would share the questions and answers in the next week or so after the meeting.

Formal Welcome to AGM

SS declared the AGM open and welcomed those attending. SS thanked everyone for taking the time to be present.

Previous minutes

Minutes from the last AGM were accepted as accurate.

Chair's Report

SS The core team are currently planning a wider digitisation programme.

Reserves Policy

The policy of the charity is to maintain unrestricted funds at levels which provide sufficient funds to cover expenditure on charitable activities for a period of six months. At the balance sheet date, the level of unrestricted funds represented in excess of twelve months expenditure.

Building for the Future

Whilst the effects of the pandemic are still being felt, the charity is continuing to make and adapt plans for the future. Like many organisations, the charity is moving forward with its staff in new hybrid ways of working. This offers a better, more flexible work/life balance for the team and effective productivity for the charity.

The charity's core aim remains the same; supporting those living with IBS enabling them to better self-manage their condition. Every decision taken, at every level, is taken with the charity's members in mind.

The core team continue to dedicate their energies in supporting those living with IBS, ensuring that no call for help goes unanswered. Membership continues to grow, but has slowed in comparison to 2020's growth at the height of the pandemic. Income from membership has remained at the increased 2021 level. Throughout these challenging times, the core team have grown its commercial partnership activity, - this being borne out by the increase in income from commercial activity over the year.

The digitisation programme is the core team's main objective throughout the coming year, particularly the income generating training element. Process mapping planning, which was postponed last year due to external pressures, has started.

In addition, the core team will continue to think of innovative ways of growing its membership and building loyalty whilst also further increasing its commercial activities to ensure the future sustainability of the charity.

Whilst, for most of the year, the core team numbered four, three full time and one part-time officer, it is now down to two full time and one part time officer. A new membership officer will be employed in the forthcoming months.

I would like to thank personally once again our dedicated team of specialist volunteer clinicians, who, despite continued pressure in the NHS, find time to support the core team and the charity's membership.

Achievements in 2021

The core team continue to work hard to ensure the charity reach and support as many people living with IBS and work with as many specialist clinicians as is possible.

Membership

Membership has remained at the levels of 2020, which is the highest it has ever been. The target for the coming year is to continue to build on this and strive to further grow membership. As in previous years' the income derived from membership is vital to the charity's continued sustainability. In working with commercial partners, the core team have been able to put in place a range of member offers throughout the year to increase loyalty and retention. The team have received very positive feedback with members reporting the charity as being a lifeline when they are struggling with their condition.

Currently membership incentives include:

- telephone helpline staffed by IBS trained nurses
- comprehensive website which includes a self-care programme and an 'Ask the Experts' area
- a 'Can't Wait' card including the international travel card
- Gut Reaction; our quarterly magazine
- Relief; our monthly e-newsletter
- a growing library of gut-friendly recipes
- frequent member only offers
- an active online forum
- frequent communication including hints, tips, recipes and offers
- trusted information and advice from specialist clinicians
- knowledge they are supported and peace of mind that they are not alone

Communication

Ongoing, relevant and timely communication has been key in growing membership and member loyalty. The charity has continued to actively engage with a range of media channels. The website remains the principal portal for the charity and usage remains high, averaging 51,000 hits per month. The core team strive to ensure the website continues to look fresh, relevant and pertinent to its target markets.

As part of its commitment to supporting its members' the core team continue to seek as wide a range of products as possible to help with symptoms of the condition. Whilst continuing working on extremely tight margins, in addition to generating some income for the charity, the online shop is seen as a service for those living with IBS.

Like many, much of the charity's meetings have taken place online, although businesses are starting to open up a little more with plans in place to attend an exhibition in March 2022.

Corporate partnerships

Working with corporates remains a key element for the charity. The core team work to ensure the foundations are laid for a productive long-term relationship. This last year has seen the charity working with a range of partners, including Symprove; Clasado; GreenLiving Pharma; PrecisionBiotics Ltd; Bold Health; Bays Kitchen, Forever Young Foods; and Field Doctor.

The Year Ahead

A charity the size of The IBS Network, is greatly affected by the external environment and feels in a somewhat exposed financial position, balancing the need to invest to grow, whilst continuing to meet its responsibilities. Nevertheless, the charity does hold an excess of six months operating reserves. In the coming year the trustees plan to update the charity's reserves policy.

Throughout all the challenges of recent years, the charity's three broad areas of work remain the same. Crucial to these objectives is that of the income-generating elements. Its

digitisation programme is the key and over-arching objective, which guides the charity in how it delivers a cost-effective programme across the board. The three areas are:

A. Well-being at Work

- Scope the development of information/support packs for employers and employees, (combination of paper and online support)
- Research the possibility of this being income generating
- Research organisations with whom to partner
- Continue to network in this area

B. Corporate partners

Concentrating on two main areas:

- Pharma and commercial organisations
- Access grant funding where possible

C. Investment in technology to better/economically delivery priorities

- Plan digitisation programme
- Partner with app developers
- Optimisation social media

That about summarises our progress to date. I'd like to hand over to Jenny who will cover the main points of the January 2021 Year End accounts.

Presentation of Accounts

JB As the charity's year end is 31 January 2021, it is important to remember the context of some of Simon's comments, we are referencing a good nine months ago.

The report supports many of the points Simon was making. We can see that membership income continues to stay strong, that is where we were at the end of January 2022. It's a similar level year on year with additional income last year from corporate sponsorship and advertising.

Those that looked at the accounts may have noticed they are presented slightly differently from last year. This is as a result of how the charity's revenue streams have been apportioned. Membership to the community is paid annually and this year the accountants have apportioned the income throughout the year. As a previous auditor I could argue for it being presented either way and it makes no difference to the results.

As you can see the income continues to remain stable, and even if there were a case of no ongoing income, which is extremely unlikely, the charity would still have in excess of six months reserves to continue operations.

JB asked if there were any questions regarding the accounts and none were asked.

SS- asked for the acceptance of the accounts from voting members, members agreed unanimously and they were accepted as accurate and true.

JB – As this is my last AGM at presenting the accounts, I would like to say thank you for the opportunity to serve as a trustee. However, my time has come to resign as I am stretched in other places. I have enjoyed my time here and wish The IBS Network good luck for the future.

SS- Thanked JB for the last three years of serving as a trustee and thanked her for her support over the years.

SS- handed over to **AR** for the CEO report

CEO Report

It seems quite a while ago that I wrote the CEO update for our original meeting date of 19 September. Who would have thought the external environment would feel even more challenging than then? Now we have the prospect of higher mortgage repayments to add to the bleak mix.

Looking at our recent figures to our year-end in January, the charity's income from membership remained at around the previous year's high at £98,738 (2021 £99,643), (-£905). Overall, income increased by just under £27,000, (with expenditure increasing by £10,192 in the same period).

Much of these results are down to the continued dedication and hard work of the charity's core team, supported by our team of specialist HCP volunteers.

A note of caution though, since year-end in January, this calendar year we have seen a downturn in membership. The continued bleak external environment will influence the behaviours and decisions our members make in continuing their membership or on those considering joining our community for the first time.

In recent months, the team have carried out an extensive process mapping exercise, including mapping the member journey. Working with a Business Growth specialist, we have identified a number of gaps.

With the current systems, sales reports are limited and the current website, in particular the online shop arrangement, does not offer a scalable solution for commercial revenues. As the charity is supported by a small staff resource, the systems in place need to be as efficient as possible minimising any laborious manual tasks and maximising staff value and income generating activity.

In order to achieve our current vision of improved digital services it is essential that these gaps be filled. This will enable the team to respond more quickly to changes in demand, identify commercial opportunities and more informed management decision-making, freeing up time to allow the core team to identify and build stronger commercial relationships.

Moving Forward

The team have met with digital system developers who have been tasked with putting together a digital integrated systems map, outlining the necessary phases and associated budgetary considerations. We have already identified grants and match-funding opportunities. (productivity, a digital integration and a digital inclusion grant).

Once the developers have submitted their recommendations, a paper detailing plans will be presented to the board of Trustees for discussion and approval.

Whilst sometimes extremely challenging, the charity continues to grow and cement its relationships with pharma and commercial companies. We will continue to work with new and existing partners to ensure the charity's on-going sustainability, presenting opportunities for members to benefit from a range of special offers.

Despite the demanding external environment, the core team continue to work towards growing the charity's membership by making full use of all its marketing and communication channels and exploring all commercial opportunities on behalf of its membership.

In conclusion as in previous years, I would like to thank our medical advisory team, who, in a continuing challenging environment, have supported the charity and its members. Thank you for giving us your time this year and every year. Thank you to the Board of trustees in helping to steer the ship and continuing to strive towards the charity's future sustainability. A special thank you to Jenny, for her wise and straightforward advice and support, it has been very much appreciated.

On a personal note, I would again like to thank Sam and Liz, in what has been yet *another* difficult year for me with a further family bereavement. It must be recognised, that not only is this a worrying and uncertain time for the charity's membership, but it is also a worrying time for the charity's core team. Thank you for your continued support and ongoing dedication to the charity. We would not be able to deliver the service that we do without your hard work and commitment.

As part of the wider dedicated team, I am confident we will get through the many changes and challenges ahead and we should be proud of what we have achieved in the last few difficult years.

Meeting Close

SS asked if anyone had any questions, none were raised. SS thanked everybody for their attendance and contributions over the previous year and closed the meeting.