

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of National Talking Express held at 12.00 on Saturday 4 May 2019 at the Hanover Inn, Harwich

1. **Welcome:** The Chairman, Philip Troll, welcomed everyone to the meeting and read the agenda.

2. **Roll Call:**

Philip Troll, Chairman;
John Flynn, Vice-Chairman;
Sheila Troll, Acting Secretary;
Muzzamil Lakhani, Treasurer;
Caroline Eustance, Acting Appeals Officer;
Arthur Payne, Publicity Officer;
Paul Chinnery, Development Officer and Member;
Jeff Kirk, Reader and Member;
Charles Peck, Member;
Martin Messias, Reader;
Barbara Wedge, Guest.

3. **Apologies:**

Irene Knowles, Retiring Committee Member and Secretary for several years;
Jackie Brown
Mervyn Iveny, Member;
Rachelle Winborne, Member;
David Tyler, Member;
Delroy Williams, Member.

The Chairman drew attention to Irene's long service and thanked her for all the work she has done for the Charity.

4. **Notification of Any Other Business:** Charles Peck (two items); Paul Chinnery (one item); Muzzamil Lakhani (one item).

5. **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 5 May 2018** were amended to note that Jeff Kirk is a member as well as a reader. With this amendment the minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

6. **Matters Arising from the Minutes:** there were none.

7. **Reports:** reports from the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Acting Secretary, Publicity Officer, Development Officer and Treasurer were read out. There was an opportunity for questions on reports, but there were none. The reports were considered en bloc.

Proposed: Charles Peck. **Seconded:** Paul Chinnery.

8. **Election of Officers:** nominations received were as follows:

Chair: Philip Troll
Vice-Chair: John Flynn
Secretary: Sheila Troll
Publicity Officer: Arthur Payne
Treasurer: Muzzamil Lakhani
Appeals Officer: Caroline Eustance

The Chairman said Irene Knowles was on the list of nominees but she had subsequently decided she was not well enough to continue.

There are vacancies for two Committee members. There were no volunteers from the floor to take these positions. The Chairman will record a resumé of the AGM for the magazine, mentioning these vacancies. New Committee members can be co-opted at a later date.

9. **Appointment of Auditor:** The Treasurer has arranged the appointment of the new Auditor, Bristol Community Accountancy Project (BCAP) at a saving of £433.20. Due diligence had been required on all Committee members and the Development Officer as our resources are now over £25,000. Everyone was happy with the arrangements the Treasurer had made and the savings to the Charity.
10. **Closing of Cassette Service:** the Chairman explained that the cassette service had been closed as the copiers, which had given good service, could no longer be repaired. The 38 people still taking cassettes would be sent a message on cassette and music CD inviting them to take the magazine on memory stick. If no reply was received within six weeks, these individuals would be deleted from the database.
11. **Alexa:** the Chairman said both magazines are now on Alexa. To use this it is necessary to ask Alexa to enable My Talking Newspapers, which is a skill. (program). This only needs to be done once. After that, a user needs to say "Alexa, ask My Talking Newspapers to play Media Round-up" (or National Talking Express). Once playing, to change to another track, speed up etc., the commands must always begin with the words: "Alexa, ask My Talking Newspaper..."
12. **Telephone Service:** on 0330 22 33 465. Once into the service, use the touch pad on the phone to follow the commands. No computer or software are required, just a telephone. It may be free if the telephone package includes 0330 numbers, otherwise it is charged at the standard rate.

13. Any Other Business:

a) **Dutch NTE:** The Treasurer is relocating to the Netherlands but will remain Treasurer of NTE, and hopes to set up a Dutch arm of the charity. This will enable collections to be made in euros and will enable us to reach a new group of people. Any assistance would be welcome. The Chairman advised the Treasurer to seek advice from the Charities Commission. This will be considered by the Committee.

b) **Fundraising:** the Appeals Officer outlined her experience, working since 2011 in charity fundraising. She had worked for a number of large charities and had been Top Fundraiser for the Samaritans, Westminster Hospital and also the Dogs' Trust. Her experience included collecting door to door, static collecting at events, station collections and fundraising over the telephone.

Ms Eustance has looked at what NTE is currently doing, and considers that giving out leaflets is vital to success. A blind person does not know someone is approaching, but as money goes in a box the person can be thanked and offered a leaflet – it is then difficult to refuse.

A company called Real does fundraising at airports, where people tend to have money to spend and to be in a good mood. Shopping centres are another possibility, where fundraisers are under cover and people are in a buying mood.

The tabards in their current colours do not stand out enough. The tabards need to have a snappy strapline and to be in the NTE brand colours. No charity currently has black tabards with red writing. An alternative would be graphite grey with red writing. Wording suggested: "One vision, lots of noise" or "You can see, I'm blind, please stop and say 'hello'". If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got. To move forward we need to learn from Ms Eustance's considerable fundraising experience. We should make welcome telephone calls and ask people about gift aid. Would people who have made one-off donations or left legacies be willing to make a small, regular donation? This would enable us to plan ahead and know what our cash flow is. A card could be designed with our logo and information, keeping the design basic and blank inside. The card could then be adapted and sent out for birthdays, Christmas etc. They could also be sold on the NTE website.

The Development Officer said that yellow had been chosen as a colour that would stand out. The tabards had originally been blue which had caused confusion because TFL and Network Rail also used blue. London Sports use red tabards. Ms Eustance said red had been used too much. The Chairman said black and red could work. Tabards with the words "I'm blind" would not be appropriate for sighted collectors, though "We are blind" would be more acceptable. It was agreed that the committee would discuss this.

c) **Membership:** Mr Peck noted that membership renewal is due in April and requested the option of deferring until May so that members could pay prior to the start of the AGM, and be able to vote. The Chairman said this option already

existed: provided a person paid before the beginning of the meeting they were eligible to vote.

d) **Returned CDs:** a lot of CDs are returned to the office and cannot be re-used. Mr Peck suggested taking them to pubs and giving them out free of charge. The Chairman said the pubs would not allow this as it would be intruding on people's privacy. They could, however, be given out at collections.

e) **Stephen Kingsberry:** the Development Officer wished to thank Stephen Kingsberry for making contact with Tape Aids for the Blind South Africa who had allowed us to use features from their magazine. Mr Chinnery had told them that in return they were welcome to use articles from our magazines.

f) **Development Officer's Contract::** the Development Officer said he would be doing more of his work on a voluntary basis, and more details would be given to the Committee. The Chairman thanked Mr Chinnery for his generosity.

14. **Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting:** Saturday 2 May 2020, venue to be arranged by the Committee.

Philip Troll
Chairman
July 2019