**StopGap Sheffield**

**reg. charity no. 1146601**

**Minutes of Annual General Meeting**

**Tuesday 25th February 4pm – St Wilfrid’s Centre, Sheffield**

**Present** –Jo Abbot (Chair), Louise Finnigan (Secretary), Tim Renshaw, Aimee Lowe, Souleymane Bah, Wendy Robson (Trustees), Phil Johnson, Keith Dewsnap and Grace Longstaffe (St Wilfrid’s staff), Ruth Sheldon (Director of St Wilfrid’s Centre), Tina Powell-Wiffen, Ruth Grayson and Alex Lumsden (Ben’s Centre)

**Minutes** – Liz Grasso (StopGap Administrator)

**1. Welcome and thanks**

StopGap chair Jo Abbott welcomed everyone to the meeting, and thanked St Wilfrid’s Centre for hosting the AGM.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies from Jenny Sewell and Jean Cromar.

**3. Minutes of 2023 AGM (5th March 2024)**

**Accuracy -**

p.2 St Wilfrid’s Centre should read ‘St Wilfrid’s Place’

Jo asked that those present today agree to their adoption by this AGM. This was supported unopposed.

**4. Matters arising**

Framework has now had their Street Outreach service re-commissioned.

There were no further matters arising from last year's minutes that were not covered by today's agenda.

**5. Annual report 2023/24**

Jo presented the Annual report to the AGM. This is now signed and is on our website.

Key points-

* We continued to face difficulties with a lack of accommodation in the city for rough sleepers to be placed in.
* Numbers of people sleeping rough in and around the Sheffield city centre have increased, and in line with other agencies, StopGap has seen an increase in demand for accommodation.
* We once again produced a “Sponsor a Room” campaign and produced a newsletter for our supporters.
* From 1st July 2023 to 30th June 2024, we provided a total of 103 bed nights for a total of 14 people, which was an increase from our previous year.
* The pilot project to place people who are newly at risk of rough sleeping in appropriate hotel accommodation was extended to July 2024, when we agreed to review whether to continue the scheme at a Trustees meeting.
* **Case study** - SA found rough sleeping by the Street Outreach team on 23/10/24. She had recently had a caesarean section but the baby was stillborn. This was a result of sexual assault and the partner asked her to leave. The council were unclear if they had a duty to house due to complications around her immigration status. StopGap funding meant that the Street Outreach team could accommodate SA allowing further investigations. Street Outreach were able to help her get medical care for an infection and on leaving hospital she was placed under discretionary Rough Sleeper Initiative funding.

Questions-

Ruth- Which agencies are helping people with refugee status if they haven’t got a permanent address?

Tim- The Home Office are now pushing through their long waiting list and using the accommodation that the Council would usually use. This has been highlighted to the Home Office. People can stay in Home Office accommodation longer, but the process is very slow, and there is a log-jam in the system. Services are under a lot of pressure as there is no more funding available to address the issue.

The Council are commissioning some houses of multiple occupation (approximately 45 rooms) for Home Office leavers, but are yet unsure as to when this will happen. This is a drop in the ocean compared with demand.

**6. Treasurer's report**

Barney Williams left the Board as Treasurer in June 2023, and so we are now managing finances as a Board.

Jo thanked Liz and Louise for all her help with putting together the financial accounts this year.

Key points-

* During the 12th month period 1st July 2023 to 30th June 2024
* We started the year with £36,789.70 in the bank.
* We had £11,924 of outgoings in the year.
* During the year we had receipts of £3,977.00 from donors and grants - subs of £50, donations £2,427 and grants of £1,500 - £1,500 from the Sheffield Town Trust Subscription scheme
* We ended the year with £36,790 in the bank.

Thanks were made to Dr Peter Cromar, independent examiner of our accounts.

**7. Election of officers and trustees**

The following were elected unopposed to serve for the coming year 2024/25

**Officers:**

Jo Abbott – Chair

Louise Finnigan – Secretary

**Trustees:**

Souleymane Bah

Aimee Lowe

Timothy Renshaw

Wendy Robson

**7. Membership**

Jo reminded all those present that membership of StopGap was open to anyone, or any organisation, that would like to support us by joining. Membership forms will be sent out with the minutes from the AGM.

**8. AOB**

None

**Talk from Tim and Aimee-**

**Overview of hidden homelessness of women-**

**Key points-**

* In the last year, Framework helped 875 people. 710 were rough sleepers, 730 were men, 141 female and the remainder were trans.
* Framework thinks they are missing the many of the women who are rough sleeping as many of them are hidden, transient, or intermittent rough sleepers. Male rough sleepers tend to be more visible. Women rough sleepers tend to move around all night and don’t repeat the place that they sleep in - sleeping in A&E, squats, sex workers etc.,
* The Women’s Homelessness Census has been carried out for the last two years. This is a questionnaire that looks at locations, services they engage with etc., They also gather quantitative data from other services.
* 18 women filled out the questionnaire - which is a good number for the cohort.
* 104 women were identified as meeting the definition over 8 services for the women's census as being seen as rough sleeping.

Compare this to 3 who were found on our official 2023 headcount.

You can see the number of women who are missing from the stats.

* When Framework carried out their official headcount, they only found 3 women rough sleeping, but believe the figures to be much higher than this.
* They tend to find that women over the age of 40 spend more nights on the street, but under the age of 40 move to more different locations.
* The female cohort have a distrust of statutory services - often because of child removal. They also have higher complex needs and trauma experiences.
* Framework has adapted their service to check in on A&E, MacDonalds, and work with SWWOP and Chocolate Box.
* They have received grant funding for the last 18 months for an activities coordinator to help women engage, and are hoping for more grant funding to continue this work.
* Aimee also highlighted the Growth Project, which is run by Target Housing , which supports women who are homeless and have experienced multiple child removal, and offers more psychological support.

Q&A-

Ruth- Are there any differences in the way that StopGap would deal with male and females who were referred?

Tim- They would be accommodated separately.

Aimee- Framework would prioritise women as they are at higher risk. The council are reluctant to place couples, and therefore, couples are likely to be at risk from rough sleeping for longer periods of time because of this.

Tim- There is some work around looking at domestic abuse with the perpetrators of the abuse as well as the victim.

There are services that can look at safe zones, and can support women into the safe zone.

Wendy-What percentage of women are over 40 and what under 40?

Aimee- They have unidentifiable data, so this is hard to show.

Louise-They have seen several incidences of cuckooing, where homeless women have moved in with vulnerable male clients, leading to safeguarding procedures.