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Voluntary Action North Somerset Limited

Annual General Meeting

Held on:

Monday, 25th September 2023

1800 – 2000

Worlebury Golf Club, Worlebury, Weston-super-Mare

1. Welcome, Introductions and Housekeeping

- 1.1. Voluntary Action North Somerset Chairperson Delyth Lloyd-Evans (DLE) welcomed everyone attending and was delighted to see so many attending this evening with representatives from the sector, commissioners, trustees, VANS Team members and stakeholders.
- 1.2. DLE explained the housekeeping rules for the venue and followed with an outline of the programme for the evening, a presentation from our Keynote speaker followed by the formal AGM, and a further presentation to round off the evening. explained the housekeeping rules for the venue.

2. Apologies

- 2.1. DLE noted that several apologies had been received and asked those in attendance if they knew of any other to let the VANS Team know via email.
- 2.2. Details of the apologies and attendees are noted at the end of the minutes.

3. Keynote Speaker – Mustafa Shaikh, Senior Coach (Somerset Cricket Foundation) The Maqbul Project in Partnership with VANS

- 3.1. DLE introduced Mustafa Shaikh (MS), who outlined the role of Somerset Cricket Club, its Foundation and the partnership with VANS.
- 3.2. As a Foundation, MS explained that they are striving, through a multi-agency approach, to make cricket both inclusive and accessible across all communities.
- 3.3. MS described how the name of the project came about and that it came from those involved in the activity – Maqbul Project (Maqbul - the most common word for “beautiful” and “accepted” in Afghan Persian. The group gave approval for its use as there is a play

on the beautiful game, the people and place.) The group participating in the cricket activities comprised 10-12 individuals, currently based in Weston-super-Mare.

- 3.4. Somerset Cricket Foundation exists to support, grow and diversify grassroots cricket and use the draw of cricket to develop communities to make a positive difference. The Maqbul Project has showcased the work with displaced people in the Weston-super-Mare area, in partnership with VANS. It was acknowledged that special thanks should go to VANS Team members David Crossman (DC) and Shahid Waraich (SW).
- 3.5. MS continued that the events and activities were captured as a photo diary, highlighting the plan in action and its impact on those involved. He described the steps taken in the action plan from the initial meetings and training sessions, culminating in social fixtures (5).
- 3.6. The activities have a measurable impact on those taking part – such as increased physical activities, social interaction, emotional and mental wellbeing, cultural diversity and networking. MS acknowledged that registration was difficult, as the group are “displaced” and this was a challenge.
- 3.7. The project has prompted national interest, MS and DC are now planning for future fixtures. In closing, MS listed all those involved and added that without their support, working together has been the drive toward the project's success.
- 3.8. DLE thanked MS for the presentation and said that she loved the inclusive approach and how they have the involvement of such high-profile individuals supporting the project. DLE asked if there were any questions from the floor.
- 3.9. VANS Trustee Liam Sweeny (LS) asked if the learning from this project could be shared across the UK. MS replied that he was at the meeting at the County Ground, and Devon had expressed an interest in the project and wished to share the learning and the principles of Maqbul across their county.
- 3.10. VANS Team member Claire Payne (CP) enquired about the possibilities of such a programme being open to young people. MS commented that a conversation had begun recently with the fostering section of North Somerset Council and is now waiting for a response. Somerset County Foundation, MS added that street cricket was also a possibility for schools to take up, and the Foundation has already received enquiries. An example of a young person focus was noted from North Petherton (Somerset) Cricket Club, where they hold, during holiday periods, young people sessions.
- 3.11. DC commented on a pilot scheme with schools relating to street cricket and for the older generation walking cricket. MS added that the English Cricket Board (ECB) had recently made an announcement regarding diversity, and the ECB was keen to network to get the message out there that cricket is for anyone, not just playing but volunteering as well.
- 3.12. DLE thanked everyone for their comments and an interesting presentation and introduced the Formal part of the AGM.

collegiate and partnership way across the wider footprint including Bristol and South Glos.

- 4.4.5. DLE handed over to MG, who reflected on the 2022/23 year and how VANS continued to respond to the challenges and embrace the future for the sector in and beyond North Somerset.
- 4.4.6. MG outlined the key achievements of the VANS team for the year, which was a busy year with many highlights, and it was noted how proud we should be of the achievements. MG explained what VANS does under the pillars of Leadership and Advocacy, Volunteering, Capacity Building and Partnership/Collaboration with the following examples.
- 4.4.7. Under Leadership and Advocacy, VANS has hosted several forums, the Shape of the Sector survey and membership at strategic boards as the voice and influence for the North Somerset sector.
- 4.4.8. For volunteering, MG added that the new online Volunteer Centre was launched, and the Step Forward Programme and Community Resilience North Somerset continue to increase the potential of volunteers. MG thanked North Somerset Council for its continued support for the Step Forward programme.
- 4.4.9. Capacity Building in the sector, VANS, MG explained has a programme which supports Ageing Well, Volunteering and Events, and Equality and Diversity through sport. VANS has provided bid training opportunities for those applying for the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the North Somerset Lottery, promoting 85 good causes in our area.
- 4.4.10. Partnership/collaboration has provided VANS with opportunities to establish community hubs, build resilience into the sector, establish a Befriending Alliance and lead on several workstreams for health.
- 4.4.11. MG outlined the future plans for VANS under the four pillars, which included developing a North Somerset VCFSE Strategy with North Somerset Council, the State of Ageing Report and the Domestic Abuse and Chronic Pain Project. Volunteering will feature strongly to get more people volunteering, encourage underrepresented groups to volunteer and develop volunteer passports and Volunteering Awards.
- 4.4.12. MG continued the need for capacity building of the sector as we advance, including training events, senior leadership forums and outreach sessions across North Somerset to meet new groups in their respective communities. These will form a key feature of our plans to develop VANS. The Partnership and Collaboration pillar focuses on developing the VCFSE Alliance to have a voice in health, with more news to follow. MG added that VANS has the Good Neighbours Project with WERN and is developing a Young Person Forum.
- 4.4.13. In rounding up, MG updated the membership and Trustees that VANS was informed that they had achieved the NACVA Accreditation as a Volunteer Centre for another three years.

4.4.14. DLE commended the Impact Report to the members and asked if there were any questions. In summary, DLE continued, VANS aims to influence commissioners and funders to invest in our sector offer, and whilst VANS is a small organisation, our influence is wide. We are acknowledged as a key partner.

4.4.15. The Trustees, DLE added, recognised the hard work the VANS Team deliver across their work programmes and how the Team represents VANS has played a significant part in shaping our services across North Somerset to ensure the sector's voice is heard and recognised for the value the sector can bring.

4.4.16. DLE continued that MG, as our Chief Executive, has brought a fresh and dynamic approach to VANS and created a great partnership with the VANS Team, leaders across the sector and commissioners. DLE added that she would like to commend MG for her caring, focused approach and dedication in quite challenging times. It was noted that MG has developed key relationships across North Somerset and beyond and has positioned VANS as a key and major player in supporting our North Somerset sector. DLE commented that she had been impressed by the way MG had embraced the challenges when taking up the role whilst studying for a PhD and now we can congratulate MG on becoming Dr Gardner.

4.4.17. DLE noted that MG's hard work, good nature and diligence in doing the right thing are to be commended, and DLE wished to thank MG personally as it has been so great to work alongside her. The Board, the VANS Team and colleagues from the wider community have also thanked MG for all that has been done for VANS and the benefit of the wider sector in North Somerset.

4.5. Presentation of VANS Financial Statement for 2021/22

4.5.1. DLE stated that Albert Goodman Accountants (VANS Accountants) and the Trustees had approved the accounts and were now presented to the AGM.

4.5.2. DLE explained that the format VANS has adopted in previous years, as advised by Albert Goodman, has continued to be developed to align the VANS work programmes and strategic functions to ensure that VANS meets all the requirements as set out by the Charity Commission.

4.5.3. DLE introduced Neil Salter (NS) VANS Trustee and Board Treasurer, who then highlighted the key elements of VANS accounts, funding levels, and positive income.

4.5.4. NS provided an overview of the accounts for the year ending 2021/23 and noted that it had been a successful year. Key points include.

- A continued growth of VANS with new projects and the staff team increasing to 14 members with another four posts under recruitment.
- Across this year, VANS had the opportunity to future-proof systems by developing a new online Volunteering Centre and a Customer Relationship Manager system (CRM) provided by Simply Connect Solutions.
- VANS financial performance has continued to improve, and we remain on a firm financial footing.

NS acknowledged that the whole VANS team, whether delivering projects or identifying projects in line with VANS objects as a charity and vision, should be proud of what they have achieved towards the financial growth of VANS.

- 4.5.5. NS explained the detailed accounts concerning income and asked that a number of points should be noted.
- NS report that the way projects are funded, a large proportion of income is being held over to cover the future costs of ongoing projects £233k, as set out on page 25.
 - The accounts report the gross amount received for each project, with most of this income is used to cover the costs of delivering the projects. As a result, there is only a small management charge that accrues to VANS as an organisation.
 - VANS does receive and is very grateful for the grants and donations we receive to help cover the core costs of the organisation, the main funders being North Somerset Council and Weston Town Council. However, these only cover 30% of our core costs, so each year the staff team are challenged to find further funding through grants or by delivering specific projects focused on volunteer coordination and leadership for the VCFSE sector on behalf of funders and commissioners.
- 4.5.6. Concerning expenditure, NS explained that as an organisation, both the VANS Team and Trustees keep a close watch on expenditure with ongoing reviews to ensure that all cost areas continue delivering value for money. Details of which are set out on page 21 of the accounts.
- 4.5.7. NS advised that it should be noted that the growth in expenditure for VANS as an organisation had seen an increase in staff costs, rising from an average of 11 to 14 employed staff year on year. This, coupled with the fact that the changeover in the Chief Executive role meant that there were several weeks when both were employed, Hence the rise reported in the key management personnel costs set out on page 22 of the accounts, where the increase in staff costs increase year on year from £291k to £367k. Whilst no direct pay awards to team members were made during the year, a cost of living adjustment was made to the team in November 2022.
- 4.5.8. NS reported that central costs had seen an increase as a result of the investment in the future as underlying investments were made in the organisation's IT infrastructure, which will provide improved data capture for reporting purposes and a slicker volunteering portal for both VCFSE groups and volunteers. Despite this investment, central costs remain low at 5% of the total.
- 4.5.9. Governance costs, including the employment of the financial examiner and the bookkeeper accounting have seen an increase year on year as the hours of the bookkeeper have increased due to the additional workload as the organisation has grown.

4.5.10. In summary, NS outlined the key message from the financial statement, which is that VANS, as an organisation, remains financially robust. Whilst we start the 2023/24 financial year on a firm financial footing, the whole VANS team are aware that there remain many challenges that will need to be faced in the coming years ahead, not least the growing demand for services from the VCFSE sector. The Trustees are up for the challenge to ensure our current positive financial position, and this has only been achieved thanks to the dedication, hard work, and support of the VANS team, ably led initially by Paul Lucock (previous Chief Executive) with ME picking up the reigns from the Autumn of 2022.

4.5.11. NS concluded that this covered his overview of the accounts the full details of which, including the main trustee annual report, are included in the Trustee annual report and accounts.

4.5.12. DLE thanked NS for his invaluable input and the hours he has put into the accounts.

5. Appointment of Independent Financial Examiner

5.1. DLE explained that Albert Goodman has been approved at the 2022 AGM to continue as the VANS Independent Financial Examiner. The Board approved their reappointment of Trustees in July 2023, and we are now asking the members to approve Albert Goodman's reappointment for 2023/24. DLE asked for a proposer and seconder from the Trustees.

5.2. **Proposer:** Neil Salter **Seconded:** Sue Shillabeer
VANS Members: 8 present and seven votes by proxy – approved.
none recorded as against or abstention.

Albert Goodman was approved as the independent financial advisor for 2023/24.

6. Election to Board of Trustees

6.1. DLE explained that VANS recruited two co-opted Trustees to the VANS Board after the AGM last year. The members are now asked to elect Lizzie and Liam to the Board formally. Both profiles were included in the packs for the evening and are available on the VANS website. DLE continued that as Trustees, the election enables a tenure of 3 years before re-election. The Board of Trustees recommends the appointment as Trustees to the VANS Board.

6.2. DLE introduced Lynda Bowen (LB) to the members and attendees, who gave a brief background of her experience, and it was noted that LB had become a Trustee after volunteering with the Mass Vacc and Airport Greeting programmes.

6.3. DLE asked for a proposer and seconder from the Trustees.

Proposer: Lizzie Wormald-Kelly **Seconded:** Sue Shillabeer
VANS Members: 7 present and seven votes by proxy – approved.
none recorded as against, one abstention.

6.4. DLE introduced Liam Sweeney (LS) to the members and attendees. LS gave a brief background to his experience, and it was noted that he resides in Weston-super-Mare.

6.5. DLE asked for a proposer and seconder from the Trustees.

Proposer: Neil Salter

Seconded: Lizzie Wormald-Kelly

VANS Members: 8 present and seven votes by proxy – approved.
none recorded as against or abstention.

6.6. DLE thanked the membership, and LB and LS were welcomed formally as Trustees to the VANS Board of Trustees.

7. Re-election to the Board of Trustees

7.1. DLE introduced the next stage of the AGM as two Trustees required re-election for a further three-year tenure. Members were required to vote on the re-election of DLE and NS to the Board of Trustees. First was the re-election of NS, and DLE asked the Trustees for a proposer and seconder.

Proposer: Lizzie Wormald-Kelly

Seconded: Sue Shillabeer

VANS Members: 8 present and seven votes by proxy – approved.
none recorded as against or abstention.

7.2. DLE indicated that as the next stage was her re-election MG was asked to continue. MG asked the Trustees for a proposer and seconder.

Proposer: Sue Shillabeer

Seconded: Lizzie Wormald-Kelly

VANS Members: 8 present and seven votes by proxy – approved.
none recorded as against or abstention.

7.3. MG handed back to DLE to continue with the AGM.

7.4. DLE thanked everyone for their input into the formal part of the AGM, and that concluded that part. DLE explained that we have two further guest speakers and introduced Krishna Madhavan (KM) from the South Asian Group (FYI Community Group) and Amy Riley (AM) for the Young Carers Development Trust.

8. Guest Speakers

8.1. FYI Community Group

This evening, KM, representing her husband, explained how the group had developed from a small local support group, helping those new to the area - providing local information, friendship and signposting cultural activities in and around Weston. The FYI group have extended their activities to include help for those struggling to find shops where they can access ethnic food, and places to live, as the broader community support for their families.

The numbers the group now supports have risen to over 700 families, and the support provided is voluntary, almost becoming full-time role as the need has grown.

KM thanked the ongoing support provided by VANS, The Other Place and the Multicultural Friendship Association. In addition, FYI had also joined the Anti Racism Group, led by Weston Town Council.

Current activities include a dance, sewing, and swimming groups for women. FYI, are also building links with North Somerset Council and have been working with Somewhere to Go.

In the future, the group has recognised the need to provide their children with activities, support and guidance.

KM added that over the last three years, they have been blessed with a wide range of support.

DLE thanked KM for the talk about FYI and their work and asked how people get in touch. KM advises this through David Crossman at VANS, The Other Place or the Children's Centre (Weston-super-Mare).

8.2. Young Carers Development Trust

DLE welcomed AR to the AGM. AR explained her journey as a recipient of the services of YCDT and how she became a Mentor and is now a Trustee of the Charity.

AR outlined how the charity supports young carers, established in 2012. As AR explained, she was one of the first beneficiaries as she was struggling to cope as a young carer, and this was impacting her education.

AR continued that the income for YCDT is 100% through fundraising, they receive no statutory funding, and their service is free to young carers and their families. As a charity, they always ensure that funding is in place for four years before taking on a young carer. AR explained that this funding was crucial to provide the support of a mentor to the young carer for four years and described how this develops in a four-year plan, which is structured around the needs of the young carer.

AR provided several stats relating to young carers – 85% say they could not go to college/university because of their caring role, 800,000 Young carers currently in the UK, a quarter of the school year missed, of those who do go to college/university young carers are four times more likely to drop out.

AR described the role of the mentor and the support provided, as the mentor provides sustained support to instil confidence and gain access to education while including the family. The service also provides tuition to support missed lessons, equipment such as laptops/textbooks/revision tools, visits to universities, and work placement opportunities.

AR provided examples of the impact of YCDT since 2012, which was an overall improvement in grades, an increase in those going to university, 100% remaining in education, employment or training, 66% continuing their relationship with YCDT and becoming ambassadors. Other services provided included webinars, an annual Young Carers Conference and working with universities to provide workshops for young carers to help raise their aspirations.

AR explained that through the scheme, she would not have gone through university to become a mentor and now a trustee and Ambassador for YCDT. AR asked if there were any questions.

DLE added that we need to understand the different parts that we, as a sector, can support. AR added that Weston Rotary closed the position of young carers in North Somerset and Alliance Homes. Young Carers need respite. Also, YCDT, as awareness is raised, receives referrals from other charities who nominate their beneficiaries for support from YCDT, however, these charities should also seek funding support to guarantee support from YCDT and the mentor.

SH asked what training the mentors must have to undertake their role. AR explained that safeguarding and mental health were two of the main ones, however, there are a variety of training available to the mentors. The mentors have a workbook and guidance they work through when mentoring a young carer.

CP advised that YCDT is currently advertising on the online VANS Volunteering Centre and asked AR what YDCT is looking for in a mentor. AR replied that they would match the mentor with a local young carer and start to build up a good relationship. A mentor shows empathy, a willingness to understand and good listening skills. Experience in the education sector is an advantage, however, the willingness to make the role their own.

DLE was pleased to hear from AR and congratulated her on her journey.

9. Chair's Closing Remarks

9.1. DLE, in closing the AGM, noted that the VANS focus for the forthcoming year is the

- Continuation of the VANS advocacy role – working with and for the sector to promote it widely and have a strong voice.
- Promoting volunteering and raising awareness of the significant benefits it offers to the sector, our residents and how key the impact can be.
- Working in partnership and collaboration to encourage and build capacity and skills across the sector.

9.2. DLE continued closing the event and wished to thank the fellow Board of Trustees again, who have given time and expertise over the last 12 months.

9.3. It was also a thank you to the all the VANS Team, including our volunteers. DLE added that all are flexible, professional and committed to providing a comprehensive range of work and support to the sector.

9.4. For funders and commissioners, DLE added that VANS valued the trust they have put into us to deliver the programmes, represent the sector, and highlight where other parts of our sector can best deliver a service to add value to our communities.

9.5. To our member organisations, a thank you for your support of VANS, which enables us to support you through our connections and for the varied and significant work you do for the people of North Somerset.

DLE formally closed the AGM, thanked everyone for attending and hope to see everyone next year, it was noted that a provisional date of 30th September 2024 had been agreed and that VANS hoped and looking forward to working alongside you all over the next 12 months.

DLE added that she wished to share and leave us with three short quotes.

- *Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.*
- *Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.*
- *Don't let yesterday take up too much of today.*

END – AGM closed at 2000.

Attendees (representatives from the following organisations/community groups/charities)	Apologies Received (representatives from the following organisations/community groups/charities)
Churchill and Langford Minibus Society	Alzheimers - Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire (BNSSG),
Citizens Advice North Somerset / Wellbeing Collective	Bridging the Gap Together
Disabled Access Group (North Somerset Council)	Children's Air Ambulance (Bristol, Bath, South Gloucestershire & Somerset)
FYI Community Group	Clevedon Pier and Heritage Trust Ltd
Lowering The Bar	For All Healthy Living Centre / Wellbeing Collective
Multicultural Friendship Association	Gordano Community Cars
North Somerset Council	Homestart North Somerset
North Somerset Parent Carers Working Together	LiveWest
Quartet Community Foundation	Marie Curie
Race Equality North Somerset	Osprey Outdoors Community Interest Company Ltd
Redport	Samaritans of Weston-super-Mare and North Somerset
Refugees Welcome North Somerset	Wesport (The West of England Sport Trust)
Rotary Club	West of England Rural Network
Rotary Club (WsM)	Weston-super-Mare Town Council
Sirona Care and Health CIC	YMCA Clevedon
Somerset County Foundation	
The Peer Partnership	
We Are With You	
Wellspring Counselling	
Young Carers Development Trust	