

## **Notes of SHA Central Council , Oxford 19.1.19**

**Present:** Alex Scott-Samuel (Chair) (ASS), Jean Hardiman Smith (Secretary (JHS), Tony Beddow (TB), John Lipetz (JL), Brian Gibbons (BG), Alison Scouller (AS), Nicholas Csergo (NC), Jessica Ormerod (JO), Mike Roberts (MR), Kathrin Thomas (KT), Brian Fisher (BF), Peter Mayer (PM), Vivien Walsh (VW), Vivien Gilardi (VG), Mark Ladbrooke (ML), Norma Dudley (ND), Diane Jones (DJ), Corrie Lowry (CL), Irene Leonard (IL), Coral Jones (CJ), Caroline Bedale (CB), Andy Thompson (AT), Tom Fitzgerald (TF), Judith Varley (Minutes Secretary) (JV)

**Apologies:** Shaun McBride, Paul Leake, David Wrigley, Helen Cranage, Jos Bell, Steve Bedser, Dave Mattocks, Gareth Gould, Sina Lari, Dave Watson, Jackie Davis, Alan Hall, Carol, Ackroyd, Jon Shaffer

**Observers:** Mike Hobbs, Liz Peretz, Tony Winters, Maggie Winters, Christine Marsden, John Mercer, Ken Smith

### **1 Welcome**

ASS welcomed everyone and thanked the Oxford branch members for finding us the accommodation for the meeting. Mike Hobbs said that the Oxford branch had been formed only in May 2018, but now had 44 members and had had a major triumph in reversing the Council's decision to cut budgets to services

### **2 Guest speaker**

ASS introduced Aaron Reeves, Associate Professor of Social Policy and Intervention at Oxford University, who spoke on 'The Political Economy of Health Inequalities'.

We were given an exemplary comprehensive overview of the current situation; no unexpected revelations, but the figures shockingly stark, particularly when compared with improving health trends up to the early years of this century; the graphs illustrated the halt in improvement and the downward movement in the many parameters covered. Members expressed surprise that Cameron's commitment to 'permanent austerity' policies and his declaration that 'we cannot afford to support people as we've done in the past' has had such an immediate impact on longevity and 'quality' of life, particularly for women in England and Wales since 2011. The effects are seen in both the poorest and middle income populations. 86% of the cuts have fallen on women, and public health and housing budgets have been slashed.

Male health has been adversely affected too, but nothing like as much. 'Common' mental health problems have increased, often linked to tragic decisions made in Work Capability Assessments so that suicides and prescribing of anti-depressants have all escalated too. Teresa May's declaration that 'austerity is over' is hollow when we are only at the beginning of cuts and seeing their impact.

There was an enthusiastic discussion and Aaron was thanked warmly for his contribution.

### **3 Notes of Central Council meeting held on 10.11.18 in London**

(i) Eileen O'Keeffe was present as an Observer.

(ii) Re Clarke Review: Should SHA be a Limited Liability Incorporated Association rather than a Limited Liability Company? AT said the appropriate term was 'Company Limited by Guarantee'. VG suggested discussion should be deferred until

standing orders and the constitution have been reviewed but being 'limited' was important. AT leading on 'governance' will now be replaced by TB

#### **4 Award**

Gurinder Singh Josan was congratulated on his CBE award

#### **5 Secretary's Report**

SHA's Contemporary Motion to 2018 Conference had not been successful as Social Care was not chosen for debate by the delegates. The National Policy Forum would now continue this discussion.

KT said we need to submit a motion addressing falling life expectancy and infant mortality, both linking well with Aaron's talk. BF raised the motion on social care for the Women's Conference, but JHS said it had failed as it was insufficiently women specific, and she had now raised a motion which had been accepted on those grounds. She would circulate the details. It was crucial that Motions raised are discussed, so we must be sure to tailor them to meet the criteria

#### **6 Chair's Report**

ASS gave a verbal summary of the last year's events in considerable detail, something which has not happened at earlier meetings in order that due process was not compromised or members subjected to undue influence. Agreement has been reached with the former Director, Martin Rathfelder, and his representative so the matter ends there. A summary covering every stage of the process will be available to every member who requests a copy. The former Director must now return all documentation, equipment and materials relating to SHA and ensure any information concerning SHA on any other equipment or information transmitted to anyone else must be deleted. By law, he must retain nothing and this process was still incomplete at the time of the meeting. A 28 day period for settlement is underway. AT commented that the former Director did not contest the allegations against him of gross misconduct, only that the penalty of his dismissal from SHA was too severe. BF asked about the final cost and whether SHA was covered by insurance. He was assured costs were much less than if the matter had been pursued further, but the solicitor had not yet sent his bill.

#### **7 Treasurer's Report**

This had been circulated. TF gave a brief verbal summary report and commented that Alex, Jean and Ken had, between them, salvaged the SHA. His Report was accepted.

KT thanked the officers for their diligence and care in dealing with these difficult matters and the stress they'd generated. She noted the need for confidentiality. PM said he had learned via Linked-In that Martin was happy with the outcome and that members needed to be mindful not to commit any breach of confidentiality.

MR reminded us of the severe penalties under GDPR if information remains extant.

If Martin still has, or uses, the SHA data bank, we might have to tackle this elsewhere. ASS said that when we began the ACAS process, our solicitor included a confidentiality clause, but Martin had insisted on its removal, so neither side is now bound by confidentiality. VG suggested we accept the Officers' Reports as

given. Members were assured that all appropriate actions that could be taken, had been, and with the Clarke Report currently under review, Officers were unable to give further details at this stage. A vote was taken on accepting the Officers' Reports, which were unanimously accepted.

## **8 Database problems**

JHS thanked CC for its support. She gave further details on how difficult it had been to access Martin's records of the membership, to know which members were just historical, inconsistencies in names and geographical location and in the accounts.

Gradually branch memberships and other irregularities were being brought up to date, but it was difficult and time consuming. Informally branches had been advised they could now access small support money for meetings. There were no records of who were SHA delegates to CLPs, so no fees had been paid. SHA branches in London, Liverpool and Leeds were operating well and up to date, but many other branches had gaps. She was in the process of changing SHA contact names and addresses given to outside bodies. SHA post sent to Martin was being returned to the sender marked 'Gone Away'. Martin had charged storage costs for documents and she was now investigating other options, along with ways of negotiating the large bill asked to affiliate SHA to the Labour Party. There are issues regarding social media with a fake Facebook page – anything labelled 'Socialist Health AS' is not official, we don't know who runs it or the 'SHA Business account'. She said everyone has shown great integrity and done his /her best for the organisation at this difficult time. ASS confirmed how stressful this had been for the Officers particularly, and the Vice Chairs and he thanked everyone involved for their support.

TB questioned the integrity of the database and asked if, in the circumstances, it was acceptable to continue with the elections for the coming year. Perhaps we should extend the current Officer team and defer the AGM. This was supported by MR. CJ suggested starting again with a properly functional organisation once we were through this time of chaos. AT agreed; he thought that the AGM should be deferred and he favoured extending the current CC and Officers' term for a year (till March 2020) so that there is time for all governance issues to be resolved; his proposal was seconded by CJ. VG thought a year was too long, and she proposed (but subsequently, withdrew) an amendment stating that the officers should define a more appropriate deferral term. AT's motion was carried overwhelmingly.

IL said KS has been absolutely invaluable as acting administrator. Thanks to his endeavours, SHA will not be in this situation again. BG said Martin had been paid and KS's work in getting the database sorted should be properly paid too, not dependent on volunteer goodwill. ASS endorsed the dedication KS had shown to SHA and that he would be paid for the work he has undertaken.

## **9 Branches**

Questions were raised about branch elections and their validity given the database uncertainties. Perhaps they might be deferred for a time not exceeding 12 months.

IL suggested we must be sure about the integrity of the data before we can proceed; better to suspend operations until we have confidence in it. CB asked if it was acceptable for branch elections to be suspended until queries about delegates were resolved. AT commented that Union branches often elected Officers for 3 years, and

although we don't want this as a regular feature, maybe another 12 month appointment might be reasonable given the circumstances. JHS said this need not apply to all branches, only those where the database was uncertain. CB suggested branches should continue with last year's delegates unless recent elections had been held. AT suggested that Central Council instruct the officers to assess all branch database concerns and respond accordingly as required. This was agreed.

### **10 Emergency motion – termination of membership**

ML commented on the extraordinary situation in which the SHA had found itself and the broader issues raised by Martin's behaviour, none of which was compatible with the ethos of the organisation. With reluctance, he found it necessary to propose that Martin Rathfelder's membership of the SHA be terminated. In seconding the motion, VG thanked the Officers for their conduct and said that our long term problems had stemmed from how the SHA, its values and its Officers had been systematically undermined over many years, and because implementation of the Clarke governance report (2014) had been deliberately blocked. 'The tail had wagged the dog', with the SHA's employee effectively running the organisation administratively, financially and politically, with a complete absence of transparency.

BG suggested deferring this discussion to the next meeting. AT responded that while SHA's governance processes needed further clarification, human rights and the law had been recognised and respected throughout. The SHA had the right to determine its procedures. If CC thinks it right, it can expel someone if there is a two thirds majority to do so. In summing up, ML reminded us that in his appeal, Martin had not denied any of the charges against him; he had never protested his innocence. A ballot vote on expelling Martin Rathfelder was taken and passed, with 20 for, 1 against and 1 abstention - a 90% majority.

### **11 Motion from Kathrin Thomas**

KT's precirculated motion was seconded by CJ. Kathrin spoke of Danny Dorling's work. The Winter of 2017/18 had seen the largest spike in excess deaths (50,000 +) since 1975, with deaths in women and the elderly being particularly high. A similar spike was not seen in other European countries. It's a 'canary in the mine' warning and we need explanations. Though the population is ageing, prolonged cold spells and 'flu epidemics happened, it's clear that the impact of austerity, loss of social support, and falls in income make important contributions. Similar effects are not seen in Sweden or Norway. She would like to see an independent enquiry with cross-sectional input on why life expectancy is flat-lining or falling. Can this matter be raised at a future meeting? MR strongly supported KT's proposal, which was carried unanimously.

### **12 Policy development**

Papers from Tony Beddow and Tony Jewell had been precirculated. Tony Jewell was leading on Public Health; a position paper was forthcoming. A broad base is essential, relating well being, environment, climate change, pollution, housing, and health to public policies.

BF said the National Care Service group will not be supportive of a monolithic structure. CB said that Carol Ackroyd has made some important points about non-public providers in social care.

JL suggested we discuss these policies fully at the beginning of the next meeting. This was agreed. The papers from TB and TJ were accepted.

The Clarke Review team, with TB leading on governance would be reporting in the next few months. TB's role as coordinator of the governance review was agreed.

**13 Vote of thanks**

Maggie Winters, speaking on behalf of the Observers, thanked CC for a very interesting afternoon.

**14 Date of next meeting:**

Cardiff , March 30.