

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Held at Hatfield Place, Hatfield Peverel, Chelmsford
6.30 pm – 7.15 pm Wednesday 24 November 2021**

The Chair of Trustees, Nicholas Alston CBE DL, opened the 25th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Essex Community Foundation (ECF).

Mr Alston advised that Claire Read, a trustee of ECF and its Company Secretary, and a solicitor with Birkett Long, would lead the AGM proceedings.

Ms Read advised that notification and details of resolutions and relevant information had been provided to Members in advance of the meeting in accordance with the Foundation's Articles of Association. No questions had been raised in advance of the meeting. Members who were present were asked to vote by raising the membership card given to them on arrival.

1 Apologies

Ms Read confirmed the meeting was quorate with 27 Members present. In addition, proxy votes had been received from 5 Members. Apologies from the remaining 51 Members were recorded.

2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 12 November 2020

The Chair proposed that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2020 be accepted. Vivienne Depledge seconded. Members voted in favour along with 5 members who voted in favour by proxy. There were no votes against.

3 Chief Executive's Review of the Year

Caroline Taylor presented the Foundation's activities during the year to 30 June 2021. She advised that this was the second of our five-year strategic plan and we have made good progress against our objectives despite the challenging circumstances.

During the year, we paid out £4.5 million of grants to 414 voluntary organisations and 75 individuals. This was a slight decrease on the previous year but brings our overall grantmaking since our inception in 1996 to £42 million. In addition, our flowthrough, or non-invested funds, resulted in £2 million of grants from partners, including Essex County Council, the National Lottery Community Fund, NHS Charities Together, which were monies raised by Captain Sir Tom Moore, the Mulberry Trust and Chelmsford Star Co-op.

Our grantmaking continued to support a wide range of issues and organisations across Essex, with 24% of grants paid during the year helping children and young people projects. Two thirds of those funded had an annual income of less than £150,000. In addition, 44% of our grantmaking supported core cost applications and we increased access for under-represented groups with £173k awarded to ethnic minority organisations. We also progressed our Community Listening Project which will help us to understand what our stakeholders need from us. The continuing Covid-19 restrictions meant that we could not hold our usual receptions and events, so we moved online and held informative sessions, featuring our grant recipients, with our donors and supporters.

We continued to broaden our engagement with new donors and during the year we launched a £250,000 match funding scheme as an incentive to give to local communities through our Acorn Fund. The match will continue into 2022. Eleven new charitable funds were established during the year, bringing the total number of funds under our management to 175. We were grateful to receive a legacy during the year from Gwendy Marrs, who was not known to us, but was a client of Fiona Ashworth at Thompson Smith & Puxon Solicitors.

Ms Taylor advised that we had started work on our understanding of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues and their relevance across all areas of our organisation. This was an important piece of work for us, but it also reflected broader developments across the trust and foundation sector.

Finally, Ms Taylor shared the exciting news that our work had inspired support from a local family who had generously gifted us the use of offices in Chelmsford at a peppercorn rent for the next 25 years. The gift not only provided ECF with a new home but there was also sufficient space for us to broaden the help we give to charities and community groups by offering free office and meeting space. We will move into the new offices in Spring 2022.

Ms Taylor paid tribute to the team for their continued hard work. She gave special thanks to the Foundation's long-serving volunteers, Lorraine Brooks, Andrew Clarke and Barbara Garside, who continue to add significant value to the work of the Grants Team. Also, Mike Richards and Mike Blakey who had both volunteered a significant amount of time during the year supporting Ms Taylor and the trustees with the new property purchase and refurbishment works.

Ms Taylor thanked Whittles Chartered Accountants who provide a pro-bono payroll service and Birkett Long who provide support in all aspects of HR and employment law.

4 Presentation of Accounts

Mr Alston introduced Charles Bishop, Chair of the Finance and Investment Committee, who presented the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 30 June 2021, which had received an unqualified audit report from Haysmacintyre.

In the 12 months to June 2021, Mr Bishop advised that our core portfolio produced a net return of 19.0% which was good in absolute terms and was ahead of the benchmark comparator of ARC Steady Growth which produced a total return of 16.5%. Investec produced a return of +17.2%, CCLA +18.0% and Liontrust, our ethical manager +32.8% (all net of fees). Over a three-year period, our core portfolio returned 22.81% (7.6% pa).

Mr Bishop said there was a strong recovery in equity markets from the lows of 2020, as economies reopened, and investors focussed on longer term outlook for earnings. Bonds fell as fears of inflation grew. Since the year-end inflationary concerns have strengthened. Having enjoyed unprecedented monetary support from central banks and governments there was recognition that, whilst policy adjustments were not imminent there is less justification for exceptional monetary policies.

Mr Bishop added that the ability of good quality companies to continue to generate strong returns, and to generate income and compound positive real returns in our balanced portfolio remains true. We needed to be fully invested in equities worldwide, which although more volatile in nature, is the right investment philosophy for us over the next year.

Mr Bishop advised that the trustees had agreed to maintain a grant distribution rate of 6% this year across the endowed funds reflecting the continued need for financial support within the voluntary sector.

Mr Bishop advised that along with the ESG task group the Finance and Investment Committee had examined what it would mean to us and our stakeholders if we were to move further along the ESG route in terms of investment. He said that the trustees believe we are reasonably well positioned, and we are talking to our investment managers about how we can develop our approach.

Mr Bishop thanked the Finance and Investment Committee for their support, in particular Peter Martin who was retiring from the board and our co-opted advisor, Rae Brooks, for their contributions during the year. Two new trustees, Gail Cunningham and Ben Minter, had joined the committee during the year. Both bring extremely relevant and specialised knowledge of investment (particularly sustainable investment) and charitable foundations.

Along with Russell Edey, who chairs the Audit & Risk Committee, Mr Bishop thanked the auditors for undertaking a thorough and professional audit. He thanked Catherine Burton and Tracy Hardy, the ECF finance team, for their diligence and accuracy in administering the Foundation's finances and preparing the accounts.

There being no questions, Ms Read thanked Mr Bishop for his report and asked members to receive and adopt the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period to 30 June 2021. Robert Erith proposed. Nikki Schuster on behalf of Renew Counselling seconded. Members voted in favour along with 5 members who voted in favour by proxy. There were no votes against.

5 Election of Trustees

Ms Read advised that under the terms of ECF's Memorandum and Articles of Association, directors or trustees are elected to hold office for four years and can be re-elected for two consecutive terms of two years. She advised that two trustees, Peter Martin and Rosemary Turner, were retiring from the Board having each completed a full term of eight years. In addition, three trustees, Gemma Cartwright, Gail Cunningham and Ben Minter were putting themselves forward for election for the first term of four years, having each served one year already.

Ms Read asked that Gemma Cartwright be elected for a first term of four years. Rosemary Turner proposed. Rhiannedd Pratley seconded. Members voted in favour along with 5 members who voted in favour by proxy. There were no votes against.

Ms Read asked that Gail Cunningham be elected for a first term of four years. Rhiannedd Pratley proposed. John Burrow seconded. Members voted in favour along with 5 members who voted in favour by proxy. There were no votes against.

Ms Read asked that Ben Minter be elected for a first term of four years. John Aldridge proposed. Fiona Ashworth seconded. Members voted in favour along with 5 members who voted in favour by proxy. There were no votes against.

Mr Alston added on behalf of the Board, sincere thanks to Rosemary Turner whose support and business experience had been of enormous value. As Chair of our Fund Development Committee, she had helped us to develop new ideas that would ensure the Foundation continued to inspire new people to give and get involved. The Foundation had also greatly benefited from the business knowledge and accountancy experience of Peter Martin, Mr Alston thanked him for his expertise and contribution as part of our Finance and Investment Committee and our Audit Committee.

6 Adoption of Articles

Ms Read advised that alterations to the Articles followed the recognised precedent that many charities use, and the updates did not make sweeping changes to the operation of the charity, but rather brought them up to date. Ms Read thanked Tim Field from Birkett Long for his support in updating the Articles. As there were a number of changes, a new set of Articles was presented to Members. Jonny Minter Proposed. Sandra Hollis seconded. Members voted in favour along with 5 Members who voted in favour by proxy. There were no votes against.

A copy of the new Articles of Association would be available through the Charity Commission, on request from the office and on the Foundation's website in due course.

7 Appointment of Auditors

Ms Read advised that Haysmacintyre were being put forward for re-appointment as ECF's auditors. She proposed that members appoint Haysmacintyre as the Foundation's auditors for 2021/22. Russell Edey seconded. Members voted in favour along with 5 members who also voted in favour by proxy. There were no votes against.

Ms Read confirmed the appointment of Haysmacintyre as ECF's auditors for the forthcoming year.

8 Any Other Business

Mr Alston thanked ECF's donors' and supporters, the staff and fellow Board members for their collective and individual commitment to ECF.

There being no other business, Mr Alston formally closed the Annual General Meeting.