

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Held at Hatfield Place, Hatfield Peverel, Chelmsford
6.30 pm – 7.30 pm Wednesday 20 November 2024**

The Chair of Trustees, Nicholas Alston CBE DL, opened the 28th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Essex Community Foundation (ECF).

He referred to our second Charity Symposium held earlier in the day and advised that over the past 12 months we had taken important steps to expand and strengthen our work in the development of the new 2030 Strategy.

During his introduction, he paid tribute to Jo Wells who was retiring as a trustee after seven years. He said she had brought both true passion for social justice and her extensive grantmaking experience to the Board and had significantly advanced our work. She had contributed to our new 2030 strategy, our responsible investment policy and grantmaking policy, along with our community listening work which she had been instrumental in developing.

Mr Alston advised that Tim Field, ECF trustee and Company Secretary, and a solicitor with Birkett Long, would lead the AGM proceedings.

Mr Field 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

Mr Field confirmed the meeting was quorate proxy votes had been received from **7** Members. Apologies from the remaining **29** Members were recorded.

2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 23 November 2023

Mr Alston proposed that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023 be accepted. Members voted in favour along with 7 members who voted in favour by proxy.

3 Chief Executive's Review of the Year

Caroline Taylor presented the Foundation's activities during the year to 30 June 2024.

She advised that 2024 marked the conclusion of our five-year strategy and she highlighted some of our achievements during that time. These included, awarding nearly £21m in grants, revising our grantmaking policy and introducing improvements to our application process, publishing three Community Listening Reports and securing £9.2m in new donations to endowed funds, as well as managing £11.5m in annual funding programmes in partnership with other funders and public agencies.

In addition, we launched our Fundbuilder initiative, giving new generations of donors an accessible way to start their philanthropic journey in line with their financial means. We also took further steps to diversify the Board of Trustees.

In the past 12 months, we awarded over £3.3m in grants with 36% going to small organisations with annual incomes of less than £100,000, and 60% of our grants supported core costs. While most of our grants are given annually, we increased those given over several years by 25%, totalling nearly £500,000.

Ms Taylor advised that 15 new charitable funds had been established during the year, including the Ron and Elsie Odden Fund and the Basildon Crown Court Seized Assets Distribution Fund.

Our regular networking events with professional advisors remain a cornerstone of our donor engagement strategy. Sponsored by local firms, these events provide an excellent platform to showcase how the Foundation can support their clients' charitable interests. In addition, we commissioned an independent donor research report to understand the preferences of our existing supporters and identify effective ways to engage new donors.

Moving to operations, Ms Taylor advised the Foundation had successfully achieved Cyber Essentials certification to enhance our data security. We also implemented a new CRM system which is enabling us to transform how we manage data and streamline our processes.

The use of our free Foundation Hub space has increased this year, with over 3,000 hours of use or 480 days by 130 registered users. This has been a great way for us to extend our support.

Turning to the team, Ms Taylor advised that Catherine Burton was promoted to Director of Finance & Resources and Andy Payne Worpole to Director of Policy & Programmes. At the end of the year, we had 15 employees. Our volunteers remain at the heart of our work, contributing 1,069 hours this year and Ms Taylor made special mention of Andrew Clarke who has served the Foundation for an incredible 24 years.

Finally, Ms Taylor extended her thanks to all those present for their continued interest and involvement in the Foundation.

4 Presentation of Accounts

Mr Alston advised that Charles Bishop, Chair of the Finance and Investment Committee (FIC), was unable to attend the meeting. He introduced Stewart Sanderson, a trustee and member of FIC to present the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year to 30 June 2024, which had received an unqualified audit report from HaysMac LLP (formerly HaysMacIntyre).

Mr Sanderson started by reading a note of thanks from Mr Bishop to the Finance and Investment Committee trustees for their contribution during the year. He thanked the ECF Finance team, Catherine Burton and Tracy Hardy, who have continued to develop our finance operations and had once again ensured a smooth audit process, he also thanked HaysMac LLP.

Mr Sanderson said he was pleased to report total income of £4.9m and total expenditure of £4.6m, including grants recognised in the SOFA of £3.3m. The market value of all endowed funds at 30 June 2024 totalled around £51m.

He explained that while matters had progressed relating to the expected legacy valued at around £7m, this had been delayed due to queries with US tax authorities and was ongoing.

During the year, Trustees approved the transfer of £47k from the Acorn Fund to offset the annual operating deficit and maintain unrestricted reserves at the current level, being six months of operating costs.

Mr Sanderson advised that investment performance had been influenced by interest rate cuts, growth and AI, all creating significant tailwinds for markets. Our core portfolio benefited from these tailwinds and produced a return of 12.1% after all fees, outperforming our chosen benchmark of ARC Steady Growth (Asset Risk Consultants Private Client Indices) which produced a total return of 11.0%.

At a manager level, Investec, who are now part of Rathbones, produced a return of 14.3% after costs and CCLA 12.4%. Long-term performance, which is key, remains strong, with a ten-year average performance net of all costs approaching 7%.

During the year, the Board of Trustees undertook a review of our investment approach and created a new Investment Policy. This prioritises long-term financial returns, ethical investments and climate sustainability, while balancing risk.

Mr Sanderson referred to the Foundation's aim to preserve the nominal value of endowed funds, this being the relationship between the market value of our funds and their original donation value. In recent years, where the Foundation had deliberately set a grant distribution rate greater than investment returns, so as to respond to increased demands from local charities due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, the nominal value of funds had decreased. To help, the Board agreed to a new policy which sets a minimum grant rate of 4% which will be used until our investment values are back to nominal value. These are currently at 97%.

Mr Sanderson asked if there were any questions. Mr Spence asked how the Foundation would respond to receiving a large legacy where the purpose may be clear, but the timeframe for distribution was not, and how the Trustees would decide to manage such a legacy. Mr Sanderson responded by saying that the Trustees regularly had conversations about how to balance preserving the nominal value of a fund while ensuring it could have an impact. If such a legacy was received, the Trustees would debate the wishes of the donor and discuss how best to use the legacy to achieve their charitable ambitions. This may include a combination of investment and immediate grantmaking.

There being no further questions, Mr Field thanked Mr Sanderson for his report and asked members to receive and adopt the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the period to 30 June 2024. Members voted in favour along with 7 members who voted in favour by proxy.

5 Election of Trustees

Mr Field advised that under the terms of ECF's Articles of Association, directors or trustees are elected to hold office for four years, the first term. They can be re-elected for two further consecutive terms of two years. He advised that one trustee was retiring from the Board.

One trustee, Charles Bishop, was putting himself forward for a final term of two years. Three trustees, Gemma Cartwright, Gail Cunningham and Ben Minter, were putting themselves forward for re-election for a second term of two years.

Mr Field asked that **Charles Bishop** be re-elected for a final term of two years. One member abstained from voting, the remainder of those members present voted in favour along with 7 members who voted in favour by proxy. **Charles Bishop** was and therefore is re-elected for a final term of two years

Mr Field asked that **Gemma Cartwright** be re-elected for a second term. Those members present voted in favour along with 7 members who voted in favour by proxy. **Gemma Cartwright** was and therefore is re-elected for a second term of two years.

Mr Field asked that **Gail Cunningham** be re-elected for a second term. Those members present voted in favour along with 7 members who voted in favour by proxy. **Gail Cunningham** was and therefore is re-elected for a second term of two years.

Mr Field asked that **Ben Minter** be re-elected for a second term. Those members present voted in favour along with 7 members who voted in favour by proxy. **Ben Minter** was and therefore is re-elected for a second term of two years.

In addition, Stewart Sanderson, who was appointed during the year by Resolution of the Directors, was being put forward for approval by Members for a first term of four years, along with along with Graham Chapman KC and David Guest.

Mr Field asked that **Stewart Sanderson** be elected for the first term of four years. Those members present voted in favour along with 7 members who voted in favour by proxy. **Stewart Sanderson** was and therefore is elected for a first term of four years

Mr Field asked that **Graham Chapman KC** be elected for the first term of four years. Those members present voted in favour along with 7 members who voted in favour by proxy. **Graham Chapman KC** was and therefore is elected for a first term of four years.

Mr Field asked that **David Guest** be elected for the first term of four years. Those members present voted in favour along with 7 members who voted in favour by proxy. **David Guest** was and therefore is elected for a first term of four years.

6 Appointment of Auditors

Mr Field advised that HaysMac LLP (formerly Haysmacintyre) were being put forward for re-appointment as ECF's auditors. He proposed that members appoint HaysMac LLP as the Foundation's auditors for 2024/25. Those members present voted in favour along with 7 members who also voted in favour by proxy.

Mr Field confirmed the appointment of HaysMac LLP (formerly 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.