



**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Vetlife
held on 13 July 2016 at 15:30 at UBS, London EC2**

PRESENT:

There were 15 Vetlife members present.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from 7 Vetlife members.

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 15 July 2015

The approval of the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 15 July 2015 was proposed by Nick Coulson and seconded by Graham Dick and unanimously agreed. The Minutes were duly signed as a correct record.

The Chair then addressed the meeting:

Today David Cameron and I have something in common. David Cameron moved into Downing Street 6 years ago and it is 6 years since I was appointed on to the Board of Vetlife. Today David Cameron and I leave our respective positions.

Over the last week or so, when preparing my report for today, I have been reflecting on those 6 years and, at the same time, thinking about what lies in the future for our charity.

On joining the Board I was delegated to join the Finance Committee. Although at that time I had been associated with Vetlife for 10+ years I was given the opportunity to learn more about how Vetlife managed its budget and I also learned about the efficient way in which Investment Bankers managed our investment fund. I would like to thank UBS for working on our behalf, especially at times of financial crises and I would also thank them for their hospitality, both in providing a venue for meetings during my time as President and for the lunch the Board have enjoyed earlier today.

How did I come to be delivering this AGM Speech today?

In my third year on the Board, and with Mike Rutter planning the end of his terms as Honorary Secretary, I was asked if I would consider taking on that role. I accepted, spent time shadowing Mike and then in July 2013 I was officially elected as Honorary Secretary and joined the Executive Team. Since that time I have, on a number of occasions, described my work as 'challenging'.

In July 2014 Lydia Brown ended her term as President and I was nominated and elected into the Presidential Role.

If I can now look back to 2010 and specifically to one day in October that year, my first meeting as a member of the Board, when a 'Strategy Meeting' was convened. That meeting was planned to look ahead over the next 5 years and was facilitated by Geoff Little (using his communication skills).

I remember that the outcomes of that meeting included three very relevant objectives:

- i. To have greater outreach and publicise the work of Vetlife*
- ii. To consider changing the 'image' of the charity and setting out the message that the 3 arms of our organisation were owned by the same body – financial support, health support and a helpline. (When the website was established in 2011 – 2012 there was a fourth arm to consider).*
- iii. To seek to remove the stigma of talking about mental health within the profession, having more openness about the issues that students, veterinary surgeons and nurses faced, issues that VBF could / would support.*

Today, as I leave the Board of Vetlife, having chosen not to stand for re-election, I can see that the objectives set out in 2010 have been achieved, it has been a privilege to have been associated with the charity whilst work was done to achieve the goals that were set.

There have been some sad times for me during my six years on the Board. The deaths of two colleagues on the Executive, whilst they were in office, Bob Young whilst Treasurer and David Bee, whilst Honorary Secretary, impacted massively. David was someone who I had known for many years as a friend and fellow volunteer on the Helpline Team and then we joined the Vetlife Board in 2010. It was David who had a vision to take us forward into the next decade (and beyond), albeit with some controversy when that vision included dissolving Vetlife Council.

a) 'Greater Outreach & Publicity'

Along with other Board Members I have been able to meet so many members of the veterinary community to explain what we do and how we do it. Our presence at BVA Congresses / London Vet Shows / BSAVA Congresses / SPVS Conferences and Final Year Student Seminars, along with attending all the VDS Graduate Reunions over the last four years have been invaluable to us in disseminating our message. I would like to thank all the organisations who have invited us to their conferences and meeting, providing time for us to talk and space to put out our banners and leaflets.

b) 'The Image of Vetlife'

The removal of the Victorian 'Benevolent' name happened, and in November 2015, at the London Vet Show, Vetlife was officially 'born', our new working title. It was sad that David Bee was not there to be able to see how the seeds that he had helped to sow finally flowered.

c) The Stigma of Mental Health

There is no doubt that the problems that the veterinary community face in its day to day life are now openly discussed.

At virtually every veterinary conference there are papers presented on aspects of 'well-being'. The incidence of suicide within the profession has been highlighted in the national press and possibly as a result of the publicity given to the support that Vetlife can provide, the calls to our Helpline (telephone & email) have increased year on year.

Additional Helpers have been recruited and trained to work as listeners on the Helpline (note the Telephone Helpline was established in 1992 with the email service added in April 2013).

The Health Support Service has also, of course, been subjected to additional demands. In 1999, when VSHSP was established, it was there to assist veterinary surgeons with addictive problems, interesting to note that RCVS and BVA were the driving forces in 1999 in establishing the service. Now, of course, the focus of the service is to provide more and more on cases of 'general mental health' reported by veterinary surgeons, veterinary students and veterinary nurses.

We know that in the last two years RCVS and VDS have provided additional funding to Vetlife to 'expand' the Health Support Service, a service that our current national Co-Ordinator, Rory O'Connor has managed since 2008. Today, Vetlife Board have considered a review to decide how the service will be managed in the future.

As I leave the Executive I am aware that over the last 10 months the Board has faced some difficult times, and I am also aware that I am leaving the new Board and New Executive to deal with 'issues pending:

- Finalising and rolling out the 'new' Health Support Programme, I hope that the new programme can provide the quality of service that has been in place for many years.*
- Putting into place a robust training programme and auditing process for Area Representatives, Helpline Helpers and Board Members*
- Appointing, as they see appropriate, a new Patron to replace Lord Soulsby, the Patron who, for so many years, has been our figurehead*
- Complete the rebranding of Vetlife through the roll out of the 'new website'.*
- Relocate office premises when BVA leaves its current headquarters in Mansfield Street*

Life will not be easy nor straightforward for the new Board. I would like to remind everyone that Board members, Area Representatives, Helpline Helpers and others who from time to time act as ambassadors for our Charity do so as volunteers, giving their time freely, those people giving that time must do so and be able to 'enjoy' the work they do.

I repeat again that it has been a privilege to have been on Vetlife Board and be part of the evolution of VBF to Vetlife. I have heard first hand from many people to know that our organisation is really respected for the work it does.

Whilst I have referred to the volunteers within our organisation we do rely on the permanent paid staff in our office to manage the day to day activities for us, thank you Vanessa Kearns, Sabrina Singh & Derek Thorpe. I also want to add thanks to Rory O'Connor and Douglas Fowlie for the work they have done for the Health Support Programme.

I am not the only Board Member leaving today. Emily Folwell, Joanna Dyer & Nick Coulson have resigned, I acknowledge and thank them for the time they have given to Vetlife.

I know that Vetlife will continue to provide 'Support for the Veterinary Community', our strapline, and we must continue to emphasise the role as a charity that is independent, an organisation that has so much depth of knowledge and experience about the needs of that community.

3. Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2015

The adoption of the Annual Report and Accounts for 2015 was proposed by Bill Mavir, seconded by Jade Statt and unanimously agreed.

4. Election of 6 Members of the Fund to serve on the Board of Directors

The Chair announced that the 6 Directors that had been elected by the Members of the Fund were Hazel Bentall, Magda Jaszczak, Richard Killen, Ewan McNeill, Katie Moore and Mary Thomson.

5. Appointment of Auditors and authorisation of Board of Directors to determine their remuneration

The re-appointment of Buzzacott LLP was unanimously agreed. The Board of Directors was authorised to determine the Auditors' remuneration.

6. Any General Business

John Moffitt

On behalf of the Board, Bill Mavir thanked John Moffitt for his hard work for Vetlife over many years and in particular during his time as President.

There being no further business, the President thanked all those present for attending and declared the meeting closed.