COMMUNITY ACTION DACORUM

(DACORUM COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE)

MINUTES of the 42nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the CHARITY
held on 2nd December 2025
South Hill Centre, Cemetery Hill, Hemel Hempstead

1. To record those present:

Chairman	Colin Gage
Vice Chairmen	Margaret Griffiths,
Hon. Treasurer	James Lowe
Directors	Chris Dove, Peter Ashman,
Chief Executive	Simon Aulton
Company Secretary	Helen Mutio
Member Organisations	There were 23 member organisations represented.
Others	There were 34 attendees in total representing a wide spectrum of the community and Cllr Cathy McArevey, Mayor of Dacorum, members of staff and volunteers.

2. To receive apologies for absence:

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the 42nd Annual General Meeting and passed the Chair to Cllr Cathy McArevey, Mayor of Dacorum.

There were 19 apologies for absence including Doug Root, David Taylor MP, Gagan Mahindra MP, Cllr Sally Symington, Cllr Terry Douris, Cllr Julie Banks, Cllr Alex Bhinder, Cllr Brenda Link and Trish Dowden

3. **To approve the minutes of the 40th Annual General Meeting of the Company:**

The minutes of the 41st Annual General Meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

4. To receive the Chairman's address:

The Chairman reported that Community Action Dacorum's 2025 has been marked by significant progress, with continued growth across the themes of Communities, Employability and Wellbeing, alongside the development of new initiatives that strengthen our position as a respected leader in the voluntary sector. Despite the wider economic challenges, the organisation has delivered another strong financial outcome, demonstrating resilience and sound management. These achievements

reflect the commitment and creativity of our staff, volunteers and trustees, whose contributions remain central to our success.

Reflecting on the past seven years as Chair, he said this period has brought substantial achievement despite considerable external pressures, from Brexit to the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. The organisation has professionalised, expanded, and become more widely recognised — highlights include receiving the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, establishing HITS as a commercially run trading subsidiary, replacing EU funding with alternative income, and supporting the national vaccination effort. Improvements in HR practices, governance and trustee recruitment have further strengthened the charity's capacity and long-term sustainability.

In stepping down as Chair and proposing Peter Ashman as his successor, Mr Gage said we remain mindful of future challenges, including local government reorganisation and ongoing financial uncertainties. However, with strong leadership in place, new trustees joining, and clear plans for the future, he is confident that Community Action Dacorum is well positioned for continued growth, stability and impact in the years ahead.

5. **To receive the Directors Financial Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025.**
In presenting the audited accounts, the Hon. Treasurer, James Lowe, advised that his report will provide a high-level overview of Community Action Dacorum's financial position and activities over the past year.

Mr Lowe reported that the financial year 2024/25 delivered another period of strong performance for the Charity, with reserves continuing to grow and designated funds set aside both for future development and to protect against emerging risks. Despite the broader economic uncertainty — including persistent inflation, rising National Insurance costs, and ongoing reductions in local authority expenditure — the organisation has maintained a stable financial footing. The potential impact of local government reorganisation remains unclear, but preparation and monitoring are already in place to mitigate any consequences.

Overall, the Charity remains in a robust financial position. Our General Reserve is comfortably above the minimum policy requirement, and additional funds have been allocated to cover foreseeable risks. This strong reserve base has enabled the launch of several improvement projects, ensuring that the organisation can continue to invest in its services even as local government finances come under increasing pressure. The financial resilience demonstrated this year provides confidence in our ability to navigate uncertain conditions while sustaining our mission and impact.

Cllr Richard Roberts proposed that the Directors Annual Financial Report and Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2025 be approved, seconded by Margaret Griffiths and it was unanimously resolved by all present that the report and accounts should be accepted.

6. **To Receive the Chief Executives Report:**
The Chief Executive, Simon Aulton presented his report and showcased Community Action Dacorum's achievements in addressing community needs.

He reflected that 2025 was a year of significant growth and impact for Community Action Dacorum, with achievements across funding, employability, digital inclusion, wellbeing and community support. Working with Dacorum Borough Council, we distributed £200,000 of UKSPF funding to charities across the borough, strengthening local organisations and community pride, with a further £50,000 to follow. Our employability work remained strong, including the development of the Future Ready programme supporting young carers, and our countywide audit with the ICB, which is shaping Hertfordshire's approach to health-related employment support. Alongside this, our Staying Connected programme helped over 1,500 residents become digitally confident while reducing e-waste, directly supporting the NHS's shift toward digital healthcare.

Our wellbeing services also expanded, contributing to key strands of the Hertfordshire Health Creation Strategy and the NHS 10-year plan. The Library of Things, launched at ShopMobility, is helping residents save money, reduce waste and improve their homes. DayTrippers continued to thrive, combating loneliness through accessible trips that now sell out within a day, while Radio Dacorum grew its reach on DAB and online, offering a unique local voice and supporting health initiatives like Music for Memory. Our Sheds celebrated 10 years, supported in part by Tring Brewery's year-long fundraising. Across all areas, the training and ESOL teams played a vital role in helping vulnerable residents integrate, build skills and access employment — supported by another record year for HITS and the introduction of Boostlingo, offering instant translation in 386 languages.

Looking ahead, the NHS 10-year plan and forthcoming local government changes present major opportunities for the organisation to expand its community role. Our services already deliver on key national and local priorities, from prevention-based support to digital inclusion, healthy ageing and community cohesion. Positioning the charity to support residents across the new unitary authority will be essential to extending our impact and enabling more people and organisations to benefit from our work.

Finally, Dr Aulton expressed his thanks to three longstanding colleagues whose contributions have shaped the charity's strength today. Chris Dove played a pivotal role in stabilising finances, reshaping HITS and building reserves; Doug Root provided expert HR guidance, championed the Repair Sheds and helped professionalise staff management; and outgoing Chair Colin Gage guided the organisation through transformative challenges — from the pandemic to achieving the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service — offering steadfast leadership and friendship throughout. Their influence has left a lasting legacy on Community Action Dacorum's success and future trajectory.

He concluded by thanking volunteers and staff for their contribution to another busy and successful year.

7. **<u>To Elect Directors as both individual members and trustees of the Executive Committee</u>:**
   The following individuals were nominated as members and trustees:
   - Graeme Elliot
   - Liz Green
   - Louise Towler
   - Audrey Weightman

   The following Directors are stepping down and eligible for re-election

   - Colin Gage
   - Peter Ashman
   - Richard Roberts
   - Sally Symington

- William Allen

Nominations proposed en bloc by Margaret Griffiths and seconded by Helen Young. The elections were unanimously passed by the membership.

The meeting accepted the resignation of Mr Chris Dove, Mr Doug Root and Mr Richard Milnes and thanked them for their long and dedicated service.

8. **To note the Honorary Officers to be appointed/re-appointed after the AGM**
   Peter Ashman – Chairman
   Margaret Griffiths – Vice Chairman
   Rchard Roberts – Vice Chairman
   James Lowe – Hon Treasurer

9. **<u>To Appoint the Auditors</u>:**
   It was proposed that Mercer Hole be reappointed as the Auditors for the year 2025/2026. This was proposed by James Lowe and seconded by Colin Gage, it was unanimously accepted. Thanks were given to Moore Kingston Smith for their professionalism, diligence, and valuable service over the years.

10. **<u>To consider any other business</u>:**
    No other business had been notified before the meeting. In closing the Chairman thanked everyone for attending.