

Charities Information Day October 2016 - Escrick

Despite it being dull and overcast, on the morning of 13th October 2016 105 people found their way to The Parsonage Hotel at Escrick, York for the 18th Annual Charities Information Day. This was a special meeting as the Provincial Grand Charity was for the first time holding its AGM away from the Annual Provincial Grand Lodge Meeting. The delegates were mainly Almoners (41) and Charity Stewards (33) together with Charity Trustees, speakers and members of the Charity.

The meeting was opened with a short presentation by Nigel Weightman, Chairman of The Provincial Grand Charity. This was followed by words of welcome from the President, RW Bro Jeffrey Gillyon, our Provincial Grand Master, who presided over the event.

Charity AGM

After the usual business of confirming the Non-Masonic Grants, electing members to serve on the Charity's Standing Committee and appointing the Auditors, there was a presentation from Nigel Weightman about the proposal to convert PGC to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Nigel was supported in his presentation by Dr Gareth Morgan, a retired professor of charity law from Sheffield Hallam University and an expert in the procedures involved in the conversion process.

The existing charity was established in 1986 and has operated well for 30 years. However it has become obvious that some issues needed attention for which the Charity has no procedures. After considerable discussion, the Charity Trustees and Standing Committee members agreed that conversion to a CIO was the way forward and a Working Group was formed to investigate the matter. The Group carried out a detailed review and confirmed the view that conversion of PGC to a CIO was the way forward. After an excellent presentation and a lively discussion, the brethren passed 2 resolutions, one agreeing to the conversion of PGC to a CIO and the second to ask the members at the Annual Provincial Grand Lodge Meeting in May 2017 to transfer the PGC assets to the new CIO and dissolve PGC. Arrangements will be put in hand to progress these resolutions. These are major changes and will provide the Provincial Charity, to be named 'Freemasons Charity of Yorkshire North & East Riding CIO' with a framework that is suitable for the 21st Century.

Festival 2018

The next speaker was Denis Stublely, Chairman of the Festival 2018 Committee, who gave an update on the Festival's finances. So far £1,281k had been raised - £1,132k in the bank and another £149k in pledges. To achieve the target, another £319,000 needs to be raised over the next 1 ½ years, equivalent to £3,200 per lodge. Denis then introduced Bro Bob Stannard of Victory Lodge, whose wife had been a recipient of an MSF Grant to cover the cost of knee replacements which were not available in the foreseeable future on the NHS. It was an interesting interview that could not fail to impress upon the brethren the importance of assisting our brethren in need. He concluded by urging all brethren to continue their support of Festival 2018 to enable MSF to continue its important work.

Denis then introduced Dr Simon Fellerman, a retired GP and Freemason from West Riding Province who was also involved with the MSF Review Panel. He is also well versed in the workings of the new Masonic Charitable Foundation. Simon gave a superb presentation on the work of the MSF and described the way in which the Masonic Charitable Foundation has assumed responsibility of the 4 Central Charities.

Presentations

Jan Garrill from The Two Ridings Community Foundation gave a talk on 'Surviving Winter' and referred to the initiative whereby individuals donate their 'winter fuel allowance' to help those less fortunate than themselves to keep warm in winter.

Stan Hardy is a Committee Member of the Duke of York's Community Initiative, which recognises those in the Yorkshire community who carry out work to help others. Stan gave a comprehensive talk about the Duke's initiative and asked for nominations for future awards.

Chris Riley from Anchor Lodge then gave a presentation about Dementia Support in the Province. This is a condition that eventually affects up to 1 in 14 individuals over 65 years.

David Burnett, from Old Bridlingtonian Lodge, followed his success last year with a talk on 'Wills' with another excellent presentation about 'Going into Residential Care'. Using his previous experience as a solicitor, David highlighted a number of issues that need to be addressed before considering residential care.

The closing remarks were made by Nigel Weightman and RWPGM Jeffrey Gillyon. They both hoped that the day had been worthwhile for the delegates and that the presentations were useful and relevant to the very important work that they do as lodge/chapter Almoners and Charity Stewards.

Denis Kelly 24th October 2016