

# GREATER MANCHESTER SKEPTICS SOCIETY

Annual General Meeting  
Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2014, 6:30pm  
**Minutes**

Minutes by: Caroline Meek and Malcolm Chambers

## **Agenda:**

1. Apologies
2. Adoption of draft constitution
3. Election of committee members
4. Treasurers report
5. Website plus social media
6. The Unbelievers screening
7. Suggested speakers
8. Other suggested events
9. AOB

## **Attendees:**

- Caroline Meek
- Roy Koifa
- Paul Fitzgerald
- Robert McAtimer
- Victoria Stiles
- Tom Bourne
- Malcolm Chambers
- Geoff Whelan
- Andrew Taylor
- Anup Bavooah
- Rick Owen
- Andrew Bowers
- Adam Brown
- Trevor Wongsam

## **1) Apologies**

- Stephanie Gibson

## **2) Adoption of draft constitution**

Geoff Whelan had produced and distributed a draft constitution before this meeting. The draft constitution has relevant parts from various other constitutions and Merseyside Skeptics.

Geoff Whelan looked into structure of group (eg Merseyside are a limited company with directors etc.).

This draft constitution is in the form of a community-group-type-constitution.

Geoff Whelan asked if anyone finds anything in the draft constitution unworkable.

Suggested constitution alterations were discussed:

- Replace 'offices' with 'committee' (for purposes of ejecting disruptive members). (Discussions established 'officers' and 'committee' were synonymous and only one term should be used to avoid confusion.)
- Vicky Stiles asked about harassment policy – comes under offensive behaviour, or could add to **section 3.2**.
- Questions regarding inclusion of 'religious beliefs' and offense/offensive behaviour.
- **4.2** Paul Fitzgerald asked to drop 'inflammatory', add 'bullying'.
- **2.1.7** add 'support and encourage freedom of speech'.
- **5.** The distinction between Outreach officer and Publicity officer roles was discussed.
- Paul Fitzgerald suggested creating a Nationwide account for ethical reasons.
- Officers' positions (roles and titles) agreed.
- **6.** Questions on quorum, Geoff explained why we have the 'lesser of 10 members or 10% of group' phrase for AGM.
- **6.** Concern about whether there should be a minimum attendance requirement for members voting in AGM, not just committee.
- **7.** Definition of 'related' was discussed (cousins as family members, sharing a household etc.). Should be amended to 'immediately related'.
- **9.** Change 'charity' to 'nominated organisation'. This would provide more freedom to donated any remaining funds to a group that supports the aims of the society.

**The constitution (as amended) was adopted by the group.**

### 3) Election of committee members

The following members were elected to roles, without opposition.

Position	Member	Nominated By	Seconded By
Chair	Geoff Whelan	Caroline Meek	Vicky Stiles
Vice Chair	Vicky Stiles	Geoff Whelan	Rick Owen
Secretary	Malcolm Chambers	Geoff Whelan	Caroline Meek
Treasurer	Rick Owen	Geoff Whelan	Andrew Taylor
Social Secretary	Vicky Stiles	Geoff Whelan	Malcolm Chambers
Book Group	Steph Gibson	Geoff Whelan	Roy Koifa
Web Manager	Andrew Taylor	Geoff Whelan	Roy Koifa
Outreach	Caroline Meek	Geoff Whelan	Vicky Stiles
Publicity	VACANT	N / A	N / A
Committee Member 1	Paul Fitzgerald	Geoff Whelan	Rick Owen
Committee Member 2	VACANT	N / A	N / A

It was noted that the constitution does not preclude a single member holding multiple committee positions.

Discussions decided that the signatories for the account would be whichever member held the position of:

- Chair
- Vice Chair
- Treasurer

### 4) Treasurers report

Prior to the AGM, Rick Owen had been fulfilling the role of a treasurer for the group. Rick announced that there was **£258.25** in the kitty.

A bank account needs to be set up for the group [**Action: Rick Owen**].

Assets of the group include:

- wireless microphones,
- extension cables,
- batteries.

Useful things to buy might include:

- Laptop,
- Projector,
- Remote control (for presenters to advance slides remotely),
- XLR cables.

Geoff Whelan asked for costs to be estimated for these items [**Action: Rick Owen**].

Rick Owen presented a graph of income to the group for hosting recent presenters.

## **5) Website plus social media**

We have website and meetup etc.

We now have a handover agreed of old website, domain will be transferred

Andrew Taylor – We could get a pre-pay website of Pay As You Go. Andrew Taylor briefly described the various advantages and disadvantages of each.

Geoff Whelan – asked Andrew Taylor to come to the next committee meeting with costings

**[Action: Andrew Taylor]**.

The group should minimise the number of admins (people with login details and control) for each site / social media group.

The existing facebook page should be changed to a 'Group' if possible. 'Group' has benefits of being interactive by members. **[Action: Facebook Admin(s)]**

Webpage, Facebook, Meetup should all be used by GMSS.

Twitter is also being used currently to some extent.

## **6) The Unbelievers screening**

Geoff Whelan arranged a screening of The Unbelievers in the Manchester Conference Centre on 25<sup>th</sup> October at 4:30pm. This will be followed by a questions and answers session with Prof Richard Dawkins and Prof Lawrence Krauss.

280 tickets have been sold at £18 each. Geoff Whelan has retained a few tickets to sell as required on an individual basis.

The venue required £1,200. Profs Dawkins and Krauss will be reimbursed for travel and accommodation etc. Profs Dawkins and Krauss will receive 50% of any nett profit. This event will provide the society with a significant influx of money.

Geoff Whelan asked committee members to arrive to the event early to help set up. A few people volunteered. **[Action: Volunteers]**

The event is an opportunity to promote the GMSS and this was discussed.

Paul Fitzgerald suggested the Manchester Resource Group, in the Northern Quarter. They provide ~300 leaflets for £30 - £40. Geoff Whelan recommended colour (not monotone) leaflets and the group agreed that this was worthwhile for a slightly higher price.

Leaflets could be handed out at The Unbelievers event on 25<sup>th</sup> October.

Paul Fitzgerald will investigate/devise a new logo for review by other members, prior to printing and handing out. **[Action: Paul Fitzgerald]**

Leaflet to include:

- Past speakers
- Skeplit (Book Group)
- Venues and times of upcoming meetings
- Brevity is important for appeal

Purchasing more than 300 leaflets in a bulk order would provide the society with useful merchandise at other events.

## 7) Suggested speakers

Discussions in this area were extensive; the following is a non-exhaustive list of suggested speakers:

- Miles Power.
- Geoff Whelan has been referred to a female cage-fighting Cambridge Mathematician. She might like to do a presentation on the myths of martial arts in December.
- A speaker describing Muslim extremism and anti-extremism.
- A speaker against climate change denial (eg Danny Chivers).
- Genetically modified food was suggested as a topic. Two anti-GM food presenters have been found, but no pro-GM food presenters.
- Dr Ben Goldacre might be a possible speaker once the society has more funds available.
- Mark Tilbrook might like to speak.

The format of events was discussed:

- Debates between various speakers would be a good format.
- A 'lions den' format was discussed. That is, invite a couple of speakers who are all 'for' or all 'against' a particular topic and invite the audience to debate with them in a questions and answers session. The group was divided on whether this would be a good format or might pose problems.
- Geoff Whelan has a contact at Manchester Museum of Science and Technology (MOSI). This would be an impressive and large venue for future events.
- A GMSS field trip to Manchester Science Festival in MOSI. This runs from 23<sup>rd</sup> October to 2<sup>nd</sup> November.
- It was noted that informal events needn't just be pub-based, eg curry nights were suggested.

## 8) AOB

### Podcast

- The GMSS podcast's Resurrection, Name, and Format were discussed.
- Someone has to edit pre-broadcast. Liable is a consideration, and the edited version must be balanced/representative of the actual conversation. Takes ~5 hours to edit conversation into a 45 minute broadcast.
- A themed series of Podcasts might be good.
- Less rigid regularity of broadcast might be easier to achieve (ie no pressure or deadline as such).

- The conversations have a 'shelf-life' of relevance. Therefore there would usually need to be a quick completion time for broadcast.

### **Venue**

- Consider non-TV21/Bar21 venue for speakers events
- Bar 21 has advantages (free, decent size, projector, sound system etc)
- The group is encouraged to use Bar 21 as a benchmark. Suggestions are welcome on ones which have a better benefit:cost ratio. **[Action: Interested Members]**

The group agreed that arranging a Bank Account is high priority. **[Action: Rick Owen]**

End of Meeting