Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

RSPCA Leicestershire, Peterborough and Rutland Branch

24th June 2025

Present: C. Acton (Chair), S. Kinchington (SK, Treasurer), K. Forman (KF, Branch Partnership Manager), P. Clark (PC, Trustee), D. Morrish (DM, Trustee), C. Page (CP, Trustee), M. Mannix (MM, Trustee), E. Peake (EP, CEO), P. Huddleston (PH, Volunteer), J. Ralph (JR, Volunteer), E. Bell, R. Lane, S. Dewick, C. Stephens (former Chief Inspector), R. Lee, R. Phipps (Clerk)

Members present: 8, Volunteers: 2, RSPCA Staff: 2, Guests: 4

The meeting was quorate in terms of number of members present.

1. Opening address and welcome

1.1 The Chair welcomed those present and thanked them for attending. He noted that it was good to see some new faces, noting that in previous years attendance had largely comprised members..

1.2 The Chair advised that the meeting was likely to be shorter than normal as the Branch was not quite ready to present the audited accounts. The Finance Team had been without a Head of Finance for over six months, who had only recently returned from long-term absence.

1.3 The Chair then advised that the members would be invited to an Extraordinary General Meeting by the end of October to present and discuss the accounts.

1.4 The Chair then invited those present to a tour of facilities after the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

2.1 Apologies were noted from member B. Malamah-Thomas and Dave Brown.

3. Approval of minutes of the last AGM

3.1 The Chair advised that a conscious decision was made to not print a glossy AGM booklet this year as the Branch is very aware of the tight financial situation. Printing a booklet professionally runs into thousands of pounds. The vast majority of RSPCA branches send their AGM booklets virtually now, so we have decided to follow suit.

3.2 R. Lane commented that although the booklet had been sent by email, they had been unable to open it. **Action:** members to be given the opportunity to request a printed version for future AGMs.

3.3 The Chair then asked the attendees if there were any issues on the minutes of the last AGM.

3.4 No issues raised.

3.5 The Chair asked for a proposer and a seconder to agree that the minutes were a true reflection of the meeting. Proposed P. Clark, Seconded C. Page.

3.6 No abstentions. The minutes of the last AGM on 26th June 2024 were therefore approved.

4. Matters arising

4.1 There were no matters arising.

5. To receive the accounts for the last financial year

5.1 Not to take place at this meeting but at an EGM before the end of October 2025.

6. Appointment of auditor

6.1 The Chair explained that although the Board were again proposing the appointment of the TC Group as auditors, they reserved the right to propose an alternative at the EGM if service received for the 2025 audit is not to a satisfactory standard.

6.2 The Chair asked members present to vote on the Board recommendation for the TC Group to continue as auditors. Proposed: S. Kinchington. Seconded: C. Page. All members present voted in agreement and TC Group was appointed as auditors for 2025.

7. To receive the committee's report

7.1 The Chair gave an overview of the Trustees' Report. He advised that following the national RSPCA's re-brand, we have matched our branding to theirs but are doing it one step at a time. We discussed how much we wanted to match the national brand, but as we are also currently going through the process of becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), and part of that process means that National expect us to reflect their branding, which they have helped to fund. National RSPCA have reported that the new branding has been driving public engagement.

7.2 The Chair then talked through the report. He noted how the opening of the public vet facility, Barney & Bella, was a real point of pride and a huge achievement. He noted that the rehoming figures had stayed similar to previous years. The Chair acknowledged the big push in increasing the number of volunteers at the Branch and the successful opening of two new charity shops. E. Peake added that the new shops, Blaby and Oadby, both opened with the new branding and new-style shop fittings. A very different look to the existing Branch retail shops. She highlighted how the new vets and opening of new shops are crucial new funding streams for the Branch. Income has not been as strong as in previous years; however, a new Head of Income is due to start in four weeks.

7.3 S. Dewick raised a question about whether the public expect the new vets to be cheaper, like the PDSA. E. Peake explained that that has not been the perception so far. Over 300 clients have registered and only one of them has asked about that. There has been lots of support in the community as people understand that the profit feeds back into helping the animals in the Centre.

7.4 R. Lane questioned whether due diligence had been properly carried out. They had looked at the prospect of making the vets public facing, but the cons outweighed the pros. Can we definitely offer everything that a normal veterinary practice can? There is a lot of publicity about people having animals euthanised as they can't afford the vets bills, won't they be expecting us to do things cheaper. What about the impact on the animals in our Centre. R. Lee explained that Barney and Bella is operating separately under a Trading Company. Everything went through the National RSPCA vet team as part of the approval process. Locally, a new independent vet practice is much needed. This is a huge opportunity and not to be feared. EP added that we have two vet teams, one for the Centre animals and one for Barney and Bella, so the care of our animals won't be compromised. R. Lee added that H. Warren is a very competent Clinical Lead.

7.5 R. Lane explained that she was worried we could get more animals dumped on us due to the national news, which would put extra pressure on the vet team. E. Peake thanked R. Lane for highlighting the issue.

7.6 The Chair highlighted the success of volunteer recruitment, acknowledging that there can be scepticism from staff about the power of volunteers, but we certainly wouldn't get as much done without them — for example, the opening of Barney & Bella. He also explained that we have to find better ways to raise funds. If we don't change and look to the future then the situation will be dire. So the opening of the vet centre as an additional income stream is really positive.

7.7 R. Lane commented that the Branch shouldn't underestimate the power of local fundraising. Not running any events will have an effect. We need to harness the power of the volunteers. When visitors come on-site for events, we can hang on to them. Some people have changed their wills as a result of the changes at Woodside. R. Lee explained that we could no longer rely on legacy as an income, it should be seen as 'nice to have'.

7.8 The Chair advised that there would be a bigger focus on the lifecycle of adoptees. The branches that are doing the best are those that have other income streams, e.g. digital fundraising. EP added that we will be growing our focus, especially out in Peterborough and Rutland, so that we are more visible in the community. The Chair added that as a branch we have over 200 members, and yet this is the turnout today.

7.9 R. Lane asked whether we would still be having an Open Day. EP advised that we are looking to schedule one in. CA stated that we would be focusing a lot more on partnerships. S. Dewick explained how she used to do that, at schools and community groups, taking her dog along. She stated how no-one had asked her to do that for many years. E. Peake advised that she wasn't aware that S. Dewick did that.

7.10 The Chair then moved onto the facilities, explaining that the cattery is the next project on the list for funding. EP added that we have been undertaking some general tidying up of the centre, but the cattery was the next big project.

7.11 The Chair then moved onto the Rehoming statistics, acknowledging the effort of the employees and volunteers. R. Lane commented that it all looked good, but questioned how it compares to previous years. CA acknowledged that there is a bit of a drop. EP advised that the Centre experienced an outbreak of parvovirus for two months. This meant the Centre was closed to the public which had a huge impact on the numbers. R. Lane commented that there was no mention of returns. R. Lane asked whether some animals were being returned to the Centre. **Action:** Add returns into next year's figures. M. Mannix added that it would also be good to see the training hours/days of the university students on the report. **Action:** Add student training figures into next year's report. CA advised that one of the new vets in

Barney and Bella was actually a trainee that came through the student training with us.

7.12 The Chair commented that we could do an overview like this again at next year's AGM and asked if there were any other comments or feedback on the Annual Report. No further comments or questions.

7.13 CA invited the members of the branch to receive the report. Proposed: C. Page, Seconded: S. Kinchington.

8. Committee Election

8.1 K. Forman led this part of the meeting and briefly introduced the standing candidates.

8.2 K. Forman reiterated that members must meet the three-month membership criteria in order to vote for the candidates. Each member can vote for as many candidates as they wished, with candidates needing 50% of the vote to be elected. The minimum number of Trustees to meet RSPCA constitutional requirements is five.

8.3 The Chair advised that as a Board, we specifically approached people who had the skills we were looking for. M. Mannix was co-opted onto the Board earlier in the year. The Chair asked M. Mannix to tell those present a little about himself. M. Mannix explained that he is a Director of Estates and Facilities for Berkshire NHS Trust. He lives locally and is passionate about animals. The Chair then advised that Betsy Malamh-Thomas, a new member standing for election, has veterinary nurse experience and is based in London. She has attended a number of the Board meetings as a guest. Unfortunately, she is on holiday today so can't be with us.

8.4 K. Forman stepped out of the meeting to count the votes.

8.5 K. Forman re-entered the room and announced that all seven candidates had been elected and gave her congratulations. There would be a short meeting after the AGM to agree on the roles.

9. Consideration of resolutions

9.1 None were put forward to be considered at the meeting.

9.2 The Chair explained that we no longer receive a Chief Inspector's Report and nothing else was received prior to the meeting.

9.3 The Chair thanked everyone for their ongoing support and reminded those present that there was a tour of the facilities available if anyone wanted a look round.

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm.