



asian resource centre  
croydon

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## **Annual General Meeting (AGM) – Minutes**

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2020, 11am – 12:30 pm | Online via Zoom

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### **1. Introduction & Welcome**

- a. The CEO of ARCC, Ima Miah welcomed everyone to the 20th AGM which was conducted over Zoom due to Covid pandemic restrictions. She greeted all the dignitaries, guests from other VCS organisations, volunteers, businesses, community members, colleagues, and friends and this was then followed up with the meeting housekeeping.
- b. After the introduction of the meeting agenda, Ima Miah requested everyone to observe a minute of silence in remembrance of Sergeant Matt Ratana (Croydon Metropolitan Police), the victims of Covid 19 who sadly lost their lives, and in solidarity with Black Lives Matter movement.
- c. Ima Miah, then requested the Chair of ARCC Mr Raghu Shetty to address the meeting.

### **2. Chair's Address**

- a. In his opening remarks, Raghu Shetty thanked Ima Miah for chairing the AGM meeting. He also thanked everyone for giving him the privilege to serve ARCC as a Chair.
- b. Raghu Shetty mentioned that he will be stepping down as a Chair following the AGM.
- c. His recorded address was then presented. He thanked all ARCC Board members, Staff, Stakeholders, and supporters for the constructive progress achieved during the difficult pandemic period.
- d. He especially thanked all the funders and partners for their support and resources that give us the reach that we have.
- e. He stressed the importance of funding to organisations like ARCC to deliver the community services that our members expect from us and how this has proved so vital under Covid 19 when the need to provide support to our communities was at its highest level.
- f. Raghu Shetty closed his address by stating that we all should be looking at ways of uniting the communities and work in partnership and how ARCC should be resilient to meet this challenge. He thanked Croydon Council and other funding bodies for their continued support to ARCC over our journey for the last 20 years.

### 3. Minutes of the Last AGM

- a. Ima Miah then presented the minutes of the last AGM held on 27th November 2019 which had been available on the ARCC website. Members were given the opportunity to ask any questions on the content of the minutes before adoption. The members present raised no objection and the minutes were proposed by Jay Patel and this was seconded by Dilly Surelia. The minutes were approved and adopted by the AGM unanimously.

### 4. Secretary's Report

- a. The Secretary Dilly Surelia was invited to cover the next item on the Agenda and she thanked all distinguished guests and dignitaries for attending this unique ARCC's AGM over Zoom.
- b. The Secretary mentioned that it has been a difficult year for ARCC with new challenges faced due to Covid pandemic.
- c. Dilly referred to the ARCC Annual Report which had been uploaded to the ARCC website for everyone to view and read ahead of the meeting.
- d. She covered some of the major highlights in the above report including: -
  - *ARCC was proud to deliver over 10,000 interventions, demonstrating the impact ARCC is having on the local communities we represent.*
  - *ARCC has worked in partnership with over 30 small grassroot organisations to ensure we are able to reach the most vulnerable and hard to reach community members of our communities.*
  - *ARCC has been recognised with awards that we are proud to have earned, and also demonstrating our growing influence both locally and nationally.*
  - *ARCC has delivered projects that have made a very high impact, especially on peoples' lives during the pandemic period.*
- e. Dilly closed her address with gratitude and appreciation to all those who have worked hard to make the organisation successful, all those who have attended our services and all those who cared to take an interest in what we are doing. Of course, not forgetting, those who funded us and enabled the good work to be carried out.

### 5. Approval of ARCC Annual Report

- a. Ima Miah requested for the annual report to be approved which was proposed by Mr Somasundaram Kanagasundaram and seconded by Bushra Ahmed. The Annual report for the year 2019/2020 was approved.

### 6. Mayor of Croydon

- a. At this stage of the meeting Ima Miah introduced The Mayor of Croydon Councillor Maddie Henson and invited her to say a few words about her experience with ARCC.
- b. The Mayor thanked ARCC for the invitation to attend the AGM meeting and mentioned how important and obvious it has been of the work carried out by ARCC over the last few months during Covid 19 pandemic, especially in Croydon where there has been the highest case rate.

- c. She praised the VCS (Voluntary Community Sector) for coming together to work in partnership during this difficult period showing their resilience, passion, and commitment to look after the communities and the most vulnerable people in the borough.
- d. The Mayor was pleased to be invited to our AGM and she thanked ARCC for everything the organisation had done and continues to do.
- e. Ima Miah thanked the Mayor and mentioned how the Mayor's own contribution to support the young children and families and women is inspiring ARCC especially our women members in particular to do the same.

## **7. ARCC Volunteer & Service User Feedback**

- a. The next item on the agenda was presented by a recorded message covering the feedback from one of our many volunteers and service users.
- b. Volunteer Ellily, who is a local resident, mentioned that she has been involved in helping ARCC & BLBG in delivering the food to many of our community members. She found the service we provide to them very efficient and easy and the residents who receive it are always grateful. It is an amazing service to many and it felt like a god sent service to many of the most vulnerable people, especially during the pandemic period.
- c. Service user Priscilla who has been using ARCC services for the past 3 years commented on her experience of attending our events such as International Women's Day, Coffee Mornings, Exercise Classes, Tai-Chi classes, and various group sessions. She found them very useful and more so during the pandemic period having to follow government isolation restrictions. She feels ARCC and its members are like a family where there is true spirit to help and support each other.
- d. Ima Miah thanked both the volunteers for their kind words. It is important for ARCC to show and demonstrate the work we do and how it is impacting on the everyday lives of our community members.

## **8. Treasurer's Report**

- a. ARCC Treasurer, Rumel Jahur presented the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020. He started by saying that it was his honour and privilege for him to be the Treasurer of ARCC for several years during which the organisation has grown, developed, and sustained. The Accounts have been made available for the past week prior to the AGM which covers about 30 pages.
- b. He gave a presentation of the summary of income and expenditure for the financial year and said the full accounts were available to review online on our website for the past week and will also be available on the Charity Commission portal after the AGM.
- c. ARCC financial statements show that the total income for the year was £344,904 with total expenditure at £354,594. He went through the breakdown on the income and mentioned the names of the different funders and amount received from each of them. Equally he covered the breakdown of expenditure in various categories, mainly covering management/admin, charitable activities, general admin support, governance, and project delivery.
- d. The Treasurer also covered the amount of funding carried forward into the next financial year, that was made up by £117,000 (restricted) and £73,000 (unrestricted). The unrestricted amount falls under ARCC Reserves.

- e. He then went on to cover some of the future funding streams that had been secured by the organisation including funds from the Council, Local Trust & Lottery for the next 3 years. He was therefore confident that our short-term future is secured. Our next priority is to develop our strategy to secure our medium and long term income generation capabilities.
- f. He thanked the fellow Board members and the staff & volunteers for their support to ensure ARCC remained financially strong and resilient. He also thanked all the funding organisations for their financial support and their trust in our organisation to deliver and meet their expectations. Finally, he thanked everyone for attending our AGM meeting.
- g. Ima Miah thanked the ARCC Treasurer for his report. She reiterated that the accounts present a very positive outlook for ARCC, and we are heading in the right direction, especially from where we were 5 years ago. She requested if there were any questions or comments from the audience. Mamum Khan went through the financial report that is available on ARCC website and invited anyone who had any questions.
- h. There were no questions raised, so Ima Miah requested the meeting to approve and adopt the accounts for the year 2019/2020. They were proposed by Cllr. Himayun Kabir and seconded by Jay Patel. ARCC Financial Accounts for the year 2019/2020 were approved.
- i. Ima Miah then requested the meeting to approve the adoption of an Independent Examiner Beg Williamson & Co who have been preparing our accounts for a few years now and have done an excellent job. Dilshad Surelia proposed, and this was seconded by Cll Himayun Kabir.

## 9. ARCC CEO's Report

- a. Ima Miah then followed up the next item on the agenda to provide an update on the organisation, cover challenges faced and the work during Covid 19 pandemic, and our future commitment.
- b. She mentioned that Croydon has become one of the most diversified and dynamic boroughs in London and the last 5 years have been the most incredible period for ARCC. It is important to recognise what we have done and achieved from a humble beginning to another remarkable level to become one of the leading organisations in the borough. We have done this together as one unit showing innovation, skill and commitment from our leadership staff and volunteers.
- c. She was pleased to announce that ARCC has managed to deliver on the majority of our objectives and expectations from the funding organisations. However, it is also important for us that we can reflect, learn and develop our skills to deliver our expanding outreach work to wider communities beyond southeast Asia. Especially on the work we have done to reduce social isolation & loneliness by promoting health & wellbeing within Asian communities, advanced dialogues around taboo subjects like mental health, hate crime and domestic violence that are still prevalent within our communities but still taboo.
- d. We have also succeeded in building a stronger strategic presence and voice at the highest level in the Borough. She mentioned that ARCC's unique selling point is that we are the only pan Asian infrastructure and delivery group based in Croydon and perhaps in London. ARCC has over 4000 members and our strength is in our approach to partnership working – especially with other smaller voluntary sector organisations to address the key issues raised by Asian communities in ongoing consultations and by listening to their voices. This has helped us to develop early intervention projects that have reduced ill-health and prevented the need for people to attend medical and mainstream services.

- e. She then covered ARCC's Social & Culture events that are enabling people to bring together socially, build friendships and support structures that they did not have previously. ARCC is creating its future by developing our young people to become tomorrow's community leaders.
- f. This year we have seen development of new projects by securing funding from the council, National Lottery, the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) and other funding organisations. This ensures ARCC as a going entity. She is proud of the growth the organisation has achieved in a short period of time. Not only the growth in income but also growth in our membership from individual members of the community engaging and participating in our events and projects, to other community groups wanting to develop partnership with us and local businesses coming forward to sponsor us. ARCC has enjoyed a steady increase in our social media following, by being active on all social media platforms that includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Our service delivery arm has expanded and we have increased our representations on a number of boards we sit on – local strategic partnership board, local voluntary partnership board, safer neighbourhoods board, integrated care networks, Covid 19 health protect board, equalities group, and the shadow health & care board to name the few and there are so many other groups.
- g. Ima Miah then mentioned that that year has been interesting in terms of development on all fronts including our relationship with major strategic partners – the Council, major Funding Organisations, and the NHS. ARCC has also embarked on an exciting new project with the three other Infrastructure Groups in the Croydon Borough. She hoped that this high level partnership will pave the way for better coordination and streamline the services the VCS delivers to all the communities in the borough.
- h. Ima Miah emphasised that ARCC's biggest asset is its workforce and the ability to recruit and sustain a skilled and stable workforce. This is fundamental to us achieving our success and credibility. The team has shown passion, dedication, commitment and unity during busy times, even more so during periods of uncertainty. She is proud of ARCC's working culture, our policies, and our Human Resource support which has strengthened this year with a growing and diverse team.
- i. Our policy and campaigning work has also matured and now starting to show impact. Several campaigns have been run in the last year that included social isolation, loneliness, mental health awareness, domestic abuse, sexual violence, hate crime and honour-based violence. They have been conducted via conversations and consultations with our communities we serve. Their needs and voices remain at the heart of the work we do.
- j. Our delivery model allows us to work at both borough and local neighbourhood level. She quoted the example where ARCC is the Local trusted organisation for BLBG (Big local Broad Green) and we continue to deliver our part in ensuring a coordinated approach to Broad Green residents at neighbourhood level.
- k. In terms of ARCC office premises, we are shifting more focused on working from the Broad Green Hub, and utilise the space offered to us by Centrale Shopping. She believes the future lies in our ability to find stability in a mixture of infrastructure and service delivery work. The shifting nature of funding and government priorities means that the voluntary sector remains vulnerable to insufficient funding and cuts. In a volatile environment we must ensure that we are able to develop new and innovative services and at the same time sustain the core delivery of services based on the foundation we have laid for many years.
- l. Going forward, ARCC will be keeping a close eye on the wider landscape so that we can move in the direction of relevance and aligning ourselves with local priorities that meet community needs.

- m. Ima's focus over coming years will be to increase our work in Public Health, Preventive Measures and Localities Working. ARCC will continue to diversify the income streams, and work on steady growth that is sustainable. ARCC will always press for the voices of unheard communities to be heard, and the needs of the communities to be met. We will also demand a seat at the table for minority ethnic groups to be represented.
- n. Ima closed her report by sincerely thanking everyone that has given time, advice, money and support to our cause this year. This includes our members, volunteers, funders, supporters and stakeholders at all levels. She also thanked the ARCC Board Members who put their trust in her to make calculated decisions and risks for the betterment of the organisation. Trustees of ARCC remain a solid sounding Board and an encouraging group that makes her job far easier. She then went on to say that her staff are her greatest strength. Their hard work and dedication is one that far outweighs the benefit of being a richer organisation. She then paid sincere personal thanks to Mamun, Deba, Nayim, Richard, Katrina, Renee, Aisha, Saba, who have worked tirelessly to make the magic happen.
- o. The strength we have built and accumulated will form the foundation for 2020/2021. The coming year will be a challenging year – with the presence of Covid 19. Partnership and collaboration will be key to harnessing the talent we have and meet the challenges and the changes that are so desperately needed. She will continue to serve ARCC to the best of her ability and hopes that the year will bring further growth, success, and recognition in all areas of our work.

#### **10. Personal Covid 19 experience from Ash Balakrishanan, ARCC Trustee/Director**

- a. Ima Miah then introduced Ask Balakrishanan who was badly affected by Covid-19 and we were not sure if he was still going to be with us. His story makes one of the most remarkable recoveries in Croydon and thought it would be an inspiration for all the attendees to hear it from him.
- b. Ash presented his story with how it started with having trouble breathing and was taken to Croydon University Hospital. Here he was kept under induced coma on a ventilator for 3 weeks, lost about 15kg in weight, and there after spending more than 5 weeks with help going up the stairs, bathroom, and walking. He paid special thanks and respect to the NHS staff who literally saved his life.
- c. Ima Miah followed this up by thanking Matthew Kershaw at the Croydon university Hospital who we are working in partnership. She praised his leadership and incredible support throughout the pandemic period. She requested everyone to join in and clap for Ash for his recovery and the difficult time he and his family went through.

#### **11. BLBG – Video Presentation of the locality work**

- a. The project staff gave an update on BLBG's work and said The Hub was launched after a long campaign to secure the space in July 2019. Since then, it has had a lot of community usage with different groups including Tai-Chi Classes, Choir Sessions, Training, Art Workshops and Networking Events.
- b. BLBG has funded over 60 community projects. Some of them taking place on site with several of them also taking place off-site (including mental health support, boxing physical activity, sewing and working with isolated individuals. A wide spectrum of projects working with the community.
- c. The projects are funded by BLBG and they have a grant that is open from £500 to £2,000 every year. Further details can be found on the BLBG website.

- d. When Covid 19 came, BLBG already had an established Food Club with about 20 members. For a nominal membership fee, members were provided with bags of food each week. During the pandemic the food club grew during the peak of the lockdown when food bags were delivered to about 85 local residents who needed it the most. On top of this it was providing more than 125 cooked meals to people in the area that were isolated and vulnerable and could not go out and get their own food shopping. The numbers are now decreasing with the lockdown easing.
- e. In December 2019, BLBG held their AGM at the Hub which was attended by over 50 people.
- f. BLBG is committed to engaging with the community via any means possible that includes virtual calls, befriending calls, and face to face whenever it is possible under current government guidelines and restrictions.
- g. At this stage Ima Miah also announced that one of our other Trustees, Usha Patel has also been affected by Coronavirus about three weeks prior to the AGM meeting but managed to recover by self-isolating and following all NHS/Government guidelines. Ima requested everyone to give Usha a round of applause. Usha mentioned that she was grateful that she did not have to go to the hospital like her colleague Ash, and she thanked everyone for their support.

## **12. Members of Parliament for Croydon Central and Croydon North**

- a. Ima Miah expressed how fortunate ARCC is with the support from Croydon Council Councillors and Members of Parliament representing Croydon. She invited Sarah Jones MP for Croydon Central to say a few words.
- b. Sarah Jones referred to Ash's Covid story and said how fortunate she was that none of her family members have had Covid but as an MP she has been contacted by many who had family members with Covid, loved ones who had passed away and not been able to visit them in hospital or attend funerals or not see them. Unimaginable stories and she was pleased that Ash and Usha had a remarkable recovery.
- c. She thanked ARCC for inviting her to the meeting and was so pleased to hear the work done by ARCC over the last few months where communities have come together to support each other.
- d. She was also pleased to hear how much love & support there is in Croydon but at the same time to learn just how vulnerable so many of our community members are. She found the work carried out by ARCC is so crucial in holding our communities together by giving them the support they need.
- e. Sarah then provided her view on the pandemic and how it has affected so many people in different ways from people getting sick, hospital staff stretched to their limits to care for those that had covid, and the crisis faced in our Care Homes that were looking after the most vulnerable. It then became an economic issue with people who lost their jobs and businesses facing financial crises. The Government introduced a number of support measures to relieve the economic pressure. During this period, we then had Black Lives Matter where we had this explosion of anger, concern, and frustration. We then had this major concern regarding how people from ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by the virus. She stated there are lessons to be learned and as we come out of the pandemic on the road to recovery, inequalities in our communities need to be addressed and she will be pushing the government to do that.

- f. Sarah closed her remarks by thanking ARCC for the work we do. She praised ARCC work during the crisis to address issues related to loneliness, isolation, and mental health. Sarah then mentioned her role as a shadow Policing Minister and is therefore keen to increase diversity in our Police force and the most effective way is to run local campaigns involving local community organisations. Sarah said she would be keen to follow up on this as conversation with ARCC.
- g. Sarah thanked ARCC for the incredible work we do which is quite evident with our actions and initiatives.
- h. Ima Miah thanked Sarah Jones for her kind remarks and confirmed that ARCC would be very happy to support the police in their recruitment drive for people from Asian origin to join the force. She then made an apology on behalf of Chris Philp – MP for South Croydon who was unable to join us for the AGM. However, Steve Reed MP for Croydon North sent his message via video that was then presented to all the attendees.
- i. Steve Reed apologised for not being able to join but through his video message he thanked ARCC for the extraordinary work we are doing with Asian communities in Croydon. Last few months with the pandemic spreading and restrictions on movements and non-essential businesses closures imposed had severely affected everyone's lives. With an awful lot of people suffering the illness, deaths, loneliness, not being able to attend funerals, or weddings are the things we will remember the most. He thanked everyone involved in the ARCC organisation for the great work being done to support our community members. He also referred to how Covid 19 has disproportionately affected BAME communities. He has done a survey of his own in Croydon which he is about to publish showing just how some of those effects have been felt in our community and at a national level. He said the work that ARCC is doing has been more important than ever and it is important we carry on until we return to our normal way of life prior to Covid 19.
- j. Ima Miah thanked Steve Reed for his comments and moved on to some of the comments received in the Chat Room. She was pleased that there were almost 70 people who joined the zoom meeting. Comments were also received with regards to the professionalism and the manner we were conducting the first zoom-based AGM. There were a number of messages of support for Ash.
- k. The Mayor of Croydon mentioned in the chat that she also had contracted Covid and she expressed how lucky she was to recover from it. ARCC has captured so many stories through our befriending calls made over the last few months (300 calls). Some of these stories can be read in our community reports that we have published and also they are on our website. With our own survey with over 360 people, ARCC published Covid 19 Community Report which also highlights some of the disproportionate impact on Asian Communities.

### **13. Presentation by Guest speaker Mr Anant Bachcha**

- a. Ima Miah then moved on to introduce Mr Anant Bachcha who is CEO of Bank House Lockers Ltd and Neelkanth Safety Deposit to cover his story for opening their third business location in Croydon, after initially opening their first branch in Wembley which was then followed by their second branch in Southall.
- b. Mr Anant thanked everyone for the opportunity to speak at our AGM. He also covered how one of his staff members went through a similar process as Ash when he contacted Covid. He wished both of them for speedy recovery.

- c. Mr Anant worked in the City for most of his career with American Banks in global custody until about 6 years ago when he joined the bank house Neelkanth Group which is a family sponsored business. It provides safe deposit services to the community. He covered their background with some challenges they faced, some of the highlights they had achieved and how he sees their role in the community.
- d. Mr Anant then covered his business and had three branches and is now considering the fourth branch in East London. Essentially their business is to provide a place where individuals or families can keep their valuables safe at a price that is affordable with safety as their top priority.
- e. Over the last 20 years major Banks were beginning to stop this service and a lot of Asian communities were having to take their valuables away at home. With no other alternative, Neelkanth saw an opportunity to set up the safe deposit centre which was initially opened in Wembley.
- f. In 1995 the devotees of Swaminarayan community decided that any profits made by the business would be redirected for the benefit of social and spiritual support to the communities that included charitable type foundations. The branch in Croydon opened in 2019 after finding a suitable site and building.
- g. The initial Wembley branch took them nearly 15 years to get to full capacity and many lessons have been learned from their experience – from customers priorities to security priorities to create high tech safe deposit centres. The prices have been deliberately kept low so that everyone can keep their valuable safe which in Asian communities is very important as London faces a high rate of burglaries. It is a tradition where Asian communities inherit jewellery passed down the generations – with most having very high sentimental value. When this is suddenly lost through burglary it is a traumatic experience and some of the items are irreplaceable. This is what Neelkanth Safety Deposit provides as a security to keep personal possessions safe. Educating our communities on how to keep them safe is the biggest challenge – understanding its value, having the right insurance, etc.
- h. Mr Anant closed his remarks stating that any profits made by the business are passed back to the foundation to be used for various community initiatives and recently for Covid as well. He was very happy to sponsor ARCC work with Mental Health issues and support us in the initiatives that we have already started in this area.

#### 14. Closing Remarks

- a. Ima Miah thanked Mr Anant for his presentation, the rich history of the organisation, and some of the inspirations he has in supporting charitable organisations.
- b. Ima Miah then followed up by thanking the VIPs and other dignitaries that had attended our AGM. This included all the councillors and some of them as cabinet members from Croydon Council members of Parliament representing Croydon, and Suleman Raza from Grand Sapphire. She invited them to say something if they wished.
- c. Councillors Himayun Kabir, Pasty Cameron, Hamida Ali, Manju Hamid, ARCC Chair Raghu Shetty, Sue Mcvicker, ARCC Treasurer Rumel Jahur, Madam Mayor, ARCC Vice Chair Bushra Ahmad and few others all volunteered to praise ARCC and the work we do for our communities.
- d. Ima Miah finally thanked everyone who joined us at this AGM meeting and invited Ranit Shail, our guest musician to sing and close the meeting by entertaining the audience.