



Sirona Therapeutic Horsemanship CIO

Chairperson's Report for Annual General Meeting

On **Friday 21st May 2021**

As we weren't able to have an AGM in 2020 this report covers 2 years – 2019 and 2020.

In 2019 we welcomed two new trustees; Sarah Newton a local solicitor and later in the year Gemma Loverock a specialist in HR. No trustees left Sirona.

From early in the year trustees, led by Laurel Ellis, continued to work on landscaping our new site, including fencing, planting trees, developing the woodland and garden areas.

In early May staff and trustees were involved in delivering training from our new home. Firstly an overview of EAI for counselling students at Exeter College, followed by our Introduction to EAI – The Sirona Approach, delivered to the general public. Courses received good feedback overall.

In June, thanks to the great efforts of staff and trustees Sirona hosted a very successful Open Day with a large and enthusiastic turnout on a lovely sunny day. Visitors came from as far away as Weymouth and brief demos in the main arena, along with other events in and around the main yard were all well received.

In July we held our first AGM and celebrated the achievements of 2017/2018, including moving from CIC to CIO status, massive fundraising efforts from Hannah, staff and trustees, and finally being able to realise the dream and move to our lovely new premises.

In the Autumn Shaun and others started work on the new toilet block and haybarn and these were nearly complete by the end of the year.

In November Angie started our new Nature Based sessions, supported by Kate, and these proved very popular.

In December trustees and staff once again worked hard to raise funds at Exeter Racecourse and we had a very successful afternoon, despite the cold weather.

Staff and trustees were able to gather at The Cott in December and enjoy a lovely Christmas meal together.

During the year trustees attended a range of local events, including the Dartington Community Day, gave talks to local organisations about the work at Sirona, and manned fundraising stalls at a variety of events.

Throughout the year trustees and staff continued to meet with newly appointed CEO of the Mare & Foal Sanctuary, Sarah Jane Williamson, to try and find ways of working together that would allow both charities to remain true to their aims and objects whilst also providing the best possible service for the region.

Staff and trustees enjoyed a number of in house training days during the year ranging from Environmental Art to Mindfulness, and several trustees went on Safeguarding training.

Many challenging staffing issues arose during the year including; taking on new staff and volunteers; internships; maternity leave arrangements; new pay scales; dogs on site; sick leave and holiday pay. Trustees worked hard to support Hannah with legal, HR and other issues.

Trustees got involved in initial risk assessment work on site, with the focus on wooden buildings and potential fire risks, as well as carrying out Sirona policy reviews.

Towards the end of the year we were all delighted when Nicholas Evans agreed to join us as our new Patron and the subsequent photo shoot to celebrate was enjoyed by all.

In 2020, we had three trustee resignations sadly. First trustee Rosie Bell resigned due to ill health, Sarah Newton changed jobs and could no longer commit to meetings, and Gemma Loverock resigned due to a change in personal circumstances. Losing 3 trustees was disappointing but it wasn't the only challenge!

In late March the Covid crisis became a reality and emergency trustee meetings were held in March, April and May via Zoom. The decision was taken to try our best to keep Sirona open, albeit operating with far fewer staff, taking advantage of the furlough scheme, and only working with participants who fitted specific criteria. A huge effort was required from staff, volunteers and trustees to make this possible, with many necessary adaptations to our site and its buildings.

In January Sarah U and Diane attended a fundraising event at Budleigh Golf Club which marked the start of the club's fundraising year for Sirona. Members gave generously and despite Covid continued to do so throughout the year. The Wooden Spoon Charity had already pledged to match whatever sum the club raised so, amazingly, by the end of the year the final total raised amounted to over £36,000. By November this resulted in the purchase of a new larger classroom from Mr. Modular, as well as the Tiny House from the Dartington Estate. Trustees and volunteers were involved in preparing the

groundworks for the new building and in December trustees and staff gave their time generously to thoroughly clean both the new building and the existing portacabin, ready for the new term.

During the year trustees and staff supported MSc student from Hartpury University, Cherith Wilson, with her research project. This produced some really encouraging and statistically positive results for the work at Sirona, showing that participants experienced a 68.5% increase in a range of wellbeing indicators. The 100 page research document subsequently formed the basis of our first Evaluation Impact Report which was compiled by Hannah and presented by Diane. A real milestone for Sirona.

Many events planned for 2020 sadly couldn't go ahead due to Covid 19 but in September Sirona hosted a very interesting PACE trauma training course run by Julia Bird, as free team training for trustees and staff. We were able to sit outside, socially distanced, and learn about the Trauma Informed Schools programme (TIS - Dr. Margot Sunderland) as well as Dan Hughes' PACE model.

In the Autumn trustees and staff reviewed Sirona's procedures for taking on new trustees and created a standard advertisement, a new application form, information pack, and role description. These forms are sent out by Diane, who also takes up references and runs DBS checks. Sarah U ensures Charity Commission paperwork is completed, the CC website is updated, and that all new trustees receive the necessary induction paperwork required by the CC. Once this review process was complete we advertised the role and quickly received 3 very high calibre applications which were followed up. Referring to our Constitution it also became clear that all new trustees are initially co-opted until the next AGM, when they are formally elected.

During the year all trustees engaged in PREVENT training, trustees supported staff with individual tuition, and gave free EAT workshops. Several trustees were actively involved in developing Sirona's safeguarding framework, and a trustee ran a couple of individual EAT workshops for disappointed applicants for the Sirona Intro course, which we had to cancel, twice.

As we weren't able to have our usual Christmas meal, Christmas boxes were organised by Diane for staff, volunteers and trustees.

I would like to thank all staff, volunteers and trustees for their hard work and their many contributions throughout a very difficult year.

Chair of trustees
Sarah Urwin
18.05.21