



# Gravesham Friendly

People, Community, Environment

## NEWSLETTER 2024 HALF YEARLY MEETING – 1 NOVEMBER 2024

The Half-Yearly Meeting was held on Friday 1 November 2024, 1pm, at Gravesend Masonic Hall, (Ruckland House) 25 Wrotham Road, Gravesend DA11 0PA

The Chairman, Chief Executive, Elizabeth Woolman and all staff members welcomed 9 members in person. One member attended via zoom.



A presentation was given that covered the items listed below.

- **Reminder of vision and mission and ASFS Strategic Pillars**
- **Strategy Update:**
  - Brand Launch held on 24 October at Shorne Woods and attended by the Deputy Mayor, councillors from Gravesham Borough Council and charity representatives.
  - Final Logo Agreed
  - Member Forum
    - Two positive meetings held with good debates
    - Members include Philip Davies, Miroslav Gechev and Paul Woodward
    - Board members are Kim Harris, Elizabeth Woolman, Gez Gibbs and Paul Osborn.
  - Member Walk
    - Held on 17 September and well attended by members
    - Informative talks given on veteran trees and sculptures in the park.
  - No Board Changes – 5 NED's and 1 Executive Director
  - No regulator issues but challenge received about the Business Plan and writing meaningful new business
  - Carbon offset with Carbon neutral - will be renewed in 2025

- 2 Key objectives - New Business and Property.

- **Operational Updates**

Two key objectives for the next few years:

- Meaningful growth of membership
  - Regulators expect the business to grow
- Lower carbon/higher efficiency property portfolio – minimum EPC C rating
  - Climate change strategy in place
  - Property Portfolio accounts for the most carbon used and will be aligned to the Society's values over the next 10 years
- Operational Journey
  - 80% of claims received electronically (via the website that connects to the customer record management system, and email) helping to achieve a paperless office
  - External local resource used where needed in order to support local businesses
  - Member engagement maintained with a quarterly Newsletter, two members meetings per year and the Member Forum
  - Ant Uttley appointed on a temporary contract to lead new business
- Growth of Members – Starting Point
  - 33% of members live within the target demographic of Gravesham
  - 58% live within Kent
  - 70% live in Kent, Essex or Greater London
  - 30% live outside the South East with 2% living overseas
  - Over 300 members are over 71 years of age
  - Average age of members is 59
  - Female members account for 51% of the membership and males 49%
- Growth in Discretionary Benefit Claims
  - Discretionary benefit claims increased by 10% in volume over the same 9 month period in 2023 and 2024 and by 8% in costs
  - No staff increases as the investment in digital services helps to control costs
  - 79.1% of the membership have submitted a claim which is a great achievement
  - Females submit more discretionary claims than males
  - On 1 June 2024, two monthly payment runs were instigated reducing the maximum waiting time for reimbursement to 30 days.
- Growth
  - New website launched
  - Two new versions of the sickness product to be launched – one for £250 per week and a Group sickness policy
  - Social Media moved to Fabrick
  - Community support and involvement being enhanced with a 'Have Your Say' campaign that will be delivered to 25,000 doors within Gravesend asking residents to choose which organisation the Society will sponsor in 2025.
  - Staff members have been constant throughout 2024.
- Strategy Plan – Property

The aim to lower carbon/higher efficiency property portfolio to a minimum EPC C rating will be achieved by:

  - Identifying properties to sell, keep and invest in. The Society has 110 properties and only one third meet the regulations

- Within the sell category, identify tenants willing to move
  - Aspects such as flood plains, contaminated land and properties located close to forests for climate issues have been reviewed
  - 40 properties identified to keep, 11 require more research, 13 regulated tenancies, 26 properties to sell when the tenants move and 20 properties that require investment
  - Two properties sold this year
  - Low carbon, low maintenance properties in Gravesham being investigated
  - The Board determined it does not want to spend 20% of a property's value to achieve an energy efficiency C rating
  - Commercial property being reviewed to diversify the portfolio
  - Rental income has to be maintained to support the business
  - The new Government could bring regulation challenges.
- **The Future – Summary**
    - Products and Benefits - two new products to be launched based on feedback from members
    - Membership - younger and more diverse membership to be targeted to allow the Society to grow
    - Investments - the responsibly invested fund is performing well
    - Community – social media, sponsorship and partners will help to spread the name and work of the Society.
  - **Member Forum – Philip Davies**

Philip Davies introduced himself to the members and outlined the following:

    - Joined the Member Forum to engage with members
    - Two meetings held via zoom and discussions held on how to move forward
    - He was keen to meet members in person or communicate by email or telephone and directly feedback member's opinions, ideas and suggestions to the Board
    - Members were asked to contact the office with ideas
    - More members needed to join the Member Forum.

No member's questions were raised after the presentations.

**The Chairman formally closed the Half Yearly Meeting at 13.45.**

## CONTACT US

If you have any questions on any of the above areas, please do not hesitate to contact us using any of the following methods:

Post: The Old Rectory, Springhead Road, Northfleet, DA11 8HN

Telephone: 01474 567050

Email: [info@graveshamfriendly.co.uk](mailto:info@graveshamfriendly.co.uk)