

Postponement of Annual General Meeting of the ASCO CIO

Current guidelines from the Charity Commission reflect that “Coronavirus continues to have a major impact on charity events and that charity trustees need to consider how and if they hold meetings.” The Charity Commission further states that “we recognise that for some charities virtual meetings are not a viable option” and that “in such instances trustees may consider they have no choice but to cancel or postpone their AGMs”.

ASCO is a very small charity in terms of budget and resources, run by volunteers and with no paid staff, but we have a large membership of Special Constables, and a growing membership, with over 800 members spread across the United Kingdom.

At present, it is not confirmed that an online option for an AGM in January, when we had intended to host our meeting, would be legally available. It seems nevertheless clear to us as trustees that achieving a physical, quorate, meeting in January would be considerably challenging, or depending on regulations impossible, to achieve, given the current course of the pandemic and likely pattern of future governmental restrictions across the UK. As such committing the required financial outlays to secure a venue and related expenditures does not seem to us, as trustees, to be the efficient and effective use of charity funds at this time.

Assuming that the option of hosting an online AGM were to become available, such an option, managed in a way that effectively engaged our membership, may present additional costs and have additional technical requirements that we do not have a budget or the resources for as an organisation without seeking additional technical expertise and Home Office funding.

Furthermore, we recognise that our Special Constable members are, rightly, focused on the considerable additional voluntary support that they are providing in critical ways to front-line policing during this time of national crisis. In accordance with our constitution, for an AGM to be quorate requires the attendance of 10% of our membership. This would be very challenging to achieve at a point where many of our individual members rightly have other priorities, both in their voluntary policing and beyond. We wish the AGMs of our relatively new CIO to be points of countrywide engagement across our membership, meaningfully shaping the future path of our Association, and this would seem to us to be an unrealistic objective at this time.

Having given a detailed consideration to each of the options available to us, the trustees have taken the decision to postpone the ASCO AGM, which had been scheduled for January. The AGM will now take place, subject to Government and Charity Commission guidance and advice within six months.

ASCO Trustees 21/11/2020