

**Minutes for the Equal Parenting Alliance AGM,  
4 May 2008 Manchester.**

## **AGENDA**

**Introductions**  
**Report on Last Year Activity**  
**Report on May 2007 Election Campaign**  
**Treasurer's Report**  
**Discussion of Future Campaigns**  
**Election of Committee**  
**Any Other Business**

**Committee Members Present:** Steve Gouldstone, Ray Barry, Paul Rubert,  
Tracey Wilkinson

**Apologies:** Phil Else, Wendy Turner.

## **MINUTES**

### **1. Introductions**

Steve was declared Chairman for the meeting and brief introductions were made to all present.

The Committee would like to thank Dave Hawksworth, member from Dundee, for travelling down from Dundee with the express purpose of attending the meeting.

### **2. Report on Last Year Activity**

Since the AGM last year activity has been fairly slow, due mainly to the personal commitments of the Committee.

1. Ray Barry stood as a candidate in the Scottish Parliament elections in 2007 and again in the local elections in England on May 1<sup>st</sup> this year. Further details of these ventures can be found below.
2. Good coverage was gained for the Party via its subscription to the politics.co.uk website. The subscription proved to be good value for money and we put out a large number of press releases through it which then led to the EPA being considered experts on the subject of equal parenting and subsequently being asked by the sites organisers for our opinion on equal parenting issues.

Unfortunately the cut-price deal for subscription to the site has now lapsed and we are not yet in a position to renew it at full cost.

3. Ray appeared as an expert on equal parenting on the daytime television show, Tricia, after the EPA were contacted by programme researchers asking for us to appear on the show to give advice to those taking part in the show. Ray felt the experience was excellent

and did a good job of offering advice when called upon to do so. A clip of the show can be found on the EPA website.

4. Steve and Ray attended a Family Law conference at Westminster on 4 February 2008, headed by the Conservative Shadow Attorney General Dominic Grieve and Shadow Minister for Children, Schools and Families, Tim Loughton. All Parties were invited to attend the event but no Labour MPs were present.

Ray and Steve were both very impressed with the Conservative Ministers' approach to family policy and felt that both showed a desire to ease the pain suffered by so many families as a result of family breakdown.

The Party also received offers of support to help us to raise the equal parenting issues we are working on and Ray has been contacted by the Ministers since attending the conference.

5. The Party started gearing up for an Autumn General Election which failed to materialise.

Appeals for people willing to stand as candidates in the elections were sent out to members and to various forums but have failed to achieve any further candidates for elections so far.

We have received some interest off people considering standing in the General Election when it happens and we hope to capitalise on that.

Mike Wiffen stated that he was considering standing in his home constituency of Droylsden East; currently the seat of Labour MP David Hayes and Dave Hawksworth added a willingness to stand in Gordon Brown's Cowdenbeath constituency.

6. Steve was approached by Families Need Fathers (FNF) who asked if they could collaborate with the EPA on our Family Law Survey and their offer was accepted.

Preliminary results so far show that in 76% of family law cases false allegations had affected contact schedules.

Domestic violence was the most common false allegation cited but 26% of those false allegations reported related to sexual abuse of the child.

Preliminary results will be sent to Dominic Grieve who asked to be kept informed of our progress, and to other organisations and Parties.

7. Tina Rayburn, co-author of the book 'I want to see my Kids' recommended the EPA to Manchester's Channel M television company as a good organisation to contact in relation to equal parenting issues. As a result of this introduction Ray is currently involved in a programme for Channel M on 'Justice for Fathers' comprising of a studio debate and an individual personal profile.

Details of the show will be found on the website prior to its being broadcast.

8. Endemol contacted the EPA regarding a pilot programme on non-resident fathers that they are making for BBC 3. A request for assistance was turned down when it became obvious that the programme is to centre on dads who walk away from the children they have fathered with more than one partner and do not know how to care for their children.

Ray spoke with a researcher from the programme and said we would be willing to appear on a programme which showed dads as good parents. The researcher appeared confused by this view of parenting and whether they contact us again remains to be seen.

9. Tracey was interviewed by Professor Robert Kenedy of York University in Canada in regard to his research on the Fathers Rights movement in England and why she became involved in the movement.

The Professor is not only conducting his research to publish academically but also as part of a book he is writing. He has already undertaken research in Canada and so England formed the second part of his study. Further trips will be made this year to Scotland, Wales and Ireland in order for him to continue his research and then he will move on to Europe. Mike Wiffen was also interviewed as part of the research as were other members and ex members of F4J and RFFJ.

### **3. Report on May 2007 Election Campaign and Local elections in 2008**

The EPA contested its first seat by standing in the Scottish Parliamentary Elections against the then Justice Minister, Kathy Jamieson. Ray Barry, aided by members from both sides of the border, stood as the EPA candidate and polled 0.4% of the votes which, considering the distance involved and the limits therefore present on our campaigning, was a good result.

Over 42,000 EPA handouts were sent to every home in the Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley constituency, highlighting our message and raising the issue of the Family Law system in the area and leaflets were distributed by an excellent team of helpers at various locations in the constituency.

Press and media coverage was excellent and Ray was interviewed by BBC Radio Scotland and gained some very good press releases.

#### **Local Elections**

Ray also stood as a candidate for the EPA in the local elections in his home town of Wolverhampton. Ray and Mike Wiffen raised awareness of our issues by hand delivering 5000 leaflets to homes in the area and speaking to residents as they walked around. Thanks to Mike and to Ray for all their efforts.

Turnout in the region was 42% which was higher than usual and Ray gained 2.4% of the votes cast with the Tories winning the seat with 76% of the vote. Labour gained 491 votes and the Liberal Democrats 401, so Ray's 101 votes achieved without the backing of a large Party presence was excellent. Two Green candidates in other wards in Wolverhampton polled 189 and 151 votes respectively and we gained more votes than some Green Party and UKIP candidates in the region, which show what good progress Ray made.

It is hoped that this year will see greater progress and achievements by the Party.

#### **4. Treasurer's Report**

##### **Review of Financial Activities**

###### **Overview**

Our second year has seen a small income from membership fees and donations.

###### **Receipts and Payments**

###### **Receipts**

The only source of income is membership fees and donations.

###### **Payments**

Our main expense has been the election in Scotland, which broadly cost us £500 election deposit (which was forfeit), £557 leaflet costs and other costs and expenses of about £300.

###### **Assets**

Our assets are limited to what is in the bank account and a small amount of petty cash.

###### **Liabilities**

No known liabilities.

Membership currently stands at 65.

Steve will make the full Treasurer's Report available online.

Receipts and Payments Account for the Year ending 31 December 2007 are to be found on the next page.

## Receipts and Payments Account for year end 31 December 2007

<b>Receipts</b>	<b>Note</b>	2007	2006
	<b>s</b>	(£)	(£)
Membership subscriptions		160	464
Donations		2,219	248
Notional Income	1	148	533
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>2,527</b>	<b>1,245</b>
<b>Payments</b>			
Politics.co.uk subscription	2	517	47
Election Deposit		500	-
Election Leaflets		557	-
Other Election Expenses		295	
Attending Conferences / Meetings		234	
Website costs		154	
Postage & Consumables		77	
Electoral Commission Fees		25	
Credit Card Processing charges	3	27	14
Notional expenditure	1	148	533
<b>Total Payments</b>		<b>2,534</b>	<b>594</b>
<b>Net receipts over payments for the year</b>		<b>(7)</b>	651
<b>Cash and balances at 1st January</b>		<b>631</b>	0
<b>Cash and balances at 31st December</b>		<b>622</b>	631
<b>Monetary Assets</b>			
<b>Bank Current Account</b>		<b>582</b>	534
<b>Cash Float</b>		<b>40</b>	97
		<b>622</b>	631
<b>Total for General Purposes Fund monetary assets</b>			
<b>Liabilities</b>			
Unclaimed Expenses owed		-	351

For full details of the submitted Treasurer's Report please see the Equal Parenting Alliance website at [www.equalparentingalliance.org](http://www.equalparentingalliance.org)

## **5. Discussion of Future Campaigns**

1. We will look into the possibility of standing against Labour in the by-election for the Late Gwyneth Dunwoody's Crewe and Nantwich seat. Steve will contact Royal Mail and the Elections Officer as well as the printers to see when nominations need to be in and leaflets presented to the Post Office.

The election date of 22 May could prove difficult for us to achieve but if it is possible Ray will stand in the constituency.

The Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley leaflet is to be redesigned to incorporate reference to the recent UNICEF report highlighting the fact that Britain's children were the unhappiest in a survey of 21 industrialised nations and statistics changed to England or the Crewe and Nantwich area as necessary.

2. Discussion also took place on the issue of standing in the Seat of the new London Mayor, Boris Johnson when he stands down as MP for Henley. Steve tried to contact Raymond Cuttill and John Holden who live close to the constituency to ask if they knew anyone who could stand as a local candidate, unfortunately he could not get in touch with them so he left them messages in this regard.

It was decided that we would stand in the by-election if a local candidate could be found for nomination.

3. We will also redesign our election leaflet so that it will be ready to print with only minor changes as soon as any by-election is announced that we can fight. Priority will be given to fighting in Labour seats since the issue of the Family Law System needs to be urgently raised in these areas and the failure of Labour's policies on children highlighted.
4. Priority needs to be given to raising funds and attracting candidates to enable us to fight any upcoming by-election and also to be ready to fight in the General Election.

We also need to raise money to cost effectively target advertising of the Party and its issues. Dave Hawksworth suggested selling off unwanted free gifts that come with products such as new computers and mobile phones. Other fund raising ideas are to be sought from the membership.

5. Steve will contact FNF to ask if we can advertise for candidates in its McKenzie newsletter and we will place requests on forums and websites where possible, as well as asking members once again whether they would be interested in standing or know anyone who might be a good candidate for us.

Possible ideas for an advertising campaign included a 'Your Country Needs You/ Our Children Need you style campaign. We also need to

create the issue in people's minds and attract celebrity/journalistic support to endorse us publicly.

6. A strategy is to be drawn up to attract sponsors and donations from companies.
7. When possible we hope to finance part-time staff for the Party to ensure greater time can be spent on promoting us and raising awareness of the issues we believe are vitally important not only to children and parents but to all families and society in general.
8. We need to get regional co-ordinators working to advertise the Party locally in their regions and gain us more support. They also need to attract and work in conjunction with potential candidates to ensure that we raise awareness of the issues and get to know those who wish to represent the Party in order to ensure that the right candidates stand for the Party in elections.

**6. Election of Committee**

No one put themselves forward for election onto the committee and no nominations were received from anyone.

A vote was therefore taken to re-elect the existing committee.

Steve Gouldstone proposed the motion.  
Dave Hawksworth seconded the proposal.  
The motion was carried unanimously

**7. Any Other Business**

There was no Other Business brought up.

**The meeting ended at 18.40.**

**Next Committee Meeting to be arranged depending on by-election information.**