The Member's Benevolent Trust: Chairman's Report 2012

The Member's Benevolent Trust (MBT) of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining (IOM3) was formed in 2003 by the merger of several existing funds. Since then, as other professional bodies have joined the IOM3, their members and dependants have become eligible for help from the MBT, whether their original Institute had a benevolent fund or not. Although we operate as a Charity independently of the IOM3, we are very much an integral part of the Institute and form one of the benefits it offers to its members. The MBT is there to help members and their dependants in need. It has helped 32 beneficiaries this year, a drop from 40 last year, due to several cases declining further help as they went into state funded care homes. In these cases we provide a Christmas hamper and sometimes modest gift vouchers that do not affect their state support. Several of our long term cases are now very frail and we are able to provide respite care support for the carer.

The MBT is now able to help more members and we have updated the website and issued a new leaflet that can go to the Local Societies. This has generated more direct enquiries, particularly from younger members who are finding it difficult to get employment or fund further postgraduate study, but very few real cases of hardship have been identified. We would like more cases brought to us by Institute members who know of a former colleague or their spouse who has hit hard times and needs support, but may be too proud to ask. In the past many genuine cases originated this way, which illustrates the value of the network of Visitors, who continue to be the backbone of the MBT as they often know the member and can give emotional as well as financial help. We are grateful to the group of Visitors who keep in contact with the cases in their area, but they too are getting older and we need more volunteers to support their local societies.

The MBT does basic due diligence on claims for support. Recipients of Christmas payments are visited each year and the recipients of larger regular payments, usually quarterly, are reviewed in detail every two years. During the year all these long term beneficiaries, but one, were visited by an Institute member. The overseas beneficiaries pose challenges when arranging visits but the two who are resident in Sri Lanka were kindly visited by an FIMMM teaching at a nearby university and their regular payments increased. Also, since the year end the remaining long term overseas beneficiary resident in Germany has been visited and the MBT is taking over direct payment of his health insurance.

The typical UK one off cases have included helping members and their families with one off grants to pay for essential house repairs and respite care. The MBT has a simple application form and specific eligibility criteria. The MBT requires disclosure of financial information, which is treated in strict confidentiality, and a confirmatory visit is made before releasing funds. But the MBT realises that each application is different. It is prepared to be flexible and understands that in the current economic climate potential applicants may be relatively asset rich but cash poor. Also, the MBT appreciates that with local authority budgets being squeezed that care services may not provide former levels of help or be slower to respond. In circumstances where the MBT may not provide specific assistance or provide the total sum required then if appropriate we may recommend other charitable bodies or contribute towards joint funding of assistance. However, the MBT Board decisions are final and Trustees are not required to give reasons for refusals.

Concluding remarks

2012 has been another successful year for the MBT and I would like to pay tribute to Gavin Bowyer who has dealt with all the enquiries in a considerate manner, and to Steve Dawe who has kept the finances in good order as shown in the Hon Treasurer's report. Last year I listed the three main sources of income for the MBT. This year there have been even more donations from the Local Societies and we are very grateful for the support existing members are giving to help their former colleagues.

We can handle a few more genuine cases and would urge members to bring the MBT to the attention of members or their spouses.

David Oxley: Chairman