

Hebden Bridge Community Association

AGM 20 June 2020

(meeting postponed from 21st March 2020)

Virtual Meeting conducted via Zoom // 11.00am

In attendance

Richard Needham, Chair of Hebden Bridge Community Association, introduced the meeting and welcomed all members, visitors, volunteers and staff to the meeting.

1. Apologies

9 apologies for absence were received from Members of the Association, including from four current Trustees.

Apologies were received from Sarah Helliwell (our Auditor from Cresswells)

In attendance:

Staff (&Members): Graham Mynott

Directors (&Members): Richard Needham, Amanda Ward, Antonio Benitez, Dai Lerner, Julia Woodhouse (co-opted during the year and being proposed as a Trustee at this AGM)

Members: 12 members in attendance (per signing in sheet available)

Those present meet the Association's quorum of 8 members in attendance for AGMs

2. Minutes from last years AGM

- The minutes were approved as a correct record of the meeting. Proposed by Amanda Ward, seconded by Dai Lerner

3. Actions Arising

Graham Mynott (Director) reported on the following items:

- *The Old Building*
At the 2019 AGM we reported on a £10,000 Feasibility Study for the old building and that: we had secured Architectural Heritage Fund monies for a Project Viability Report around the un-used and under-used space in the old building; that HBCA had committed £5000 towards the overall project; and that we had bid to HRTC for the remaining funds. Graham confirmed to the meeting that the HRTC bid had been successful, and the feasibility study has run since Autumn 2019 and was now complete. The Trustees are expecting to receive the final reports in the next few days. The focus of the study has been looking at how we can maximise use of the old building and how we can improve accessibility. Graham reported that the current plan is for the Board to set aside some specific time in the early Autumn to properly discuss the outcome of the study and plan a way forward.
- *Calderdale Council's 10-year lease ended 31st March 2020.*

This was an initial agreement between HBCA and Calderdale MBC dating from April 2010 for a 10-year period. Calderdale MBC are now holding over on the lease whilst discussions about future use of the building take place within the Council. We expect this to run until at least March 2021 when a clearer picture should arise. Graham noted for the meeting that the Old Building feasibility study includes assessment of the impact of the loss of Calderdale as a tenant.

- *Fairtrade Tea*

Graham reported that the Trustees formally discussed this, as agreed at the 2019 AGM and had agreed a plan of action as follows:

- to research fairtrade tea options – can we source it from our current supplier, if not where could we get it?
- to look at the price issue – purchase price to us and retail price to customers and what impact that would have on our financial performance.
- to consider how we might go from our current position to a “fairtrade” offer, and then
- report back to the Board to agree next steps.

Graham summarised that we had to find a different supplier to source Fairtrade tea and there was an additional cost to us of purchasing this. Before the summer 2019 we had a fairtrade tea “offer” in place but did not make this our main offer - like any business, we will not change one of our top selling items lightly. We wanted to try and take customers with us and agreed to set up a specific period where we would talk to our customers at point of sale about the fairtrade option as opposed to our current main offer. There was minimal take-up in this phase. We continued to count the take-up of fairtrade tea in the 6-month period October to March 2020: fairtrade represents 0.7% of tea sales. We have therefore not switched to fairtrade being the default tea offer.

- *Building Refurbishments*

In 2018-2019 we completed a wide range of planned refurbishments across the building:

- purchased a new Wi-Fi system for the building;
- sanded and oiled all the wooden flooring in reception and across the Café.
- in the Old Building: we finished the sash windows in the Greenwood Room; completed a planned lighting upgrade programme and full decoration of the communal areas in the Old Building...and (after some water ingress) completed some reactive repairs on the old building roof and a full redecoration of the Council Chamber as well, and
- as we reported in the AGM last year, we completed the purchase and installation of a permanent lighting rig in the Hall – thanks to the funding we secured from the Co-operative Local Community Fund

3. The Chairs Annual Report- Richard Needham

- Richard noted that this is the Association’s first virtual AGM, something we have all grown used to since the start of the pandemic. Our AGM had to shift from the originally scheduled 21st March because of the start of the national lockdown.
- Richard expressed thanks to Rory Deighton who stepped down as a Trustee this year (see Trustee Statements – New Trustee + Retiring and not re-standing. Richard noted that Rory had served two 3-year terms and will be greatly missed. We wish him well in the future.
- Richard also noted that the Town Hall was once again the hub of community activity and response to flooding – this time from Storm Ciara on the 9th February 2020. Richard thanked all concerned in managing the response to that in the Town Hall.
- Richard thanked Graham for managing the Town Hall in this lockdown and for all the staff contributing towards preparations for the re-opening of the Town Hall (which are not yet confirmed)

- Finally, Richard noted for the AGM the resolution of the loan agreement with Social Investment Business which is detailed in the Annual Report & Accounts and which Amanda will cover in the Treasurer's Report shortly. Richard paid tribute to the work of Amanda and Graham in reaching this agreement which puts the organisation onto a very firm footing for the future.
- Richard finished by all the Staff team and all the Volunteers for all their contributions to the Town Hall over the last 12 months.

Directors Report- Graham Mynott

Graham reflected on the Directors Report and drew the meetings attention to some of the stories and highlights from the year including

- Business Units – we have had at least one vacant unit since February 2019 (which is the longest period with any vacancies since the Town Hall opened in 2012). Graham reported that, even in the midst of lockdown, we are now full !
- Volunteers – Graham thanked all the Volunteers for their work over the year but wanted to highlight Katherine Wackerbarth who was one of the original volunteers and had also co-ordinated the reception volunteers from the start. Katherine left the volunteer team during the year making way for Jan Scott Nelson and Sharon Slade to take over co-ordination. We are very grateful to Katherine for all she has done over the years.
- Supporting Community Activity – one of the regular occurrences with the Town Hall is people and organisations coming to see how we do what we do. Graham highlighted that this year we have hosted and provided support to organisations from Liverpool and Kirklees as well as closed to home Todmorden (our friends at Todmorden Learning Centre, the former college site) and Causey Hall in Halifax.
- Staying Well – this has continued strongly during the year and Graham highlighted that as a result we have been responsible for the distribution of funds which came to an end during 2019/2020 – Todmorden Mental Health Commission and a Tackling Isolation programme (both funded by the Community Foundation for Calderdale) and have more recently been asked to manage a fund from the West Yorkshire Health & Care Partnership called Harnessing Power of Communities. All of these take the Association beyond the Town Hall into the wider Upper Calder Valley. Graham also noted that our Staying Well staff have been part of the Council's COVID-19 volunteer and mutual aid co-ordination and response.
- Loan agreement – Graham referenced this again but as Richard had already mentioned it we will leave it to Amanda to explain in more detail.

Finally, Graham thanked the staff and volunteers that support the Town Hall daily. There is no way that the building could run without the volunteers who support the front desk and help the smooth running of the building. Volunteers are the face of the building for most people who visit the Town Hall. We have 24 volunteers filling 24 slots a week and we could not operate without them. Our staff team similarly, are fantastic, and every week go beyond the call of duty to make the building work.

5. Financial Update - Amanda

Amanda highlighted some of the issues that have led to our financial reporting for the year.

- We have had modest decline in our revenues this year – down 5% overall
- Positively, this has been more than compensated for by a reduction in operating costs of 7.5%
- We have continued with the perennial dilemma about the business tenant rents, rental rates, and the café prices we charge. We want to make our spaces and the Café affordable

but at the same time we have a duty to maintain financial balance. The national living wage, and the auto-enrolment for pensions have brought pressure to staff costs in particular.

- The Café has had a difficult year – trade overall was down 8.5% but the big hit was on bar and meeting and event catering (down 24% and 30% respectively). We think this is just about a tightening of belts in the ongoing economic uncertainties. New measures were put in place in autumn 2019 to try and address this and we were seeing some progress before Storm Ciara & COVID-19 impacted.
- Full sets of accounts are available on our website.

Balance Sheet

- Similar to previous years. The building- the fixed asset has depreciated year on year and will continue to be so.
- This is the area of real progress. In February 2020 we swapped loans of £1.56m with Social Investment Business to a loan of £0.6m with Calderdale MBC repayable over 35 years at a fixed interest rate of 3.70%. This is the culmination of a project running since summer 2015. It puts the Association on very sound financial footing going forward with an affordable loan repayment plan. It enables us to look forward more confidently and will be invaluable as we seek to tackle the old building in earnest.

Business Strategy

- It's an ongoing balance between offering good business premises, a good café, a good community offer.
- We want to maintain a lovely building and keeping standards high.
- Generating income is always a challenge for us. Our rental income will never be enough to cover everything we do.
- Graham is therefore continually chasing money and funding.

The meeting thanked Amanda for all her hard work throughout the year

6. Ordinary Resolutions from Trustees & Members

None had been submitted prior to the meeting.

7. Questions & Discussion

In order to manage the flow of questions for the meeting we had asked for the submission of questions prior to the meeting. There had been three submitted.

Question from Eileen Cann: Are there any plans to have a volunteer representative on the management committee? The HBCA Board doesn't operate on a representative basis as such, but this is a valuable question and the Trustees agreed to take this forward for consideration.

Question from Diana Monahan: I have read the documents and I notice there is mention of a feasibility study for the council buildings. What happened to all the work that was done for the failed funding bid in 2011 to 2013 with Chris Mackin, Project Development officer, and then Jerry Smith? Could this inform future work? I recall doing a lot of historical research for this and making suggestions for the HLF bid to support the remedial work needed. We have all this information, and we will draw upon this in the next phase of the planning for the old building.

Question from Diana Monahan: We had hoped to restore an oil painting of Hebden Bridge which hung on the staircase to the Council Chamber. This is now in storage at Bankfield, but Last year Friends of Hebden Bridge Station and HB Local History Society organised an exhibition in the Town Hall and on a foam board we had permission to print a life-size replica of the painting with a view to seeing if it could be put up on the staircase. Will this be possible? We might occasionally want to borrow it for an event. We have previously investigated the possibility of bringing the real John Holland paintings back to the Town Hall but this has proved prohibitive in terms of complexity. Our current thinking is that we have permission from Calderdale MBC for digital reproductions of them and we intend to pursue this approach, either as part of the next stage of the old building plans or independently of them.

Question / Comment from Anthony Rae- Antony wanted to echo the thanks around the loan and for the members thanks to be formally recorded for this. People have obviously worked very hard to resolve this for the Association and the end result is excellent. Antony sought clarification and it was confirmed that the balance of the loan with SIB has effectively been written-off but will show in our accounts as a grant.

Question from Linda Patterson Linda made positive remarks about how the Town Hall has been supportive of the Piano Festival which had to cancel in 2020. Linda commented that more could be made of the Association's members: we could and should do more around involvement and member engagement, particularly over the next 10 years in respect of the old building. This was noted and the Trustees will take this forward.

Question from Geoff Tansey about whether we cost Volunteer Time – thinking about how we show value for future funding bids? We don't do this currently and will consider how we might utilise this approach going forward.

There was general discussion about having some celebration around the 10 years since the Association took on the asset transfer of the site. The Trustees will definitely take this forward for post-pandemic.

8. New Trustees

Graham referenced the papers circulated prior to the meeting:

- Two existing Trustees – Richard Needham and Antonio Benitez – reach the end of their initial 3 year terms and have put themselves forward for re-election.
- In addition the Trustees are proposing Julia Woodhouse as a new Trustee. There is more information about Julia in the papers circulated. Julia is a former business tenant of the Town Hall.

The meeting universally accepted their nomination.

We are always on the look-out for new Trustees.

9. Any Other Ordinary Business

None was raised.

Richard thanked the meeting for their attendance at the end of another successful year.