

# Hebden Bridge Community Association

## AGM 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024 (for the Financial Year 2022/2023)

Starting at 11.00am

### In attendance

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

### 1. Apologies

7 apologies for absence had been received from Members of the Association

*(including 1 of the Directors).*

Apologies were received from Joanne Brierley (our Auditor from Cresswells)

In attendance:

*Staff (&Member): Graham Mynott (1)*

*Directors (&Members): Jane Morris, Alan Gardner, Will Lake, Sue Barlow, Rebecca Blackwell, Rachael Swindlehurst (6)*

*Members: 17 other members in attendance (per signing in sheet available)*

Those present (24) MEETS the Association's quorum of members in attendance for general meetings (including AGMs). At today's date that quorum would be 23.5 members.<sup>1</sup>

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### 2. Minutes from last year's AGM (11<sup>th</sup> March 2023)

- The minutes of the meeting were noted.

### 3. Matters Arising

Graham Mynott (Director) reported on the following items:

- *The Old Building*  
GM to defer this to Agenda Item 4 // Chairs Report (GM will talk to this)
- *Calderdale Council's 10 year lease ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020*  
GM to defer this to Agenda Item 4 // Chairs Report (GM will talk to this)
- *Building Refurbishments*  
In 2022-2023 we completed another range of planned refurbishments across the building:
  - Using Community Foundation for Calderdale funds we have replaced the Solar Thermal tubes on the roof of the new building. This is part of a larger project to reduce the overall carbon footprint of the Town Hall. The thermal tubes' function is to raise the temperature of a cold-water tank in our basement meaning that it takes less power to heat the hot water used throughout the building.

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<sup>1</sup> Quorum is based on 471 members at the time of the AGM and calculated at 1/20<sup>th</sup> of the membership = 23.5

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- We completed some further repairs to the roof of the Old Building: specifically, the bay window of the Council Chamber to the front of the building. This is an area we have tackled before and thought we had resolved prior to the Chamber being completely redecorated in 2018/2019.
- This year we also have managed to replace another 8 of the original tables we use in our meeting rooms (we replaced 10 last year). These have been heavily used over the 10 years we have been open, and we are now able to remove those in the worst condition. Our plan is to replace another 8-10 in 2023-2024.
- The major refurbishment focus for the year was 3 units in the old building which I'll outline under Agenda Item 4 // Chairs Report (GM will talk to this)
- *Membership (there was also discussion at last year's AGM about low attendance)*  
GM to defer this to Agenda Item 6 // Ordinary Resolutions from Members.
- *Carbon Reduction*  
GM to defer this to Agenda Item 4 // Chairs Report (GM will talk to this)
- *Expanding Opening Hours (weekday & weekends) & Visitor Information Offer*  
Over the last couple of years there has been some discussion about extending opening hours during weekdays and at weekends, especially Sundays. There has been plenty of discussion about options for extending week-day opening times of the Town Hall and the Café but we have no firm plans to change our regular times.

On the question of Sundays, we made a late-in-the-year decision to trial a sequence of Sundays in summer 2023 but we were not able to sustain the originally planned dates. We expect to try something this summer too, but this is not finalised.

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We have been increasing the availability of Duty staff on Saturday daytimes over the winter which we think has been valuable for visitors, other staff in the building and probably helped gather future bookings for events (especially weddings).

However, we must remember that every step to opening the Town Hall more than we do currently has a cost to the Association and the Café and we must therefore proceed cautiously establishing whether we generate sufficient additional income to cover our costs when we do so. It's too soon to make that judgement right now.

We have made limited progress on the Visitor Information Offer in 2022/2023 but are working on a new project collaborating with the Town Council and Ayup Digital's Mike Stephens on this. We hope to be able to share more on this in the next month or so: but not today.

- *Public Living Room*  
There was a question last year about the Public Living Room and our future intentions. There was a refresh of some of the furniture during this year and we were successful in securing funding this past winter for restarting the provision of free tea & coffee (funding will end at Easter).

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We have every intention of maintaining the Public Living Room into the future, refreshing as necessary.

### 4. The Chairs Annual Report- Jane Morris

- Jane started by asking all the present Trustees to say a few words about themselves. Two Trustees were not able to be present today.
- Jane noted that this has been another incredibly busy year for the Association within the Town Hall and also in the wider community.
- On the positives we were fully let, our co-worker numbers had to be capped for most of the year because of room capacity, we over-performed our room hire expectations and we had a bumper year for weddings and parties and the Café trade was very strong.
- On the negative side we were badly impacted by the timings of our fixed-deal utilities contracts and the price rises which affected everyone over the past 18months. We had a long-term gas deal running to the end of calendar year 2023, but our electricity contract was on a 12-month contract to January 2023. The exact period when we would normally be negotiating new deals fell just when no-one was contracting because of the uncertainties arising from the wider global turmoils. This meant we eventually had no choice but to sign an expensive contract late in 2022. In the end we have spent £26,000 more on electricity in Financial Year 2022/2023 than in 2021/2022. We were already on track to make improvements to our carbon footprint in the Town Hall but have not been able to complete the projects in time to achieve the financial impact we would desire this year. We will see those projects complete during 2023/2024.
- There have also been developments during the year with one of our long-standing existential questions: what happens when Calderdale MBC decide to vacate their units in Town Hall and end their lease ? Graham is going to talk more about this shortly. The refurbishment project for all the units Calderdale MBC had occupied which arose from this diverted our capacity to progress the bigger project for the old building, but it is not fatal to that project, and we will come back to it in 2023/2024.
- There are further developments detailed in the Annual Report around Staying Well which will continue to support an increased role for the Association in health & wellbeing in the community in the longer term.
- Jane reminded the meeting that we must continue to look forward. We have successfully serviced our new loan and have a solid and sustainable financial model. We have a Strategic Plan for 2022-2024 and we will continue to focus on the same priorities: Widen our reach with the Community outside the Town Hall; Create an environment that helps Businesses make new connections and thrive; and Keep the Town Hall operating successfully and keep focused on our long-term viability.
- Jane finished by thanking our hardworking team of staff and volunteers and fellow Trustees. We are also grateful to our members and the wider community in Hebden Bridge for their continuing support and deep-rooted belief in our long-term success.

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### Directors Report- Graham Mynott

Graham reminded the AGM that Jane's report is reflecting on the Financial Year to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023 and wanted to update the meeting with some recent developments since then.

- The Old Building

Jane had mentioned the refurbishment of 5 rooms in the Old Building that have been occupied by Calderdale MBC since the Asset Transfer back in April 2010. We have spent approximately £26,000 refurbishing the spaces. This cost has partly offset by some payments from Hebden Royd Town Council, whose offices have now moved into two rooms downstairs, and a small amount of grant funding for LED lighting. The remainder is split between ourselves and Calderdale MBC from whom we are seeking dilapidations costs of around £14,000. Negotiations are ongoing on this. The remaining 3 units are now: an office for Staying Well staff; a second co-working space and a new lettable office.

- Calderdale MBC Lease

Related to this is a renegotiation of the lease with Calderdale MBC covering occupation of rooms in the Old Building. This is going to be renewed to cover the two rooms occupied by Hebden Royd Town Council and we believe we have settled on a start date for this in November 2023. Whilst this will obviously be at a lower rate than the previous arrangements, we are confident that we will be close to replicating the funds previously received through this new combination of occupiers, if not this Financial Year, this should certainly be possible for 2024/2025 FY.

- Carbon Reduction

This meeting had already heard about the impact on the Association of the utilities price increases over the past 18 months – 2 years, specifically electricity in our case. In order to tackle these costs we have been progressing measures to reduce our costs (and also save carbon). Earlier at this meeting we reported on the replacement of the solar thermal tubes (which will benefit our gas bills) and we have also progressed two projects to address our electricity bills: the wholesale replacement of lighting across the Town Hall with LEDs; and the replacement of the solar panels on the roof which is ongoing currently. We are replacing the old solar panels with newer ones which are more efficient, and we are also slightly extending our array at the same time. We will start to see the impact of these most recent changes in our March 2024 bills.

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### 5. Financial Update - Graham

This item was taken AFTER Agenda Item 6 (as Andrew Bibby had to leave the meeting early)

A full set of accounts for HBCA were made available on our website and links circulated to members before the AGM through our mailings. A full paper set of Accounts was available at the meeting as were copies of the Statement of Financial Activities and Balance Sheet for HBCA to take away. A copy of the Town Hall Café Accounts was also available at the meeting.

Graham highlighted some of the issues that have led to our financial reporting for the year via a short presentation:

- Our income across all activities including the Café had risen by 21% to over £538,000+, our operating costs had also increased by 18% and although these are higher than our trading income (at £603,000+) the deficit is more than offset by grant income streams and our Accounts are showing profit in both HBCA & the Cafe.

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- The Café will be making a £10,700 donation to HBCA representing the 2022/2023 profit from it's trading.
- The profit in HBCA is a little misleading because it includes grant funds, we have received in advance but not spent: we are advised that it is a requirement to show all unspent funds in full as surplus even if they are scheduled to be used in the following Financial Year.
- On the Balance Sheet there is not much changed from last year, but we should note that the Calderdale MBC loan has, at today's date, been paid for 4 years of the original 35 year term.

### Business Strategy

- We tried a number of new approaches in 2022/2023 especially around weddings and parties, other catered events and bars and we are pushing ahead with cementing several of these new approaches in 2023/2024.
- Budget expectations are positive for both HBCA & the Café: but progress has been below our expectations in YTD. We are confident we understand why and how this can be resolved to generate surpluses in FY 2023/2024.
- There remain significant cost pressures to overcome including national living wage and salary differentials, energy costs and inflationary pressures on purchases as we have seen in the past couple of years.
- We will continue to support our business tenants and co-workers, providing high quality spaces and an attractive offer at a fair price, which will maintain our high levels of occupancy.
- In the Café we will continue to provide a safe and comfortable café serving good quality food at a good price
- We expect to deliver our plans for the next phase of the old building.

## 6. Ordinary Resolutions from Trustees & Members

The Trustees had received an Ordinary Resolution prior to the meeting and the text had been circulated in mailings to Members beforehand. Paper copies of the motion were available at the meeting.

The motion was proposed by Andrew Bibby and supported by 4 members in accordance with our rules. The motion was as follows:

*This AGM:*

*Congratulates the trustees and staff for their work in making the Town Hall a resource appreciated and used by very many in our local community.*

*This AGM notes:*

- *that this wide range of users is not necessarily reflected in the formal membership of HBCA*
- *that in the period before the asset transfer of the Town Hall in 2010 from Calderdale Council, many hundreds of local people paid to become members of Hebden Bridge Community Association, providing at the time both evidence of strong support for the Town Hall project and a form of direct accountability by Community Association trustees to the Hebden Bridge community.*
- *that HBCA remains a membership organisation and that accountability to the local community remains in formal terms through the sovereign body, the AGM.*
- *that member attendance at recent AGMs has been poor.*

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*This AGM therefore instructs the Board of Trustees to consider ways of strengthening membership of the Community Association, and through that the Association's formal governance, and to bring proposals to the 2025 AGM.*

Andrew spoke to the meeting about the motion and there was a general discussion arising including several contributions and questions from those present. The main points highlighted were:

- That the original membership was based around the purchase of mugs and that around 600 ppl had joined as a result. The constitution sets out the way in which people can become members and how that membership ends.
- There are obviously people using the Town Hall who are not members and there will also be members who are no longer locally resident and who may no longer wish or expect to be members, as well as those who have died in the intervening time. The core of the issue is about translating the usage of the Town Hall to membership and through to governance and accountability of the Association via the AGM.
- Contributions from those present included other local approaches to these challenges at the Fox & Goose, Friends of the Picture House and the Scouts and their examples of how members are involved.
- There was general agreement that the mugs were a really good way of demonstrating membership.
- There were questions about how people can become members and how the Association encourages and advertises the possibility of membership. There was also discussion about possibilities of different memberships for individuals and organisations / groups and how the latter would operate (e.g. with a nominated member for each group).
- After the discussion there was a proposal from Richard to approve the motion and this was seconded by Geoff. The meeting voted in favour of the motion.

Graham confirmed that the Board will pick this issue up and report back to the 2025 AGM and probably also keep members updated during the year via mailings.

## 7. Questions & Discussion

Other questions raised during the meeting are recorded here for the minutes, but may have been raised at different points.

- There was a question about the use of battery storage alongside the solar panels. Graham confirmed we have discussed these but haven't explored them further because we have a steady electricity usage during the day throughout the year, so we expect solar energy to be utilised as it's generated.
- There was a question as to what we mean by dilapidations. Graham noted that the lease puts responsibility on Calderdale MBC for the payment of repairs and decorations during their occupation of rooms. This occupation has run for 14 years in April so we would expect there to be a cost arising on Calderdale – this is roughly £1,000 per year of occupation. We expect a discussion around what is dilapidation and what is improvement to arise.
- There was a question about donations. Do we collect them and how do we collect them. We have a donation box in reception, just to the left of the hose tower. In the years since the box was

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installed we have received donations varying between £700 - £1000 across the course of the year. We don't currently have a method for card donations at this point but will explore this.

### 8. New Trustees

Two Trustees have joined the Board as Directors & Trustees in the period since the last AGM when we were advertising for new Trustees. These are Paul Guy & Sue Barlow. Brief notes about Paul & Sue had been circulated at the AGM. It is our custom to present new Trustees to the AGM.

Two current Trustees are coming to the end of their initial 3 year term at this AGM: Alan Gardner & Damien Woolliscroft were being proposed to this meeting. Alan was re-standing but Damien has left the area so was standing down.

Paul, Sue & Alan were all welcomed to the Board. We thank Damien for his service on the Board.

### 9. Any Other Ordinary Business

None was raised.

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

The meeting finished around 12.15pm