

LETCHWORTH EDUCATIONAL SETTLEMENT
229 Nevells Road, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 4UB
Registered Charity No 311085



MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025
Tuesday 25 November 2025 at 7.30pm

Trustees (and Committee members) present:

Hilary Kemp (Chair), Marian Adams (Secretary), Alan Higbey (Treasurer), Stephen Charles (Vice Chair), Nigel Carrick, Colin Connelly, Elaine Fox, Jenny Gosling, Nick Skinner (Manager and ex-officio)

Settlement Members present:

William Armitage, Elizabeth Barber, Maureen Higbey, David Tinney, Charles Vickers

In attendance:

Julie Butcher (Assistant Manager), Russell Friese (Manager with effect from 5 January 2026)

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The meeting was confirmed quorate (ten Members of whom two must be trustees).

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Marine Boulter (trustee), Collette Hoefkens (trustee) and John Hall.

3. Approval of minutes of the Annual General Meeting on 26 November 2024

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

4. Matters arising not covered under other agenda items

There were no matters arising.

5. Chair's report

The Chair reported as follows:

"Thank you for coming to the AGM on this dark November evening. I hope that we can brighten it somewhat with the summary of the many achievements and inspiring events that have taken place during this last year.

I joined as Chair when the Settlement re-opened in September 2020 after its closure due to the Covid pandemic. These past five years have been packed with activity – a mixture of challenges, successes, new initiatives and making plans for the Settlement's future. This last year has followed that same pattern. Tonight I would like to share with you all the highlights and main changes that have taken place this year.

Firstly, I am proud to report that our adult education offering has delivered an attractive and varied programme throughout the year, and demonstrated steady year-on-year growth. We measure the success of the programme in a number of ways, using data from our database (which is proving to be a robust and efficient means of reporting). The metrics we look at include the following:

- The number of courses we offer – which has increased by 37 compared to last year, resulting in a total of 275 courses running across the year.
- The number of enrolments on courses – which increased by 6% over the previous year – resulting in a total of 2,235 enrolments.
- In addition to running courses, we run workshops and tutor-led events. The workshops enable our existing Members to try out new subjects and meet new tutors. The workshops are also marketed to non-members in order to tempt new people through our doors. Many of these workshops have taken place during the Summer and Easter Schools which are now well established. A new initiative introduced during the year was the Saturday Morning School, which has focused on arts and crafts activities. In total 91 workshops have taken place, 54% higher than in the previous year. And if I can do a quick bit of advertising, we are also running a series of Christmas workshops over the next two weekends, if you would like to experience one for yourself.
- The number of Members is of course another metric that we monitor. Membership numbers at 31 July 2025 were 830, representing a 7% increase over the previous year.

However, we feel that guided learning hours (active teaching hours) are the best indicator of the success of the Settlement's offer as it is a consistent measure for all of the courses, workshops and tutor-led events, regardless of their length.

Guided learning hours amounted to 4,368 hours over this last year, representing a 5% increase over the previous year. Arts and crafts make up just over half of all of these hours, and we believe there is potential to grow these creative courses and workshops even further. It is one of the ambitions that is driving our vision of the future for the Settlement.

Before I look forward to that future, there are still many other achievements to bring to your attention from this year.

During the year we introduced two new initiatives, the Artist and Writer Residencies. In the first year of the scheme we appointed two artists, Nade Simmons and Becky Ullah - and when their shared residency came to an end in September, we appointed Shannon Lane to become our current artist in residence. Shannon and the writer in residence

(Pippa Harvey) work onsite at the Settlement and, in return, contribute to our life and culture. Both the artist and the writer have use of dedicated space in the Kincaid Hall building if they wish to use it. During the year the then residents have shared their work by displays or by participating in workshops or tutor-led events.

In 2025, we continued our partnership with Herts Visual Arts (known as HVA). This collaboration brings together HVA's 300+ Hertfordshire artists and craftspeople with the Settlement's arts and crafts venue and its teaching facilities. The partnership also provides joint marketing opportunities and helps us to find new tutors. We have again been a venue for HVA's Open Studios in September.

The Settlement's "Little Theatre" is home to the Settlement Players. The Players were founded in 1923, three years after the Settlement itself. Our relationship with the Players continues to be of mutual benefit and the Kincaid Hall has again been the venue of three successful productions during the year – The Flint Street Nativity, The Girl on the Train and Haywire.

The Settlement's facilities also continued to be used by a large number of other hirers ranging from the Letchworth Garden City Camera Club (another group which has been in existence nearly as long as the Settlement), the Dance Steps Academy and other local organisations and clubs, including the arts, spinning and weaving, music, chess, table tennis and wine tasting.

Fundraising from other activities remains an important source of additional income for us, as well as providing the opportunity for social events and to engage with people who may not normally come to the Settlement. During the year we introduced the Settlement Sessions, a monthly musical offering. Events during the year also included the ever-popular quiz, "Whose Wine is it Anyway?" and our annual Christmas Fayre, when we welcomed local crafts people to the Settlement. The Settlement Sessions included artists such as Edwina Hayes, Emily Slade, Gary Stewart and Elizabeth & Jameson. Other musical events included Viv Lucas and Friends, Pete and Mike's Christmas Cracker, an evening of George Gershwin and the return of The Beertles for two sessions. During the hot weather over the summer, the fact that the Kincaid Hall had air conditioning was a real bonus during our events. It is thanks to Alan, our Treasurer, the Fundraising Committee which he chairs and the volunteers who help that all of these events take place.

That is a lot to have packed into one year - and it has left the Settlement in a stronger and more stable position, both financially and in what it offers, despite the continuing challenging economic climate.

So now let us look ahead, into the future...

We set out our vision for the future, in the Settlement's business plan. The three driving elements of this vision are that by the year 2029 the Settlement will:

- Be a thriving and diverse community, providing a wide range of non-vocational educational courses and workshops.
- Have an exciting Arts and Crafts centre for Letchworth Garden City and the wider local area; and
- Be the first-choice meeting place for local community groups.

We have set ourselves a challenging agenda to achieve this vision, which involves:

- Expanding and enhancing the existing education offer to deliver a wider range of courses and workshops, additional tutors and teaching hours, and increasing enrolments.
- Continuing to develop partnerships with other organisations for mutual benefit.
- Improved and targeted marketing to reach both our existing audience and a wider diverse demographic.
- Continuing to review and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our governance and administration.
- Successful completion of the proposed extension to the arts and crafts accommodation

I have already touched upon the steady growth in the arts and crafts courses, workshops and enrolments – and the fact that this category of creative learning makes up more than half of the teaching hours that we offer. To continue this growth, we will need more space and enhanced facilities – and this is the driver behind our proposals to extend the existing arts and crafts accommodation.

We have already started the preparatory work for this proposed extension. During the year we approved expenditure for a feasibility study to provide us with an analysis of the proposed extension's practicality and viability, and information on costings and the best way to progress the project. Some output from this feasibility study is visible in the Hall tonight, in the form of architects' drawings. Please do look at the display boards. The results of the feasibility study will be used to help us to plan our next steps, including seeking funding.

To sum up - we feel that we have again accomplished a great deal during the year, building on the plans and achievements of the last few years. However, there is still more to be done with our ambitious plans for the Settlement's future, and we look forward to meeting the challenges ahead in trying to deliver them.

The Settlement is, at heart, all about people.

I therefore feel it is important that I take time to thank everyone who devotes their time and talents to the Settlement.

We are very grateful for the continued support of all our learners, tutors and hirers. We appreciate their commitment to ensuring that the Settlement retains its unique place in the local community. We are conscious that the changes that we have had to introduce to safeguard the Settlement's future viability may not have always been welcomed but we hope that everyone understands why they have had to be made.

We would also like to acknowledge the work of the small but hardworking group of volunteers who support the Settlement in many different ways on a regular basis, especially those who help with our fundraising efforts.

Without all the different people who support the Settlement, it would not continue to exist, and equally importantly, look forward to the future.

I would now like to say a few words about some specific people and significant events that have taken place during this year – and changes that will take place shortly after the AGM.

First, let us remember a very important figure in the Settlement's history. It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Roy Evans on 2 January 2025, just three months short of his 90th birthday. Roy was the Settlement's Warden from January 1963 until he retired in January 2001. After his retirement, Roy still maintained a very close connection with us – he was a great friend and support – and he will be greatly missed.

Next to the present-day staff.

The day to day running of the Settlement is the responsibility of the Manager, Nick Skinner and his staff, Assistant Managers Julie Butcher and Carly Simmons, who have worked together for several years. We are very grateful to Nick, Julie and Carly for their commitment and enthusiasm which has ensured the smooth running and continued development of the Settlement. With such a small staff team, their willingness to go the extra mile is much appreciated.

It is with sadness that we accepted Nick's resignation as Manager with effect from the end of 2025. He took over his duties at a difficult time when the Settlement was still recovering from the impact of the Covid pandemic. Under his leadership he has developed the Settlement's activities which has contributed greatly to its financial stability, as well as overseeing a greater professional approach in the Settlement's administration. We wish him well in the future.

Nick's resignation triggered a recruitment process, and as already announced, Russell Friese was the successful candidate. Russell has a background in education and will bring his experience and own passion and enthusiasm to build upon Nick's work. Russell officially takes up his new duties on 5 January 2026, but he has been spending handover time with Nick in the last few weeks, and has attended some Settlement events.

Carly, one of our Assistant Managers, has also left us at the end of October 2025. We are very grateful for her contribution to the Settlement, especially in developing our marketing. As with Nick, she will be missed. Temporary arrangements to cover Carly's duties are being put in place until Russell has had time to settle in and be a part of the decision making about future resourcing.

This November there are also a number of changes taking place at trustee level. I am stepping down from the role of Chair after today's AGM. I will not be going far, as I am seeking re-election as a Trustee in a few minutes time. I have enjoyed my time immensely in the role of Chair – the Settlement is a very special place that draws people to its unique mixture of community and creativity. I would like to say how indebted I am to all the other talented and hardworking trustees and members of staff for your inspiring energy and all the hard work you have put in. These last five years have been a pleasure - I feel honoured to have been part of such a brilliant team, and proud to have contributed to the Settlement's revival after the pandemic.

The trustees have appointed Elaine Fox as my successor as Chair, subject to her election as a Trustee at tonight's AGM. We co-opted Elaine onto the Committee in May 2025 but her involvement with the Settlement predates this, having been a member of the Fundraising and Volunteers Sub Committee for some time. Elaine brings a wealth of experience at senior management level, with particular expertise in HR and change management. I wish her all the best in her new role.

In other trustee news, Katherine (Katie) Alcock has stepped down as a Trustee due to her work commitments. Katie was elected as a Trustee during the Covid pandemic, and her IT expertise was invaluable in helping us deliver online courses and keep our previous website running, as well as delivering a number of courses for us. We will miss

her greatly, but we hope that she will continue to support the Settlement in her personal capacity. I am however pleased that we have co-opted a second new trustee onto the Committee, Jenny Gosling, who is standing for election at tonight's AGM.

We are very grateful to all the Trustees for their commitment, in different ways, to the Settlement. Their hard work, guidance and expertise have contributed to what the Settlement has achieved over the last few years."

6. Treasurer's report

The Treasurer reported as follows:

"The accounts for the year ended 31 July 2025 have been independently examined as required by the Charity Commission. There were no changes to the draft report and accounts approved by the Committee on 30 October and made available on the Settlement's website. The report and accounts have now been signed and the draft version has been replaced with the signed version on the website.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to formally record our thanks to Roger McIntyre Brown for once again independently examining the accounts. He does so for no fee which saves us a not inconsiderable sum and we are very grateful. He has also confirmed that he will be happy to act again next year.

The accounts show a surplus of £16,621. The surplus arises after an accounting adjustment of £21,163 for asset depreciation, which means our cash surplus was £37,784.

Our expenditure for the year increased by 6%, with the bulk of the increase arising from premises costs. We have however managed to contain our support costs (which cover staffing and administration) by continuing to work on improving our efficiency.

Although we continue to depend on income from our fundraising activities to support our charitable (adult education) activities, what we term "the funding gap" between the income we raise from our courses and the cost of them (including the running costs of the Settlement) has reduced considerably over the past few years. We will continue to work to eliminate this gap so that our courses at least break even and that any additional income raised can be used to improve the Settlement's offer and facilities.

Much needed work to the Settlement buildings continued during the reporting year, including the completion of the refurbishment of the Kincaid Hall and the provision of audio-visual equipment in all classrooms. Towards the end of the year improvement works to the Settlement main building were started. In the current year we will need to do work on the ageing electrics in the main building as well as replacing the Kincaid Hall floor. As noted in the report, the repairs carried out to the floor as part of the Kincaid Hall refurbishment have only slowed down its deterioration and we are considering the best option to future proof it before we commit to any expenditure.

Looking forward, the Committee confirmed our promise of last year to maintain course and hiring fees at their present level in the current year. We will review the position next year and if we cannot continue with the current fee levels, we will try to minimise any increase. However, we have little control over increases in costs, especially those for energy and those associated with the maintenance of an old, even if loved, building.

The Fundraising Sub Committee continues to look at ways to supplement our income from our educational activities. This year included several music events covering an eclectic mix of styles, and our successful and enjoyable annual quiz, thanks to our

Quizmasters. These events also attract a new audience to the Settlement and help to spread the word about what we have to offer.

We are planning to put on more fundraising events in the coming year. Nick, and subsequently Russell, will ensure that you are kept informed of forthcoming events via regular e-news updates. We also put up posters in the buildings and advertise on social media. Please look out for the dates and make a note in your diaries to come along to one or more of our events.

The Christmas Fayre and Raffle (both this coming Friday) will be an imminent chance to support the Settlement, and on 19 December we have a Christmas song event from local acapella group “Jack in a Barrel”, with sing along opportunities to well known Christmas songs, carols and festive folk songs. We also have a full calendar for music of varying types through the Settlement Sessions and details can be found on our website, under the “Events” tab.

We are very lucky to have a small group of loyal and dedicated volunteers who continue to support our fundraising efforts, and we would welcome anyone who has any ideas for new fundraising events, or better still is prepared to help to organise such events. Alternatively, if you are unable to support our fundraising events in any way, you can always make a donation to the Settlement via our website – and if you can Gift Aid, this will increase its value by 25%.

It would also be remiss of me not to mention the huge support we get from the very talented Settlement Players. They have just put on another excellent and sold-out production (Rules for Living by Sam Holcroft). The Settlement benefits from a share in the profits of the Players’ productions in addition to their regular rental payments for the hiring of the Kincaid Hall so please provide similar support to the Players for their next productions in March (And Then There Were None, by Agatha Christie) and June (Pygmalion by George Bernard Shaw).

In conclusion, at the end of July 2025, the bank balance stood at £159,804 (last year £160,847) so there is no immediate cash flow concern. The balance at the time of writing this report is around £159,000, after paying for the bulk of the improvement works carried out over the summer holiday. Whilst we cannot rest on our laurels, sound financial management and the best use of our resources mean that we can plan for the future and be reasonably confident that the Settlement will still be here, and flourishing, at the end of this decade and beyond.

Information on our financial position is provided in the annual report and the notes to the accounts, but, in the meantime, I am happy to answer any questions.”

There were no questions.

7. To receive the report and financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2025

The report and financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2025 had been approved by the Committee on 30 October 2025 subject to there being no changes to the financial statements which at the time were still being independently examined. The independent examiner signed off the financial statements, unchanged, on 8 November 2025.

The Members received the report and financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2025.

8. Appointment of independent examiner

Thanks were given to Roger McIntyre Brown for once again carrying out the independent examination of the financial statements. He received no remuneration for the examination and had saved the Settlement the cost of the examination.

Roger McIntyre Brown had confirmed that he would be happy to undertake the examination for the year ending 31 July 2026.

The Members approved the appointment of Roger as independent examiner for the year ending 31 July 2026.

9. Election of trustees

The Chair reminded Members that trustees now retired by rotation which provided greater continuity for the Settlement as it reduced the potential for a complete change of Committee membership every year.

The following nominations had been received:

Name of Nominee	Proposer
Marian Adams*	Sarah Kitching
Elaine Fox**	Marian Yates
Jenny Gosling**	Stuart Cocks
Alan Higbey*	Pam Burn
Hilary Kemp*	Collette Hoefkens

*Retiring by rotation and standing for re-election

**Co-opted by the Committee during the year and standing for election

The nominations were all for existing trustees or those who had been co-opted by the Committee during the year and no new ones had been received.

The nominations were read out and the election of trustees on bloc was unanimously approved, with no abstentions.

10. Questions from Members

There were no questions but the Settlement was congratulated for the amazing transformation that had taken place over the last five years since its closure due to the Covid pandemic and for its energy and ability to push through new ideas. Thanks were also expressed to the Settlement staff for an exciting past year.

11. Showing of the new Settlement film

The Chair introduced the film as follows:

“We have just celebrated 100 years of the Settlement’s presence on Nevells Road with a special event that took place on the evening of Saturday 8 November. It featured speeches and presentations about the past, present and future of the Settlement. A wide

range of displays and engaging activities took place across our site to showcase the courses we offer and introduce some of the organisations that call the Settlement home. The event included the first screening of a new short film we have commissioned about the Settlement, and we would like to show it to you now at the AGM. After tonight we will make the film available on our website.”

The film was shown and those present agreed that it had captured a lot of the spirit of the Settlement.

12. Any Other Business

On behalf of the Settlement, the Vice Chair presented the Chair with a small gift of indoor and outdoor plants as a token of appreciation of her contribution over the last five years as Chair. There was a round of applause. In response the Chair thanked everyone for what had been a wonderful time, despite the challenges. It was astounding to think back on what had been achieved. For the first year it was difficult to see if the Settlement had a future but now it was a place that was thriving and with ambition for the future. It was also evident how important the Settlement was to the local community.

13. Date of 2026 AGM

Confirmed as Tuesday 1 December 2026.

The Chair thanked everyone for coming to the AGM.

The AGM closed at 8.16pm.

**These minutes will be approved at the 2026 Annual General Meeting on
1 December 2026**