

THE LETCHWORTH SETTLEMENT

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 27 NOVEMBER 2017 AT 2.00 PM

MINUTES

PRESENT:

J Bird (President)

Committee members:

P Burn (Chair)

N Carrick (Vice Chair)

E Barber

P Chapman

T James (Minutes Secretary)

A Obeng-Frimpong (arrived at 2.30)

Staff:

S Weston (Manager)

R. Lawrence-Hyde (Publicity and
Marketing Officer)

Also present:

W Armitage, P Baskerville, R Burn, S Charles, R Evans, C Garvie, J Hall

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

R W and J A Evans, J Elson and R Thorogood

2 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON 23RD NOVEMBER 2016

Bob Burn proposed that the minutes were a true record of the meeting; this was seconded by Roy Evans and the minutes were signed accordingly.

3 MATTERS ARISING

The were none

4 FINANCIAL REPORTS

The President explained that the day-to-day financial records were maintained by the Manager, and subsequently passed to the paid treasurer, whose responsibility it was to prepare the accounts for the external audit.

A small loss of £4,000 had been incurred over the last financial year, however this was extremely small in relation to the turnover. The Settlement was a non-profit organisation, with a responsibility to maintain and improve its Listed Building and to keep fees as low as possible for its members. John Bird explained that £27,000 had been spent on improvements to the building and facilities. There is a healthy contingency fund as well as a maintenance allocation to cover eventualities.

In the absence of a permanent Treasurer, a Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GP) has been created with a brief to keeping a close eye on income and expenditure so that action can be quickly taken on any necessary financial commitment.

R Evans proposed the adoption of the accounts; this was seconded by C Garvie and approved unanimously.

5 MANAGER'S REPORT

Sonia Weston had produced a written report, which indicated an increase of enrolments

from 1742 to 1966, and 59 more members compared to last year. Lettings had also increased (by 9%) and the Settlement now has an alcohol licence.

The Manager also described developments in the IT system, which allowed on-line enrolments, as well as a texting system to facilitate last-minute contact with students in the event of lecture cancellation or similar emergency.

Fund raising had brought an income of £7,000, which was very encouraging. Sonia expressed her thanks to everyone who had helped with the Quiz Night, the Settlement Fair, the Christmas Raffle, the Open Gardens event and lectures from visiting speakers.

The diverse programme of workshops and daytime lectures has continued to expand, with 448 enrolments in the year. The programme has extended to Stotfold Library and this outreach initiative is planned to expand in the future.

Members were encouraged to use their discount cards to encourage contributing businesses to continue to support our programme.

Sonia expressed her thanks to staff and all volunteers and the committee, especially the hard work of the Chair in supporting the carrying out of her role.

P Chapman spoke on behalf of all members to convey thanks to the Manager for her hard work throughout the year.

5.1 **PR REPORT**

Rachel Hyde described items mentioned in her written report, including the use of social media to promote the Settlement's activities and its supportive learning environment. There was a realisation that not everyone is conversant with electronic communication and an extensive outreach and leafleting campaign has been carried out in surrounding areas such as Biggleswade and Hitchin. A network of 'poster points' has also been established and community newsletters and listing guides have also been exploited.

The President thanked Rachel for all that she had accomplished.

6 **CHAIR'S REPORT**

Pam Burn reported that there had been many positive developments, thanks to the hard work of the staff and committee. Income was considerably increased compared to the previous year and she especially expressed her gratitude to all the volunteers who helped with the Open Gardens event, particularly those who kindly opened their grounds to the public.

The Chair thanked Nigel Carrick and Bob Thorogood for their hard work on premises-related matters, both maintenance and refurbishment. Much of this work would not have been possible without the substantial donation of Roy Evans and he was thanked for the generosity of his financial support.

Pam explained that it was good practice for any organisation to review its operational procedures on a regular basis and such an exercise had recently been undertaken.

There is a proposal to create an Honorary Fellowship status to replace the existing Vice President category, as the latter did not exist to reward people for their significant contribution to the Settlement. Conferment of an Honorary Fellowship would include life membership and free attendance at lectures. Candidates could be proposed by members and considered and ratified by the Management Committee. It is expected

that Life Members would have demonstrated valuable service, loyalty and engagement and made a significant contribution to the Settlement. It would seek to acknowledge the best of the Settlement and it was not anticipated that the number would be large; it should be a truly meritorious award. The Committee had considered the proposal in depth and it was commended to the membership.

The aforementioned review was undertaken in respect of the previous strategic plan of November 2015 and the Chair was pleased to report that – apart from not managing to appoint a treasurer – significant progress had been made in all other areas, viz: offering a greater diversity of courses of shorter duration, a significant expansion of workshops and an increasing number of twilight talks. Tribute was paid to Sonia Weston, Peter Chapman and Elizabeth Barber for their work on developing a wide-ranging and interesting programme. It was recognised that whilst it was seen that the aims and objectives were being achieved, there would be no resting on laurels, as there was a need to be aware of the competition and state of the economy when trying to maintain and grow the activities of the Settlement.

Work had also been undertaken on papers to support Governance, the Terms of Reference and the Feedback Process for students and tutors. These will shortly be available on the website, along with biographies of the Management Committee and minutes from Committee meetings and the AGM.

Plans were beginning to be developed for the Settlement's centenary in 2020, with a theme of celebrating the past and looking forward to the future.

Thanks were expressed to the staff and committee, which had been supported by the return of Tony James in the role of Secretary and the recent addition of Akua Obeng-Frimpong; Sarah Halfpenny was thanked for her contribution and Louise Reed for her insight during her time on the committee. The Chair was delighted that John Bird had agreed to remain as President for a further three years, as his input and stability were greatly valued.

Questions:

- It was suggested that one focus for the centenary could be to look at the Settlement and the town as they were 100 years ago from the perspective of issues that were of importance at that time and to compare them to contemporary matters.
- In response to the question, it was explained that the Settlement would close for three weeks in the summer for repairs and maintenance and that there would be activities and courses in the remaining three weeks.

7 MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Pam Burn proposed that membership subscriptions should remain the same for the coming year; this was seconded by Sonia Weston and approved unanimously.

8 MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

The Chair outline proposed changes to the Constitution:

p1: The Creation of Honorary Fellowships as previously explained;
extension of the President's term of office to up to six years;
calculation of a 'Membership year' as 12 months from the date of joining. (This was now possible due to computerised record keeping).

A clarification had been made to explain that visitors would not be charged a membership fee for attendance at one-off lectures. Not only would this make the cost of attendance disproportionate but also the lectures are seen in some cases as

taster events for subsequent courses, for which Settlement membership would be obligatory.

p2: Similarly, membership would not be charged on any course that did not exceed four weeks.

There was an amendment to the structure of the Management Committee as it had not been possible to find a volunteer to fill the Treasurer's post. The F&GP has been instigated and an accountant is being paid for her time, to keep the Settlement up-to-date with government financial practice and to prepare the end-of-year accounts.

p3: There was further clarification of the role of Treasurer/Accountant

p4: There was an undertaking to report the conferment of Honorary Fellowships to the AGM of appointed; reference to Vice Presidents has been deleted.

Questions: The census date for membership has been set to the end of July.

Roy Evans proposed that the motions and resolutions should be adopted; this was seconded by John Hall and approved unanimously.

9 **APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS**

Peter Chapman proposed that UHY Hacker Young should continue as auditors. John Bird seconded the proposal and it was approved unanimously.

10 **ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES**

John Bird was proposed as President by Pam Burn, seconded by Elizabeth Barber and approved unanimously.

Election of the current Trustees, with the inclusion of Akua Obeng-Frimpong, was proposed by John Bird, seconded by Bob Burn and approved unanimously.

11 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Bob Burn referred to a problem that had occurred with a neighbour regarding a private party and asked whether there had been any feedback. Sonia Weston advised that the matter had been raised following the granting of the Settlement's Alcohol Licence but she had been able to confirm to the Licensing Officer that no alcohol had been on sale at the event and that the music had been switched off at 11.00 pm. The Manager is vigilant that events should finish on time and has discouraged the booking of the Settlement for late-night private functions. There had been no subsequent issues.

Carola Garvie had continued to hear how much the Settlement is considered to be a valuable part of the life of the town and congratulated all staff and Trustees on their efforts.

John Hall asked whether estate agents had been utilised to provide a source of information about the Settlement's activities and the Manager explained that Diane Brendling has visited all the town's agents as part of her outreach activities and all bar one had taken brochures to distribute to prospective homeowners. Pam Burn added that over 50% of members are from outside of the town and the Publicity Officer had been working hard through social media and other initiatives to promote the Settlement in adjoining towns and neighbourhoods

The President thanked all for attending and meeting closed at 2.46 pm

Tony James
Minutes Secretary