

THE LETCHWORTH SETTLEMENT

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 27 NOVEMBER 2018 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)

R Thorogood

Staff:

S Weston (Manager)

R. Lawrence-Hyde (Publicity and
Marketing Officer)

Also present:

V Aitken, W Armitage, S Charles, R Evans, R McIntyre Brown, R Burn, M Mutton, B Neale, and P Soneji.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from K Chapman, J Hall, and S Pyke

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

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

3 MATTERS ARISING

There were none.

4 FINANCIAL REPORT

The President explained that the day-to-day financial records were maintained by the Manager, who did approximately 90-95% of the work involved in the production of the figures for the Final Accounts. These were subsequently passed to the paid treasurer, whose responsibility it was to finalise the accounts for the external audit.

There was a small deficit of £5,000 (compared to £4,000 last year). It was clarified that the accumulation of funds had been used to catch up on repairs and maintenance that had fallen into abeyance during the time of renegotiation of the lease. Items included refurbishment of the Hall floor, decoration of the Hall, the provision of new chairs and re-upholstery of others, replacement of tables, and the purchase of additional data projectors and software. The President assured the meeting that the finances were still in good hand. There was £120k in the bank (including £55k in reserve as a contingency if an unfortunate need for closure was to arise).

R McIntyre Brown sought clarification regarding the restricted funds and the President explained that the Restricted Funds were grants given in the past for specific purposes such as the new boiler and the Garden Room etc. these assets are depreciated over the remainder of the lease and the grants are also depreciated in line with this. The Unrestricted Designated Funds are cash reserves accumulated monthly for future large expenses such as boiler replacement as well as preparation for exterior redecoration and other major items. *[Post meeting note: the current lease is 50 years from 2014. PB]*

P Chapman proposed the adoption of the accounts; this was seconded by R McIntyre Brown and approved unanimously.

5 **MANAGER'S REPORT**

Sonia Weston had produced a written report, which was distributed to attendees. She reported that the settlement continues to be busy, with enrolments up from 1966 in the previous year to 2014. There was an 8% increase in enrolments for special interest courses, 9% for arts and crafts and 2.5% for languages. There are currently 943 Settlement Members – a rise of 25 from the previous year. Improvements in the online booking system appear to have led to a greater use of the facility. (For example, 80% of the attendees had booked online for a recent event). There had been a 4% decrease in lettings of the facility since last year for a variety of reasons; principally the loss of one regular group, other groups meeting less frequently and the policy decision to restrict party hirings in consideration for the neighbours.

Lectures by visiting speakers have been profitable and in addition to the regular fundraisers such as the Quiz Night, Settlement Fair and Christmas Raffle, a total of over £6,800 has been raised. The Manager thanked all who had contributed to helping these events run successfully.

There is an extensive programme of workshops and one-off lectures to encourage an audience who may not be able to commit to an ongoing course. There has been a 30% increase in enrolments in such events over the past year, which included a very successful summer programme. Good relationships had continued to flourish with local schools and libraries and more local businesses have signed up to the discount scheme.

The Manager thanked the staff, volunteers and Management Committee for their hard work and support over the past year.

S Charles enquired whether there were any specific plans to continue to increase members or lettings and the Manager explained that it would be helpful to continue the gradual annual increase but appreciated that the insecurity in the economy was causing an issue which led to people being cautious about expenditure. She aims to fill the gap in the hiring programme on Thursday afternoons and to increase after school hirings.

W Armitage asked whether the capacity to expand was limited by having a full complement of classes and S Weston explained that some classes still had a capability for more attendees but agreed that there are few gaps in the programme to run more events. The Chair observed that four years ago there was an anxiety about the building being underused, whereas the current position is much more favourable.

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

5.1 **PR REPORT**

Rachel Lawrence Hyde described the support of many partners and local organisations. The one-off courses added good opportunities to promote the Settlement on social media platforms, which also showcased the quality of work of members in classes. Rachel explained that she attempts to be as agile as possible in terms of communication, bearing in mind the budget considerations. She further commented that the outreach work in Shefford has shown to be very worthwhile.

S Charles asked for clarification regarding *'On the Button'* and it was explained that it was the Arlesey community magazine. He also offered the help of the Settlement Players to

share distribution strategies and the range of social media. RL-H added that relationships with the Comet newspaper are increasingly favourable.

The President proposed a vote of thanks for 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.

This had been a year of consolidation and building on the successes of previous years, both in terms of the programme, planned maintenance and audio-visual facilities. The expenditure had been carefully planned and the previously mentioned deficit was an expected outcome.

A full programme of courses leads to a strain on car parking and the Trustees have given priority to our courses as opposed to hirers when there has been high demand. However, the Chair was pleased to note that the hiring group most affected by this decision has found an alternative venue to suit their needs.

Pam was pleased to welcome three new committee members: Ken Chapman, Barry Neale and Sue Pike and went on to thank volunteers and the Management Committee for the support they have offered to help to the staff in making the Settlement successful.

Regrettably, it has been necessary to say farewell to Sarah Halfpenny and Akua Obeng-Frimpong who have resigned due to pressure of work. Nigel Carrick has also stepped down from the Committee and was sincerely thanked for wise counsel and huge support. He has made an enormous contribution to property improvements, providing energy, professional skills and experience. Pam was delighted to report that the Trustees had agreed without reservation to award Nigel an Honorary Fellowship in recognition of his services to the Settlement.

The Chair thanked all members for their continued support and sought help for the centenary celebrations in any way that people thought they might be able to contribute.

Questions:

S Charles observed that the Arts Council (East of England Lottery Foundation) and other bodies such as the Weston Family Foundation were asking for organisations to apply for grants. The Chair thanked him for the suggestion and explained that this has been discussed and the Settlement will actively be seeking such avenues.

V Aitken enquired whether there were any long-term plans to extend car park. This was not the case but it had been fully discussed by the Management Committee. The sum of £40,000 to develop 17 spaces was considered not to be economically viable. Furthermore, there was a national initiative to discourage the use of cars. The council car park at the Bowling Club was only a short distance away and provided parking at a reasonable rate. P Chapman explained the practicalities of the potential expansion, which led to its lack of adoption.

W Armitage asked whether a History of The Settlement was planned as part of the celebration and suggested that a history of courses back to 1920 would be interesting to compare with the present day. He further wondered whether any of the early courses would have any relevance in the contemporary world. It was explained that E Barber had undertaken research with support from R Evans. The research had been supplemented

by interesting aspects of the life of the Settlement movement over the years. Dr Mark Freeman (Professor of Social History at UCL) had been approached to see whether a PhD student would be willing to undertake a more detailed research project. R Evans added that research into the archives had noted that German was being taught at the Settlement in 1939 and that there was a surprisingly high attendance in the early days. The Manager commented that German courses had recently been re-introduced to the programme. R McIntyre Brown was pleased to hear that the history of the Settlement movement was to be included in the proposed document.

7 MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

P Burn proposed that membership subscriptions should remain at their current level. This was seconded by S Weston and approved unanimously.

8 MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

There were none.

9 APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

J Bird proposed that UHY Hacker Young should continue as auditors. SW seconded the proposal and it was approved unanimously.

10 ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

John Bird proposed that Pam Burn should be elected as Chair of the Trustees: this was seconded by V Aitken and approved unanimously.

The election of the current Trustees, with the inclusion of K Chapman, B Neale and S Pike was proposed by John Bird, seconded by V Aitken and approved unanimously.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of AoB

The President thanked all for attending and meeting closed at 2.50 pm

Tony James
Minutes Secretary