

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



MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

Tuesday 23 November 2021 at 7.30pm

Trustees (and members of Management Committee) present:

Hilary Kemp (Chair), Marian Adams (Secretary), Alan Higbey (Treasurer), Katherine Alcock, Carole Brooks, Nigel Carrick, Stephen Charles, Abigail Huffer, Natalie Maguire

Settlement Members present:

Elizabeth Barber, Pat Baskerville, John Bird, John Hall, Louise Jacklin, Allan Lupton, Barry Neale, Praful Soneji, Rick Weston

Settlement staff in attendance:

Sally Rogers, Jacqui Black

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Val Aitken, Pam and Bob Burn, Barbara Heaton and Shauna Miller (trustee and member of Management Committee).

3. Approval of minutes of the Annual General Meeting on 24 November 2020

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:

"The academic year from September 2020 to the summer of 2021 was a very challenging one in which to operate a centre such as the Settlement, with its multiple functions and

users. It was, of course, a year dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Frequently changing guidelines had to be interpreted and then applied to maintain some level of offering / service throughout the year, whilst safeguarding the health of our Members, tutors and hirers. It was a difficult and time-consuming juggling act.

The disruption caused by the start of the pandemic in early 2020, and the national government requirement to 'lockdown' in March 2020, meant that no formal course programme had been published in a printed brochure for the 2020-21 academic year. Historically this has been the main marketing tool for the Settlement's adult education offering, and also promotes the community groups closely allied with the Settlement, and the room-hire service. The Settlement therefore had to take a very different and flexible approach to offering and promoting awareness of its courses, talks and other activities during much of that 2020 -21 academic year.

The first action taken, prior to the start of the Autumn 2020 term, was to perform an extensive Covid-19 risk assessment, in conjunction with surveys and discussions with tutors, hirers and other users. This established the ground rules for opening and operating – including lower maximum room capacities to cater for social distancing; a new cleaning regime; and mask and movement guidelines for the centre. The second action taken was to equip the Settlement to operate 'virtually'. Many of the courses and talks offered during the year had to be offered online via Zoom, rather than in the classroom. This required work on the Settlement's IT set up and website and the purchase of Zoom licences – and it also required a new way of teaching and learning to be adopted by many of our tutors and students. However, it did mean that when the second and third national lockdowns were implemented in England during the winter of 2020 through to the Spring of 2021 the Settlement could continue offering educational courses and a series of talks online, even though the building itself was shut for several months.

Despite the long period of lockdown from January to late Spring 2021, work commenced on the creation of a course programme and brochure for the 2021-22 academic year. The Settlement's office staff did an excellent job of compiling a varied offering for the year, whilst building in flexibility for reduced class sizes and a potential fallback to online learning if circumstances demanded this. With the vaccine rollout progressing at pace there was greater confidence that a return to classroom teaching would be possible, and hands on art and craft activities would be able to resume. In fact several courses, talks and events did resume 'in person' at the Settlement in the summer term of 2021, with care taken to ensure that recommendations included adequate ventilation as well as the 'hands, face, space' guidelines already in place.

This unusual year has demanded a large amount of flexibility, adaptability and sheer hard work from the staff, the Management Committee, volunteers, tutors and users of the Settlement. I am proud that we have maintained a service for our Members and other users throughout this period, supporting social contact at a time of enforced isolation, as well as offering opportunities for learning to continue. This was only possible through the dedication and ingenuity of those involved with the planning, organising and running of the Settlement. I would like to say a very big thank you to everyone who played a part. It has taken team work, a willingness to adapt, and resilience to operate throughout this last year.

Special thanks are due to Sally Rogers and Jacqui Black who have kept the Settlement office running so efficiently and with a warm welcome throughout this unprecedented time. And thank you also to Carole Brooks, the Health and Safety expert on the Management Committee, whose ability to interpret the Covid-19 government regulations

and calmly implement them contributed to the ability of the Settlement to remain 'open for business' in some shape or form for the whole of the 2020-21 academic year.

The Settlement resumed the new teaching year in September 2021 in something resembling its pre-pandemic guise. Classroom based lessons, weekend workshops, the return of many community groups, and the staging of events and performances to complete the cultural mix. We must remember, though, that we are still in a period of recovery and consolidation – and we need to move at a pace that does not outstrip our capacity to deliver a good experience. The Settlement has a promising future, with exciting opportunities there to grasp (as our recent strategic planning session identified – I will briefly return to this later in the meeting under item 12). We greatly appreciate the support and loyalty of our Members, tutors, and all users of the Settlement, and hope you are just as eager as we are to deliver that future.

I cannot finish without mentioning the sad death of Sonia Weston, the former Manager here, in June of this year. I know that many of you knew her well. And to thank Rick, her husband, for requesting donations to the Settlement in her memory. We have been discussing a lasting memorial to Sonia here at the Settlement and hope to have one in place in the not too distant future.”

There were no questions.

6. Treasurer's report

The Treasurer reported as follows:

“The accounts for the year ended 31 July 2021 are being readied to be sent for independent examination as required by the Charity Commission, before being formally published. This is later than we would have wished, but remains well within the Charity Commission's deadline for submission. We expect the accounts (together with the annual report) to be approved by the Management Committee and published early next year at the latest.

The draft accounts show a surplus of £32,280. In addition to income from courses and the hiring of rooms, which was some 18% lower than in the previous year due to the Covid-19 restrictions, we also received donations to the Save Our Settlement Campaign of £28,037 and grants of £67,000. These grants include £25,000 from the Letchworth Civic Trust, £25,000 from Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage and £15,000 from the Letchworth Heritage Foundation. Without this additional income, the Settlement would have run at a deficit of just under £31,000.

As far as expenditure is concerned, we spent £17,600 on the decoration of the outside of the buildings (as required under the terms of our lease – this cost was met from the grant from the Culture Recovery Fund) and £14,000 on cleaning (at a more comprehensive level due to Covid-19 requirements).

The Settlement's performance continues the trend of the past few years – certainly since 2012/13 the Settlement has run at a deficit every year if other income is excluded (and in some years even if it is not), at levels varying in line with the costs of maintaining the historic buildings. The Management Committee is looking at ways to try to reduce the deficit, rather than rely too heavily upon donations going forward.

At the end of July 2021 the bank balance stood at £180,700 so there is no immediate cash flow concern, but clearly we cannot just continue to do what has been done in the past as over time the bank balance will just reduce and any reserves will be used up. If

last year's deficit of £31,000 continued in future years the cash balance would disappear in 6 years.

We need your help please in coming up with ideas as to how we can raise money for the Settlement. We unfortunately had to cancel a planned concert last month due to the low number of ticket sales. So, alternatives are needed and we would welcome as many "heads" as we can find to help us find alternative ways of raising money that will appeal to our Members and the local community. Please do contact me if you have any thoughts on this."

In response to a question about whether membership numbers were on a par with those pre pandemic, the Secretary undertook to provide the numbers in the minutes.

Post meeting note

The membership numbers (including Life Members) are as follows:

Date	Number
18 November 2021	672
31 July 2021	639
31 July 2020	510*
31 July 2019	984*
31 July 2018	943*
31 July 2017	918*

* Per annual report

7. Approval of accounts for year ended 31 July 2021

As noted in item 6, the accounts for the year ended 31 July 2021 are still being prepared for independent examination. As the Members will not be able to receive them at the AGM, the accounts will be made available as soon as the independent examination has been completed and they, and the annual report, have been signed off by the Management Committee.

8. Appointment of independent examiner

The independent examiner of the accounts for the year ended 31 July 2021, Roger McIntyre Brown, was doing the examination free of charge, as he had done for the previous year. At this point he had not been asked if he would be happy to undertake the examination of the accounts for the year ended 31 July 2022 but it was hoped that he would be willing to do so. If he was not, another examiner would need to be appointed, which might incur a cost.

Thanks were noted to Roger for carrying out the examination.

9. Election of Officers

The following nominations had been received:

Nominee	Position	Proposer
Hilary Kemp*	Chair	Carole Brooks

Nominee	Position	Proposer
Marian Adams*	Secretary	Elaine Fox
Alan Higbey*	Treasurer	Marian Adams

* standing for re-election

The nominations were read out and the election of Officers on bloc was unanimously approved. Hilary King, Marian Adams and Alan Higbey were therefore duly elected as Chair, Secretary and Treasurer respectively, to serve until the next AGM.

10. Election of other Trustees

The following nominations had been received:

Nominee	Proposer
Katherine Alcock*	Nigel Carrick
Nigel Carrick*	Katherine Alcock
Stephen Charles*	Pat Baskerville
Abigail Huffer**	Carole Brooks
Natalie Maguire*	Stephen Charles
Shauna Miller **	Hilary Kemp

* standing for re-election

** co-opted by Committee during year and standing for election

The nominations were read out and the election of other Trustees on bloc was unanimously approved. Katherine Alcock, Nigel Carrick, Stephen Charles, Abigail Huffer, Natalie Maguire and Shauna Miller were duly elected as other Trustees, to serve until the next AGM.

The Chair also noted that the Committee would welcome some more members, and to contact her if anyone was interested.

11. Membership fees

The Chair noted that at the 2019 AGM Members approved an increase in membership fees from £18 to £20, and from £13 to £15 for concessions (over 60s). At the 2020 AGM it was reported that the Management Committee had decided not to implement the increase for 2020/21 due to the reduced offering as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions. The Management Committee had now reviewed the position and decided that the increase should be implemented for 2022/23. It felt this struck a balance between the needs of the Settlement and fairness to Members. Although there was no requirement for Members to approve any increase in fees, the Committee wanted to let them know what it had decided and seek their views.

In discussion the following points were raised:

Gift Aid

Gift Aid was reclaimed on membership fees if a Member had signed a Gift Aid declaration. It was also noted a number of Members rounded up the amount to include a

donation (on which Gift Aid could also be reclaimed) when they paid their membership fee.

Post meeting note

Gift Aid reclaimed on membership fees is as follows:

Year ended	Membership fees £	Gift Aid £	Total £
31 July 2019	Split not available	Split not available	13,799
31 July 2020	7,509	1,452*	8,961
31 July 2021	9,744	1,381	11,125

Note: prior to the year ended 31 July 2020 membership fees were included as part of fees for courses. In the accounts for the year ended 31 July 2020 this was changed and the previous year's comparative restated.

*Figure higher than expected but estimated from historic records and split may be incorrect and/or include tax reclaimed on transactions from the previous year.

Concessionary rates for room hire

Membership was obligatory for Settlement groups, and a benefit to a group included a concessionary rate for room hire. However, there was a feeling that other groups, whose members were not all Settlement Members, also benefitted from a concessionary rate, therefore negating any benefit. The Management Committee undertook to review the fees to ensure that any benefits were fairly allocated.

Benefits of membership

It was noted that discounts with local businesses were valued by some Members more than others. The Chair reported that the Management Committee had already started looking at the make up of membership, how it fitted in with increasing and diversifying the Settlement's audience and its affordability and value, and would continue its review as part of its discussions on strategy over the next year.

Conclusion

The Members endorsed the Management Committee's decision to implement the previously agreed increase in membership fees with effect from 2022/23.

12. Looking forward

The Chair reported that the Management Committee had been looking to the future and the opportunities there might be after the last 18 months of uncertainty and change.

The Settlement had a strong educational base and course offer and was experimenting with how to deliver it, for example, online to attract a bigger audience. Additionally, the Settlement's social and community elements were also a strong driver.

The Management Committee had done some preliminary work on strategy. Over the coming months its objective was to develop some concrete proposals, based on the Settlement's existing strengths. One strand of the strategy would be how the Settlement's offer could appeal to a more diverse set of people.

Views from Members about the Settlement's offer, how to make more people aware of what the Settlement does and how to reach more, and diverse, people would be very

welcome. Surveys were also being planned to gather information on people's thoughts post pandemic, how their working patterns might have changed as a result of working from home and the impact on the local community.

The Chair believed that a lot had been learnt over the past year and the Settlement had a bright future. She thanked Members for their loyalty during a challenging time.

13. Any Other Business

Message from Val Aitken

In her absence, Val had asked that the following message was reported at the AGM: "Can I add a message of grateful thanks, to be minuted, from an ordinary Member for all the work the Settlement Officers and Trustees have done over the past year in an exceptionally difficult time. It is appreciated. Please add thanks as well to Sally & Jacqui and other Settlement Staff for their valued and appreciated contribution to their running of a unique institution".

The other Members present concurred with Val's message.

Membership fees

In addition to the discussions under item 11, Pat Baskerville proposed that a single rate membership fee should be considered. This proposal was supported by Barry Neale who agreed that although it was sensible to implement the increase in membership fees noted at the 2020 AGM, options for the membership fee and offer with effect from 2023/24 should be considered, including looking at membership in a wider context e.g. was it a barrier for people who might otherwise consider enrolment on a course.

The Chair agreed that the proposal for a single rate fee was a sensible one. The Management Committee would discuss the options and implications for membership fees, and ways to inspire support, before the next AGM when it would be an agenda item to report back to Members.

John Hall also suggested that more should be made of the Settlement's charitable status and its value as a heritage and community asset. These could be promoted as a reason for membership in addition to access to the Settlement's courses.

Carole Brooks

The Chair noted that Carole had not stood for re-election as a Trustee for personal reasons. All involved with the Settlement were immensely grateful for her skills during a difficult time.

Sally and Jacqui

The Chair also noted that the beating heart of the Settlement was the office and its staff. Members were already aware that both Sally and Jacqui would be leaving their roles, although not immediately. They had played an immense role over the last eighteen months and had coped with so many changes. It had been very difficult for them to plan ahead given the difficulties that Covid-19 had brought. On behalf of everyone who involved with the Settlement, the Chair thanked them for their hard work and commitment.

14. Date of 2022 AGM

Confirmed as Tuesday 22 November 2022.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

**These minutes will be approved at the 2022 Annual General Meeting on
22 November 2022**