

# TOWN HALL \ Hebden Bridge

## Hebden Bridge Community Association

### Annual General Meeting

Tues. 26th November 2013

### Approved minutes

Trustees present: Peter Hirst (Chair), Sarah Moss (Treasurer), Stephen Curry, Bob Deacon, Gwen Goddard. Also: Dave Clarson (Temporary CEO), Amy Leader (Business Development Officer), Cllr Steve Sweeney (guest speaker), and 24 members.

Apologies: Mike Troke (trustee), Char March, Kay Hiscox, Ruth Lister, Jane Scullion, Jerry Smith, Nina Smith, Jenni Wetton.

**Minutes of Previous AGM:** The Minutes were noted and approved unanimously without amendment.

### Annual Report from Peter Hirst

This has been our first full year of operating and the demand for what the Town Hall offers has continued to be strong throughout the year. The number of groups and organisations using the Town Hall is building and are themselves performing a valuable service to the town and surrounding areas. We have continued to be surprised at the increasing demand for weddings and other events, although this has posed us with problems. We have 35 enterprise units and a churn of tenancies is always expected as businesses expand and contract, but we have coped with that and in the new-year all units will be occupied. We have held a number of exhibitions in the reception area, and the café, after one or two teething problems, will reopen in the new-year when we will take it in house and run it ourselves.

You would expect that with all this activity and demand, we would have a healthy bank balance, but that doesn't always follow. You will remember that at the last AGM we reported that the building was completed 6 months later than we expected, losing us half a year's income, and the final cost was £140k over budget. That impacted on us during this financial year. Always the first year of running a new building is difficult. You don't know how much it costs to heat light and staff it. So we have had a few cash flow difficulties during the year. This has meant that we had to look at our room charges, our costs and our staffing structure.



Sarah Lister Blow left us in September having got us through the difficult capital build programme and Dave Clarson joined us. We have, for the last few months, had the benefit of his experience in running a building in Sheffield. It has been a challenging first year but we have got through it. We have a great building and now have good grounds for optimism as we move forward. For this I must give our thanks to:

- Our funders (particularly Community Builders) for continuing to help us;
- My colleagues on the Board and in particular our retiring Trustees including Chris Smith, Chris Standish, Jerry Smith, Gwen Goddard, and Fiona Armer, our Treasurer throughout the last year.
- Our staff, as well as Sarah and Dave, and Amy, Paula, Fran our hard working finance officer and more recently Robin and Andrew.
- Our volunteers without whom we couldn't have opened the building. It is difficult to single anybody out but I must mention Robin Dixon who has performed an invaluable service and Katherine Wackerbarth who has acted as our volunteer co-ordinator.
- I must also mention our members, and everyone else who has used the building, thank you for your patience.

As we move forward into the next year, we are conscious that there are a number of challenges, not least securing the resources to improve the old town hall building. We have plans for this project, details of which will unfold during the course of the year.

We also need to think as a Board about how we face the challenges of life outside the walls of the Town Hall. We are a Community Association, in effect a development trust, and we do have a responsibility to think about some of the other needs of the town which are not met by this building, and how as a Board we should respond.

Dave Clarson and Amy Leader were invited to speak from a management and staff perspective. Dave told the AGM that he had been drafted in by the main funders to help HBCA revise its operation of the new building and to develop its business plan. He said when he first arrived he was not over impressed as it seemed like just a new building in a nice town centre setting. However as time went on he was impressed with the level and range of community activity making use of the building. Dave explained there had been some difficulties but in his opinion the right actions had been taken by the trustees at the right time to avert a more serious outcome. In travelling around the country he had seen other project struggling to survive.

Amy told the AGM about a typical day in the running of the Town Hall and how the staff team worked beyond their remit to co-ordinate all those activities, uses and service the tenants. The office space when available is filled quickly. Wedding booking continue to grow next year.

## **Finance Report: Sarah Moss (Treasurer)**

Sarah presented a summary of our figures in the last financial year. She explained that due to the closeness of the end of year accounts to the date of AGM. We have been unable to produce audited accounts in time for the AGM.

A Summary as follows was presented:

### **Annual Income**

£380K (excluding grants £120K) = £ 250K of which rentals: £140K (key tenants are Calderdale Council, Prestige Gifting, and Marketing Lab), room hire: £50K, including weddings £15K, bar & catering: £29K, re-charges: £15K (phones and data used by tenants), and other sources of income: £15K (e.g. knowledge exchange speaking at events, organising events for the community).

### **Key areas of expenditure:**

Staff: £130K, gas & electric: £29K, bar stock: £18K, marketing (including new website): £10K, general maintenance of building: £8K, insurance: £7K, café equipment: £6K

N.B. A small loss was made in our first year of trading, however we were able to secure additional funding from one of our key funders to help our cash flow.

Full set of audited accounts available to members in the new year.

Questions were asked about the low income from weddings and the high staff costs and the cafe. Members were reminded that these were historic figures and now under better control. Further questions were asked about our level of debt and the period of paying this off. Dave Clarson explained there was no immediate issue with repayment as we had a repayments holiday as a result of our renegotiation of financial support from the Social Investment Business (SIB). The SIB Relationship Manager explained to the AGM when they would be looking for their return.

### **Ordinary Resolutions**

Stephen explained that the current governing documents (Mems & Arts) were causing the board problems in terms of interpretation, that they were confusing in places and too restrictive in others. They also contained too much legalise for the average trustee to interpret with no legal background. On behalf of the board he asked the membership to allow the board to review all aspects of the governing documents by April 2014:

- 1. That the new board is tasked to review the current Mems and Arts in its entirety between now and April 2014 ensuring it is fit for purpose in relating to a new organisational structure, and puts forward a revised version for replacement of the current governing documents to an ordinary general meeting in April 2014.*
- 2. That the board is also tasked to review and revise the Friends/Membership.*  
*Stephen also asked that the members approve the following motion to allow audited accounts to be presented to future AGMs*
- 3. That the Membership agrees to the moving of the AGM from November to April each year.*

All motions were voted on as one proposal from the board and were carried unanimously.

## **General questions and discussion.**

The main area for discussion was the proposed work to be carried out on the old building. Bob Deacon who was co-opted to take the HLF bid through to this month, explained that we had withdrawn our bid in favour of an opportunity to apply for a larger bid. This was in part due to financial constraints meaning we would not be able to cash-flow the smaller bid in 2014. The proposal is if successful with a bid in 2014 we would begin a full restoration project in 2015-16. Concern was expressed about the business interruption and members were told we were conscious of this and would be looking to minimise this and work with all the tenants such as Calderdale and Hebden Royd Town Council to this end.

## **Election of Trustees**

The Chair explained that the process of selection and election had been different this year to reflect the need to strengthen the board. This had resulted in an excellent selection of candidates with a good range of skill sets. Stephen explained that the change in method for balloting had been introduced to save on postage and staff costs but plenty of opportunity of options to vote had been made available. The Clerk to Hebden Royd Town Council had kindly acted as Returning Officer for these elections and had declared the following results:

A total of 45 votes were cast with a result that the following were elected to the board:

Tamsin Curror, Bob Deacon, Rory Deighton, Paula Nickson, Andrew Wrigley.

A members asked what the % turnout was. Stephen said of the total membership listed with us it would amount to 8%. However current active/responding members are around 160 so it could be seen as 28%.

## **AOB**

No items were raised

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.

The meeting was followed with a talk by Guest Speaker, Cllr Steve Sweeney, portfolio holder for Communities at Calderdale Council. And a Film "How Hebden Bridge was nearly lost" by local film maker Nick Wilding.