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In attendance :

P Nickson, S Curry, M Troke, P Hirst, A Wiseman, R Deighton, R Rickards, B Cape, J Cape, B Deacon, G Goddard, A Ward, K Collins, A Leader, E Clegg, M Green, C Light, D Hallgarth, C Willis, P Thomas, S Crawford, J Battye

Rachel Rickards, Chair of HBCA welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for coming. The formal business of the meeting began at 6.40pm. The meeting was declared quorate.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Tamsin Curor, Andrew Bibby and Dai Lerner.

Draft minutes of the 2013 AGM and the 2014 Ordinary General Meeting

The minutes of the previous AGM were accepted as a correct record. Minutes proposed by Bob Deacon seconded by Dai Hallgarth

2. Matters Arising

Rachel drew our attention to the issue of membership. We need to get better at communicating with our members and understand what our friends and members want and need better. Trustees have identified this as an issue for our workplan in 2015.16.

Rachel talked about HBCA's transition this year from an organisation that had designed, and built a building, to one that was now working out the best way to use it for the benefit of the community that we serve.

It was really important that we achieved this last year, and we feel that getting a better understanding of the core business was key to our stability and possible future growth.

Next year we will look at revitalising our membership / friends scheme.

Our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund was unsuccessful, and we need to work out the plan for the next priority which is understanding how we secure a long term future for the old Town Hall building.

3. Chair's Annual Report to members

Rachel asked Amy Leader, Director of HB Town Hall to talk us through the past 12 months

Amy presented the financial information relating to the operation of the building in the last 12 months. She outlined the challenges of the first year of operation, and the wider

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challenges of the building. This year we have moved from a position from being totally understaffed, to only slightly so!

Staff have been rigorously assessing the actual operating costs of expenditure and getting these under control. They have been expanding our buildings usage and widening our client base. Amy talked about how the buildings use is growing in a very organic way. We have people come for a memorial, and book it for a scout meeting the week afterwards, so whilst all of our activity is different, and is interlinked and interdependent.

We spend a lot of effort making sure that the building is clean and comfortable and we spend a lot of time looking after our customers. This focus on our customers and focus on providing great customer service has contributed to our success this year.

Amy talked about the Café. We took the café on in house and this was a challenge for us as an organisation. However when you look at our takings figures, we can see a significant increase in catering and café turnover in the course of the year. We will see what a café does in a full trading year soon, and carry on learning how best to balance the commercial requirements of the building with providing a service to all of our customers and stakeholders.

Amy also talked about the massive amount of work that we have put in maximising the use of our building. Rental for business units is up and we have been good to now at achieving full capacity. Our room hire activities have grown significantly from £36k to £61k over the course of the year.

Every day we make decision on how we run the building balancing the need to generate income to cover the costs of operating the building with the needs of the community. We do this by reviewing and understanding our operating costs, and our recharges to business tenants, and balancing a need to be commercial with our wider value to smaller community groups.

Amy emphasised that we are still learning about this building. We have some problems in the building that we are trying to work through. Those costs are still unknown and we face a challenge to maintain our stability as the building begins to depreciate. Lots of the large bits of equipment (lifts and heating systems) are falling out of guarantee and will start to cost more in future years.

Against this our office expenses are significantly down and we have clear cost reduction strategies to keep us lean and commercial.

Rachel praised the significant amount of work that had been completed by the staff team in developing and understanding this building. Our success over the last 12 months had been on the back of Amy's leadership and the staff team's hard work.

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We are now starting to look outside the new building for new opportunities and the Staying Well Project is an example of this. Our wider strategy has always been in making the Town Hall work first, then looking at the Old Town Hall, and then looking at wider opportunities. We are committed to this course of action.

4. Annual accounts and Auditor's financial report

Sarah Crawford from Riley & Co our accountants introduced the annual accounts.

Key issues

One of the key functions of the audit is to look at systems and test risk and the systems that are in place. Last year there has been again a significant improvement in the quality of the financial accounts. There has been a significant improvement again in the way that the systems are working across the building. This gives us great confidence in the organisations financial viability and the trustees ability to make good decisions with quality management information.

Sarah reported nothing material in their audit. There were some small errors, but Sarah reassured the meeting that reporting is of a good quality. Trustees are getting good quality financial information, and using that information to make good decisions.

The accounts show a deficit of £104k for the year which is largely as a result of our writing down of the value of the building in the course of 12 months. This will happen every year. We forward 2.2 million which largely represents the value of the building. Our balance sheet shows that we have assets of c£4m. We also have debts of £1.8m that mean that our actual assets are closer to £2.2m

Question? Have we had the building revalued? The last time we did was August 2000 when it was valued at £450k since then all of the capital expenditure has been added to that figure which gives us the valuation in our accounts

Question? Could the value be higher or lower than this figure? Trustees have considered a full impairment review, where we have a revaluation every year. However at the moment we feel that this is such a unique building that the buildings value in use to our community gives it a value above and beyond financial measurement. This is an accepted methodology for community buildings and its an appropriate valuation for us to use. It's not just a number plucked out of nowhere.

Question? Do you see this building in 5 years time being successful? The Building has changed. We are now learning how to manage the business. The business is good, the board is strong and there will always be issues. But the management systems are good and in place.

Question? Is the organisation a going concern? Yes definitely.

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Rachel thanked Sarah for her attendance and asked for the accounts to be formally accepted by the AGM.

Accounts proposed Rory Deighton

Accounts seconded by Paula Nickson

5. Ordinary resolutions from trustees and members

Members raised no ordinary resolutions

6. Questions and answers, discussion

Amy and Rachel then took questions from the floor

Question; How close are we to full occupancy? We are quite close now We have gone from 30 hours of room hire to 120 hours of room hire a week in a 12 month period which is quite amazing. We get more and more requests for weekend working, for example which we are looking at. We can't quite afford to pay for an extra member of staff at the moment though all of this is under review. And we manage all of this whilst still delivering our public benefit. The building balances the needs of the community with what is commercially viable on a daily and ongoing basis.

Q. What is the split between community and business useage?: We have 34 community groups using the building at the moment. The range of activities, from the scouts to Staying Well, gets wider and wider. We are continually balancing the needs of the business with the needs of the community. Our business units are all fully tenanted

Q. What happened to weddings as a source of income? Regular bookings are the most profitable part of our business. Whilst we have looked long and hard at weddings, some formats mean a lot of cleaning up, and dealing regrettably with drunk people. We are also mindful of fabric damage to the building. Wedding receptions are different however to Civil Ceremonies, where we can sell a ceremony and a drinks/ lunch package, without having to staff the building for 18 hours. We have a duty of care to the staff at weekend and need to be mindful of staff resources, safety and profitability.

Q. Has the end of the recession brought about a perceptible change in demand for conferences? The recession has changed this market and there is no viable conference business still. There is a small change in our position as an asset transfer, and we are unique in being fully tenanted. As a result we get lots of national visits, eg NHS England, Locality etc. There is growth in the use of the building in this way. But not as a conference centre. People want to be linked to us, but our ability to sell conference services is not a massive area for us at the moment.

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Election of Trustees

Rachel thanked three trustees who were standing down this year. Peter, Sarah and Mike had given the HBCA several years of service, through some of its most difficult times, and had been instrumental in retaining stability through the build and into our transition to being a working building.

The meeting thanked all three for their support.

Rachel introduced 3 new trustees who were standing to join the board. Anna, Dai and Amanda's applications to stand were welcomed by the existing trustees because of their range of specialist skills in arts funding and community engagement; in regeneration work, and in financial management.

As potential trustees they had already spent time in the building, attended development days, and observed board meetings

Amanda and Anna made themselves known to the meeting. Dai Lerner is on holiday. The appointments were proposed as a group by Mike Troke and seconded Dai Hallgarth.

7. Any other business

Q. Can we build on the success of the Piano festival? The building was managed with great efficiency during the festival and was a really good fun event. Would we be able to buy an upright piano and run informal sessions in the café, perhaps on a quarterly basis. Rachel said that we will consider this as a board and staff team and feed this back to the membership.

The meeting was closed at 7.30pm