

Lordship Hub Co-operative

Minutes of 2020 AGM Online Meeting, June 13th

Present: Dave Morris (Hub Chair, also representing Lordship Rec Users Forum), Glynis Kirkwood (Hub Treasurer), Sandra Sutherland (Hub Personnel,) Alyson Bradley, Nina Prieto, Issy Harvey (Hub Membership), Sally Haywill, Sue Jameson (Hub Secretary), Kate Bell (Hub Training and volunteer co-ordinator.), Joan Curtis (Hub Fundraising and communications, also representing Friends of Lordship Rec), Carola Kornfeld (Hub Community and Events Officer), Leona Ticha (Hub Cafe Manager), and Louis Rendle.

Apologies: Nefertiti Marriot.

Background to the meeting:

The meeting had had to be adjourned from its scheduled date in March due to Covid 19. 13 people attended today, two of whom also represented affiliated groups. It was arguable that we hadn't reached our quorum of 15. It was pointed out that the Government had recognised that some aspects of AGM regulations would be waived during the Covid 19 crisis. The meeting agreed to continue and that any votes would be treated as indicative, to be subject to ratification at a later date.

There was also a local parents and kids march against racism starting at the Hub going on at the same time as our AGM which we had agreed to support and had helped publicise. 2,000 took part, including many Hub regulars, members and supporters.

Annual Report:

Dave as Chair presented our Annual Report issued in March and circulated to all members and supporters as part of the publicity for the meeting – it was written by a range of board members and staff covering all aspects of the Hub including info about our overall year, finances, fundraising, membership and constitution, cafe, room hire, volunteering, park generally etc. <https://lordshiprec.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Annual-Report-20201.pdf>

Dave updated members about the extensive board activity during March to June - the forced closure / lockdown - to ensure the Hub's survival. This additional Report below had also been sent out as part of the AGM publicity:

The Hub was forced to close at the end of March. The Hub board have been going flat out to make sure the Hub survives and is in good financial shape when it comes to reopen. We have met regularly once or twice a week for 2 months for updates and decision making.

We have applied for a range of possible funding grants and lobbied our councillors and MP to support us since we have not been eligible for government grants and our insurance have refused to pay out. However we have managed to 'furlough' 7 of our 9 part time staff on 80% of wages. We also successfully applied for a £30k emergency grant from 'Power To Change' who funded the recent improvement works to the kitchen and meeting rooms – this funding stream is explicitly to cover some of our projected £50k losses due to coronavirus.

We made a video to support our successful crowdfunding appeal - £21k was donated by 665 individuals, with an additional £10k 'match-funding' promised by Sport England.

We tried to find a possible use for the building while it is closed, but nothing was successful. This is despite a meeting with a community group wanting to set up an emergency food delivery service, a positive response from the Council's Cabinet Member for education, and the Council putting us forward to the Government as a potential NHS staff testing centre.

We extensively discussed and planned for restarting as a takeaway sometime in June.

We have also put together a weekly Hub blog called Hub Huddle so that the Hub, although closed, keeps up contact with the community - there have been 6 bulletins so far, on cycling, birds, gardening and growing, community empowerment, parks friends, and Hub user groups activities online. See them here: <https://lordshiphub.org.uk/the-hub-huddle/>

We decided to spend some time to clarify our thinking about what we want the Hub to be and do and hope that staff and members can do so too so we can all come together to pool ideas, share thoughts and build the Hub.

The Annual Report was accepted. Appreciation was expressed for all the hard work of the board who are all volunteers, and the staff for their patience during this highly-stressful and complex crisis.

Financial report

Glynis provided draft annual accounts up to Oct 2019 (made available to all at the meeting via the 'Chat' page) and provided an overview. We have done forensic accounting and put new and better monitoring and forecasting systems in place. Valerie has been fantastic providing monthly cash flow forecasts. Our accounts system is linked to our accountant.

We have been struggling to move into surplus over the last 2 years despite extensive efforts. We were in a good place until Covid with some problems but going in the right direction. We then faced a new existential financial crisis due to closure, based mainly on huge loss of earnings (maybe over £70k). We have just about scraped through the worst due to furlough payments just received, a very recent £30k grant from Power To Change, and our successful £31k crowdfunding effort with included £10k match-funding from Sport England.. [Huge thanks to Joan for coordinating that, and to the 665 local people who donated!]. We now intend to replace the broken window with a hatch and repair the roof for outdoor customers.

The accounts now being presented include our shares and are currently accurate. This has taken some work to sort out as there was some uncertainty at the last AGM. [See later]

Glynis explained our accounts and the differences between accounts. Restricted and unrestricted funds. We do not have enough reserves and we are always trying to build these up. Glynis invited further questions to be sent to her by email.

We have received our accounts. We took a vote on approving our accounts and we approved unanimously.

We agreed to retain our accountant, Alison Ward.

The meeting thanked Glynis - who has indicated her desire to stand down as Treasurer (but remain on the Board) - for her unbelievable efforts over the last 2 years to ensure we get on top of our financial challenges. A Big Thank You.

Hub re-opening plans:

Danny and Valerie had been retained. 7 other staff on furlough. We will gradually be bringing staff off furlough. Brenda, Janice and Kate are the first. Sandra our Personnel officer has done a magnificent job in getting on top of the complex and often unclear government furlough scheme, and liaising with staff – a Big Thank You! We will be opening June 19th as a takeaway (only) with a paired down menu. We are hoping to open fully in September. We are taking our responsibilities re safety etc very seriously.

We have to cover our losses and meet our expenses. Our opening is gradual and we are abiding by government directives. The café usually just about covers its purchasing and staffing costs, although we don't know how the takeaway only will go. Its generally the room hire that has low overheads and therefore makes the most clear income. We have lost our most profitable months for the café and hire. We have to start somewhere. We are looking for people who might wish to organise outdoor free activities as we cannot currently use our indoor spaces.

Constitution and Membership:

Issy would like to develop our membership engaging with the people that recently donated to us. We appreciate the overwhelming support of local people towards the park and the Hub. We should take this as an chance to connect with people. We are here to serve the park and invite people to get involved in the Hub in all kinds of ways. Across the borough we have seen a tripling of park use in recent weeks, which is great - but the parks service are struggling to manage. Eg we need to encourage volunteers to help pick up some of the litter. Joan said how we need to reach out and encourage more Hub users to join in, take initiatives etc, and we still have some gaps in usage which we may fill with new ideas/projects. We have lots of local expertise to call on. We would like a more active membership and would like to see more activities in our 'amphitheatre' at the back. We have a very creative and community-minded base.

Issy gave us a summary of our constitution and membership situation. We had concerns about our constitution's share situation, and how it was creating confusion over who was a member etc. In 2018 we looked into our constitution. We had 168 members, whose share value was and is £11,500. Having shares excluded us from many public grants. We were encouraged to amend our constitution to remove shares. This we did, with extensive consultation with shareholders and through membership meetings and a special general meeting in 2019. Due to the efforts to change our constitution our last share was issued on April 13th 2018. However, we recently found out that this whole process had to be declared 'null and void' as our regulatory body, the FCA could only keep us on the mutuals public register if we had shares. Instead we would need to 'convert' to another constitutional and regulatory framework (eg CIC or Charity) and would need proper legal advice before doing this. Meanwhile we retain our original constitution.

A big Thank you to Issy for looking so thoroughly into the nightmarish details of our constitution and membership.

Joan is concerned that when people ask to become members that we can sometimes end up turning them away due to the complications (as set out above). Issy answered that it could be because it takes too much time to issue shares, and we need to move on from shares, so we need to find a way round this – to be discussed at the first meeting of the new Board. We had been close to an automated system when we had to close.

Communications: Joan, Carola and others had produced a range of brilliant flyers, monthly programmes etc over the last couple of years. In the last 2 months Joan had produced and distributed 5 or 6 sensational blog/bulletins on key themes – see our website. A Huge Mega-Thank You to Joan.

IT note: We have updated our website somewhat in order to encourage people to sign up to be supporters of the Hub. Efforts to overhaul and improve the website completely have stalled since closure, but will be resumed. A Big Thank You to volunteer Maugan who has been managing the website behind the scenes, and also sending out our supporters bulletins.

Also a big thank you to volunteer Tim who has been regularly wrestling with our struggling IT system in the office.

Lease: In March last year we finally signed a 25 year lease with the council. Hooray!

Volunteering:

Kate will be checking in with our volunteers. Kate is looking forward to work with the momentum we have got and has been heartened by the donations and the comments from crowdfunding donors that we have got. The publicity has been so positive. Kate is happy to be back in the building as she feels we have an exciting starting point.

Dave felt that involvement in the Hub is much broader than just being a member or a regular volunteer. We want to see the Hub as an eco -system of vols, board, members, regular users, people helping out at events, regular user groups etc etc all interacting and overlapping and reinforcing the Hub community.

Board elections:

A call for nominations was sent out with the publicity for the AGM, but none received. All current board members were prepared to stand again. Dave Morris, Glynis Kirkwood, Joan Curtis, Sandra Sutherland, Issy Harvey, Nefertiti Marriot and Sue Jameson were all re-elected. We will discuss at the next board meeting how to continue to seek more board members. Also, the Board will choose which of them will take on which responsibilities in the coming year.

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Looking to the future we can achieve so much - as the recent crowdfunding appeal and the children's march today from the Hub proves. We want to facilitate and assist community initiative and activities. We have seen grass roots organisations doing really good things in our communities during the last months of crisis. Lets help to encourage that to continue.

Dave thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.