

# LORDSHIP HUB CO-OPERATIVE

## AGM Minutes 16<sup>th</sup> October 2021 @ The Hub

**Present:** David Selby, Ruth Keeling, Dave Morris, Dan B, Alyson B, Sarah, Sue P, Sally H, Carl John, Maurice B, Lawrence H, Stuart G, Teodora T, Sue Jameson, Issy Harvey, Carola K, Sandra Sutherland, Louise R, Daniel J, Valerie H, Yvonne Richards.

**Introductions.** Attendees introduced themselves. There were a number of apologies.

**Attendee pack:** We distributed a pack of documents including the annual report from the Chair, financial report, Thursdays at the Hub, and a Volunteering report.

**Annual Report:** Dave Morris presented his report as Chair of the Board (see Appendix 1 below). He explained it had been a year like no other, and despite all the stress and challenges we survived the pandemic and lockdown. He paid credit to the dedication of our staff and of our amazing volunteers, including Board members, and all the fundraising efforts – a big thank you to our customers and community. Dave explained our aim of being an essential part of local community life. Due to the pandemic we have not held a members meeting until today and we would very much like to change that. We want to involve our members more. Our membership system has been updated online. For the last year we have focussed on survival. Now we have an opportunity to really think about how to best serve the community. An example is how we have chosen Thursdays to be a community organising and empowerment day (see Appendix 3 below). A final thank you to a member of staff, Kate, who has left us this month – her work as our Volunteer Co-ordinator has established volunteering as a key and thriving part of our set up, as evidenced by her final Volunteering Report (and a double page spread about this in the Council's Haringey People, being distributed this month to all homes in the borough). Sandra, our Personnel Officer, thanked our staff for all their patience, commitment and sheer hard work over this last 18 months – a sentiment echoed by the meeting.

**AGREED** We formally approved the Annual Report unanimously.

**Finances** David Selby (see Appendix 2 below), our treasurer, presented our accounts for the year up to 31<sup>st</sup> Oct 2020 – as finalised by our accountant. He also explained the progress up to Oct 2021, and thanked Valerie, our book-keeper for all her efforts to keep tabs on the finances and report to the Board each month. He reported that we are in a stable financial situation. The furlough scheme had been essential in being able to keep paying staff. We lost the hire income during much of the pandemic. The creation of a serving hatch and the reduction in VAT helped the café stay profitable. The community's response to our crowdfunding appeal was overwhelming and had raised £30k, and we had secured even more from other major grants which had kept us afloat. David pointed us to key figures including the drop in hiring income and our healthy surplus. The balance sheet last October was over £80k but included a range of grants for specific purposes which had since been spent.

A big thank you to everyone who has helped the Hub with grants and fundraising.

**AGREED** We formally approved the 2019-2020 accounts unanimously.

There were questions and a fairly wide-ranging discussion about the Hub and our finances. We noted the distinction between the Hub and the Friends of Lordship Rec, and the other park user groups. We all try to work together, and have overlapping email lists - The Friends 1400, the Hub 1000 – and other social media, fb pages etc. However, Issy, the Hub's membership secretary, explained that we as the Hub need to build up our specific dedicated membership - currently over 100 – and involve them in the life of the Hub and its decision-making eg through a series of members meetings and events. We invite all groups which use or support the Hub to also take up group membership. Dave explained that he and Issy had been grappling with complex constitutional issues, trying to transition away from a constitution based on shareholding. This is ongoing.

It was noted that the Hub has an impressive footfall and it would be good to estimate this.

We discussed the environmental benefits of our very special 'passivhaus' building, and it was felt that more could be done at the site to promote environmental sustainability.

## Election of board members

Issy Harvey stood down from the Board after 5 years - we thank her for her commitment and her efforts, particularly around membership and constitutional issues.

Joan Curtis stood down a couple of months ago after being one of the Hub founders and a Board member for 7 years – we thank her for her unparalleled contribution from Day 1 to so many areas of the Hub’s work.

Board member Nefertiti Marriott had sent her apologies and was happy to stand again for the coming year. The other existing Board members present agreed to stand again – Sandra Sutherland, Sue Jameson, David Selby, Ruth Keeling, Dave Morris. Yvonne Richards and Carl John, both regular Hub volunteers, also put themselves forward for election.

**AGREED:** All 8 standing for election to the Board were duly elected unanimously by those present.

## Final points:

- We are having a special board/staff strategy meeting about the Hub and the role of the café in a couple of weeks.
- Yvonne would like to thank all our customers for the support they have been giving our staff and volunteers throughout the pandemic.
- Yvonne raised an issue about the profitability of the café.
- Daniel would like to start a regular ParkRun like in over 700 parks around the country. It would be weekly every Saturday morning, open to all ages and abilities. £4000 needs to be raised to get this started, and he needs 10 committed volunteers. Daniel asked if anyone would like to be part of the core team to get it off the ground.

Sue P informed all of a Climate Action Now rally on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November, 11am at the Civic Centre linked to a national demonstration in Central London in the afternoon.

- Sue also reported on the Wards Corner site at Seven Sisters. After over a decade of campaigning by the local community and traders, the property developers who wanted to demolish the site to build luxury flats have abandoned their plans. The community (now at last supported by the Council) is now seeking to implement the long-agreed Community Plan for the area. It was felt to be another example of community empowerment, and how the people of Tottenham care greatly about their neighbourhoods and facilities.

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## Appendix 1.

### 2021 AGM Chair’s statement / Annual Report

It has been a very challenging, exhausting but ultimately rewarding year for the Hub. A year like no other, not just for us but for everyone. The covid pandemic meant the building had to be closed or activities severely restricted for much of the year. This was a potential crisis for our finances, our staff and volunteers, and most importantly for our members and customers, for our park users and our wider community. Our staff and volunteers have had to deal with all kinds of personal and collective challenges, and our customers have shown a great deal of patience and understanding not only of our predicament but also of the pandemic's impact on community life in general.

I cannot thank enough our dedicated Board members, staff, volunteers and customers, who together have helped us pull through.

Inevitably we have had to focus mainly on the Hub’s survival for much of the last year. For many ‘lockdown’ months the **Board** had to hold weekly meetings to discuss, develop, implement and revise strategies to deal with the complex and fluid situation. Then over the winter it tended to be fortnightly. We try to ensure the Hub functions smoothly - not an easy task at the best of times, but the last year has been very intense and a real challenge. I'm glad to say we seem to have come through it reasonably effectively due to a great deal of dedication and application to the matters in hand.

Our **staff** have had to deal with a lot of additional covid-related pressures: protective equipment and practices, the changing social distancing guidelines and arrangements, the furlough scheme and many personal and workplace

uncertainties. I think it's fair to say that at times the operation has been stretched to the limit, and it has been the staff's dedication and coordination (including through their fortnightly collective meetings) that has kept things going.

You can read the Volunteering Report about our amazing group of around 50 **volunteers**, without which we could not function. In any case they are a key part of our community involvement and empowerment ethos. This includes our Board members!

We were able to contribute to the **wider community** challenge set by the pandemic through some informative and encouraging Hub bulletins, a weekly free food distribution scheme for many months, and running our usual Hub services whenever possible. That this was appreciated was demonstrated by the overwhelming response by our customers to our financial appeal last summer to help us survive during the darkest days of lockdown. It is great to see that local people are once again hiring our rooms for all kinds of activities, and using our café fully – bringing the building alive again!

We have taken the opportunity to improve our communications, including the revamp of our website and social media. However, we also urgently need to expand and better involve our **membership** in the life of the Hub, and in particular re-launch our membership meetings which have lapsed due to a combination of complex constitutional problems with our set up (based on a shareholding system) and lockdown restrictions. One recent new initiative has been to set aside Thursdays for activities promoting community awareness, self-organisation and empowerment – which has now started to take off.

Overall, I believe our community-based co-operative ethos, principles and processes have survived the pandemic and proved resilient, and it is hoped that we can start to **move forward** from survival mode into focusing again on our long term aims in supporting our community. In the coming year we look forward to further progress on a number of fronts, including the complex issue of transitioning to a more appropriate constitutional set up, building up our membership, and encouraging more community events around the Hub and in the park generally.

*Dave Morris, Chair of Lordship Hub Co-operative*

## **Appendix 2.**

### **2021 AGM Treasurer's statement:**

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the finances of The Hub had the potential to be devastating. Different degrees of enforced lockdowns for over half of the financial year directly impacted the Hub's main sources of revenue - hire income and sales from the café - meaning that cash flow became very challenging, very quickly in March 2020.

However, the organisation reacted quickly. The Hub undertook a number of measures at pace that cut costs and raised alternative funds. These included utilising the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (or furlough), a significant crowdfunding campaign that raised over £30,000 from the local community [including £10k match funding through Crowdfunder itself] and also applied from a number of grants from a variety of organisations to cover some of the Hub's fixed costs and other projects to support the community through the pandemic.

This quick action secured the finances of the Hub, leaving a solid reserve of funds that will continue to support the recovery of the Hub well into the future as activities begin to recover.

*David Selby, Treasurer of Lordship Hub Co-operative*

## **Appendix 3.**

### **Thursdays at the Hub**

In the October half term of 2020 two volunteers ran a **free breakfast club** for families because of the government's refusal to provide food for families during school holidays.

After this week, it was decided that we carry on with this work and **provide free food** for those who were struggling in our community. We would shut the café and use the Hub as a provider of cooked food and groceries. We did this

until the end of July 2021 with the help of around 6+ volunteers. We were spending around £300 a week, and after our funding ran out we could no longer sustain it.

The board decided to remain closed on a Thursday and promote the free use of the Hub for **socially useful/solidarity projects** run by people in our community who needed facilities.

Since August 26<sup>th</sup> we have worked collaboratively with **Haringey Reach and Connect** and **Haringey over 50s Forum** to run a seniors' coffee morning which has attracted over 15+ people, from various ethnic backgrounds, regularly every week since. It is a very lively group and there have been some very good discussions and sharing of information. Since it has started we have built a relationship with **Coffee and Computers** who have come in to help people on a one to one basis with their technology problems and who also ran a public event on how to contact the NHS digitally which was very well attended.

We have a few of other groups who will be starting to use our facilities on a Thursday in November. One is the **OK Foundation** who want to use our kitchen to run a healthy eating programme where a qualified chef will teach people how to make healthy, nutritious meals on a budget. Participants will all sit together afterwards and share and enjoy the dishes they have prepared. A contract has been drawn up for the use of our kitchen facilities and a date will be set for them to start the project soon.

Another project is to teach English as a second language, run by a professional ESOL teacher. We have had meetings with **SpeakStreet** an organisation who do language work with migrants who have given us some good ideas on things we can provide and also communicated with the local **Quakers** who work with migrants in Tottenham on a gardening project. This will start in early November. We may try to introduce people who attend to the **Harmony Gardens** where they could extend their language skills while volunteering in the gardens.

A further project which would only be once a month is for a **group of local childminders** to meet together with other childminders to support each other and discuss things of mutual interest.