



**MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2020**

**Tuesday 24 November 2020 at 7.30pm**

**Via Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions**

**Trustees (and members of Management Committee) present:**

Hilary Kemp (Chair), Marian Adams (Secretary), Alan Higbey (Treasurer), Katherine Alcock, Carole Brooks, Christina Butterworth, Val Button, Nigel Carrick, Natalie Maguire, Barry Neale

**Settlement Members present:**

Michael Andrews, Elizabeth Barber, Pat Baskerville, John Bird, Bob Burn, Sarah Carrick, Peter Chapman, Stephen Charles, Paula Lawrence, Sally Rogers, Julia Scammell

**1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Pam Burn and Val Aitken.

**3. Approval of minutes of the Annual General Meeting on 25 November 2019**

Approval was conducted by Zoom Poll. The results were:

Yes	18
No	-
Abstain	3

The minutes were therefore approved and signed by the Chair.

#### **4. Matters arising not covered under other agenda items**

Membership fees: At the 2019 AGM an increase in membership fees was approved (item 7 of the minutes of the 2019 AGM refers). The Chair noted that in view of the COVID-19 restrictions, the Management Committee had decided not to implement the increase for 2020/21, but was still planning to do so for 2021/22. The Committee had felt it was important to strike a balance between what was fair to Members and the needs of the Settlement.

There were no other matters arising.

#### **5. Chair's report**

The Chair reported as follows:

“As is the case for many other people present today, I see the Settlement is a special place and ‘typically Letchworth’. It’s that combination of community, creativity and education that embody the spirit of the early pioneers of the Garden City who wanted to build a town that offered a better way of life for all.

I was shocked to hear that the doors of the Settlement were at risk of permanent closure in 2020 as a result of the pandemic. And like many others was moved to act.

I’ve chaired the Letchworth Festival for 3 years, and been involved in a number of other community organisations in Letchworth (from school PTAs to running a forest school in our parks and Common). And it was because of this experience and connections within Letchworth that I was approached to take on the role of Chair in the ‘Save Our Settlement’ emergency response team. I jumped at the chance.

There were four of us initially – Alan Higbey, Marian Adams and fundraiser extraordinaire Nigel Carrick – and we set about putting together a group of willing volunteers to form a new all-action interim Committee. We were overwhelmed by the eagerness of so many local, and some not so local, people to support the Settlement with their time or their money or both!

You’ll hear a financial update from the Treasurer in his report, including the impact of the pandemic. And details of the 2019-20 year are set out in the Trustees’ report. Plus many of you will have been aware of the Settlement opening again for business in September ... and continuing to operate and run courses and events, even though the doors have had to temporarily close again as the pandemic increased the risk of meeting face to face.

So, I want to focus on two things in the rest of my report: the future, and saying thank you.

Firstly, let’s look to the future, in this Centenary year for the Settlement. We have had a lot of looking back, but the unprecedented situation we’ve experienced in 2020 with the pandemic has made us look again at what we offer and how we offer it. Social distancing and restrictions on who can meet face to face have made us move online very rapidly. We have acquired new digital tools and skills, and are beginning to understand that there are a lot of new opportunities to be had by extending our offering into the virtual space rather than just being constrained by the capacity of the physical premises.

Don’t worry, we know that the Settlement plays an important role as a place to meet and learn, and we’ll be opening our doors again as soon as we can. But we will be doing a lot

online too in the future, even after the pandemic has gone. Online allows us to reach more people in more places - students, tutors and audiences for events, including those who regardless of the pandemic could not attend the Settlement in person. And we know that many of the population have gone through a crash course in using Zoom in 2020 so one of the historic barriers has been (mostly) removed.

We're also keen to make good use of evenings and weekends – we are looking to run more workshops and events – and we welcome any ideas. We are also keen to extend our partnerships too. The joint events held with LALG are just the start of the partnering. And we're in discussion with other clubs/venues/institutions about how we can work together across Letchworth and sometimes even beyond. The committee have many ideas – but we are keen to hear from our Members and supporters too. What would you like to see the Settlement offering in five years' time? And if we can make it happen sooner, all the better.

Coming back to the present, I feel that there a large number of thank yous in order this year, and I'll run through some key names now:

- Firstly, to Roy Evans, for a long time the warden at the Settlement, who kindly agreed to unveil our Centenary plaque. Thank you to Roy for agreeing to speak and to be filmed, and of course thank you for your long service and support.
- Next a big thank you goes to the team who captured the Settlement history in the form of a book about the first 100 years - Kate Thompson the author, Vanessa Stone for the beautiful cover design, University of Hertfordshire Press for publishing the book, and Pam Burn the driving force behind it happening at all
- A huge thank you to the staff – Sally and Jacqui in the office - who've shown just how adaptable and resilient they are in this trying year; and to all those staff who have served the Settlement over the years.
- Thank you to the new Committee for being enthusiastic, pragmatic and willing to try new things. I am pleased that with one exception (due to work commitments) they are all standing for election tonight!
- And thank you also to the previous Committee whose work over the years ensured that we inherited a centre with a fantastic reputation and a loyal base of Members.
- And the final thanks goes to the Settlement Members, volunteers, hirers and other users, donors to the fundraising appeal and grant givers. There's not time at the AGM to name everyone individually but it's your continuing support for the Settlement that means we have a bright future to look forward to."

There were no questions.

## **6. Treasurer's report**

The Treasurer reported as follows:

"Like Hilary, when I became involved with the Settlement in June of this year, it was in response to the press release advising of its closure. As a long-standing Letchworth resident and Treasurer of Letchworth Arts & Leisure Group (LALG), I could not let this happen without a fight.

With Hilary and Marian we formed the basis for the present Committee using everyone's particular expertise to create a team suited to the rescue mission that faced us.

Nigel Carrick had also responded in starting a campaign to raise money to help us in our task. This proved to be a phenomenal success and as at 31 July 2020 the Save Our Settlement Appeal has to date raised just over £83,000, including Gift Aid. Over the last few weeks we have also secured £52,000 of grants from the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage, Letchworth Civic Trust and North Herts District Council. The grants from the Recovery Fund and NHDC are restricted for specific expenditure.

The accounts for the year ended 31 July 2020 have now been sent for examination as required by the Charity Commission, before being formally published, although they are available on the Settlement website for Members to look at. Normally the examination would have been completed before the AGM but you will appreciate that there has been quite a steep learning curve for us and we felt that it was better to take the time to understand how the accounts were made up as this would give us a much better platform for the future.

The accounts show a surplus of £50,761 but this included donations to the Save Our Settlement Campaign of £83,466 and Coronavirus COVID-19 related grants of £33,741. Without this income, the Settlement would have run at a deficit of just over £60,000, although this would have been reduced by nearly half if the redundancy payments are excluded from the calculation.

As at 31 July 2020 the bank balance stood at £123,700 and income we have received since then, including further grants of £27,000, have covered costs and provided surplus funds to increase the present bank balance to just over £150,000. We still await one grant of £25,000. Together these monies will enable us to survive the pandemic and to still be around as things hopefully start to return to normal in 2021.

Since the end of July we have been able to again open classes and some of the hiring of rooms (albeit suspended at present by Lockdown 2) using the cash we hold to cover the fact that overall these are running at a loss due to restrictions on class numbers and the high cost of cleaning the premises to ensure that we comply with all Coronavirus COVID-19 restrictions.

We are developing new ideas to generate cash and the concert series, a joint venture with LALG, is one such measure that is proving to be successful. Others will follow, but if anyone has any ideas please share it with us as it may be something we have not considered.

We hope that as the restrictions are lifted over time, we can bring the Settlement fully back to life, albeit that some things will remain different than before, but, hopefully, in most cases will have changed for the better."

There were no questions.

## **7. Approval of accounts for year ended 31 July 2020**

Before approval was sought, it was noted that the accounts were currently with the independent examiner, so the AGM would be asked to approve them subject to there being no material issues arising from the examination.

Approval was conducted by Zoom Poll. The results were:

Yes	18
No	-
Abstain	3

The accounts were therefore approved subject to there being no material issues arising from the independent examination.

## 8. Appointment of independent examiner

The Treasurer noted that the independent examiner had to be a member of a professional accountancy body and if required by that body, to hold a practising certificate to accept the appointment. The examiner of the accounts for the year ended 31 July 2020 was doing the examination free of charge. 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 2021. If he was not, another examiner would need to be appointed, which might incur a cost, as it had done in previous years.

## 9. Election of Officers

Nominations had been received for Hilary Kemp, Marian Adams and Alan Higbey to serve as Chair, Secretary and Treasurer respectively

The election of each Officer was conducted by Zoom Poll. The results were:

	<b>Chair</b>	<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>
	<b>Hilary Kemp</b>	<b>Marian Adams</b>	<b>Alan Higbey</b>
Yes	20	19	21
No	-	-	-
Abstain	1	2	-

Hilary King, Marian Adams and Alan Higbey were duly elected as Chair, Secretary and Treasurer respectively, to serve until the next AGM.

## 10. Election of other Trustees

Nominations had been received for Katherine Alcock, Carole Brooks, Christina Butterworth, Val Button, Nigel Carrick, Stephen Charles, Natalie Maguire and Barry Neale to serve as other Trustees.

The election of each Trustee was conducted by Zoom Poll. The results were:

	<b>Katherine Alcock</b>	<b>Carole Brooks</b>	<b>Christina Butterworth</b>
Yes	19	20	19
No	-	-	-
Abstain	2	1	2

	<b>Val Button</b>	<b>Nigel Carrick</b>	<b>Stephen Charles</b>
Yes	20	19	17
No	-	-	-
Abstain	1	2	4

	<b>Natalie Maguire</b>	<b>Barry Neale</b>
Yes	19	17
No	-	-
Abstain	2	4

Katherine Alcock, Carole Brooks, Christina Butterworth, Val Button, Nigel Carrick, Stephen Charles, Natalie Maguire and Barry Neale were duly elected as other Trustees, to serve until the next AGM.

The Chair welcomed Stephen Charles as a new Trustee, noting that he had a long relationship with, and a good understanding of, the Settlement.

The Chair also noted that the Committee was keen to add to its expertise and would welcome any other new members.

## **11. Position of President**

The Chair noted that the Committee's priority had been what was required to re-open the Settlement and manage an increasingly complex situation going forward. It did not consider then the appointment of a President as urgent appointment as it was a non-executive position. However, the position would not be forgotten about.

## **12. Review of Constitution in 2021**

The Chair noted that the Committee intended to carry out a review of the Constitution to ensure it was in line with the latest Charity Commission guidance and best practise. If the Committee recommended any changes to it, they would be considered at the 2021 AGM.

## **13. Any Other Business**

### *Award of Honorary Fellowships*

The Chair was pleased to confirm that the Committee had approved the award of Honorary Fellowships to Pan Burn and Sue Dunne for their exceptional service.

### *Message from Pam Burn*

In her absence, Pam had asked that the following message was reported at the AGM: "The members of the new Committee have all done a great job in turning the fortunes of the Settlement around and I would ask please that my thanks and good wishes to you all are recorded."

Paula Lawrence also noted heartfelt thanks to everyone who had been involved in keeping the Settlement going as it was an invaluable place.

#### **14. Date of 2021 AGM**

Confirmed as Tuesday 23 November 2021.

The Chair thanked Katie Alcock for managing the virtual meeting and she closed it by thanking everyone for coming. She also noted that the minutes of the meeting would be published on the Settlement's website in due course.

The meeting closed at 8.13pm.

**These minutes were approved at the 2021 Annual General Meeting, and signed by the Chair, on 23 November 2021**