

Beechwood Community Centre

Beechwood (Halton) Community Centre CIC - a community interest company

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Notes of Beechwood Community Centre (HALTON) CIC

Annual General Meeting

held Tuesday 2nd April 2019

Eileen Meredith (Managing Director) opened the meeting, welcomed and thanked everyone for attending. She introduced the Directors and several staff members

The notes of the last AGM (taken by Alison Littler – administrator) were reviewed by Mr. Seabrook as a true record of the meeting.

Eileen Meredith opened the meeting with the following comments.

The overriding consideration for the Directors was keeping the costs down for homeowners and that the presentation would show how this was being done.

Before the business of the meeting she said one of the residents had asked her to share an incident that had happened in the centre. The 74-year-old was in the centre using the WIFI and a group of children/youths were causing trouble. She went to the bar to ask for help and unfortunately no help was given from the people in the bar, who basically said they were just being children and to go away. Eileen emphasised that all homeowners were responsible for actions taking place in the centre as they are the owners.

There was one comment at the meeting that things like this were happening because we let anyone in. Eileen reminded Mr. G that the decision to formalise the open to all policy was agreed by all homeowners. Also, that without income from non-homeowner users of the centre our annual charge would be substantially higher, she also stated that some of the youths involved lived on the Beechwood West.

The pledge of the directors is to continue to give all homeowners by giving evidence-based information. As a team we are working professionally but it is crucial that we have the ongoing support of homeowners as we move things forward.

We are currently negotiating with two banks to switch our accounts - Santander are offering a good deal on the loan rate and a cash incentive for switching this equates to £9000 approx. which will pay for the new air condition for the lounge.

We are a growing business with income from the business streams subsidising the homeowners fee so keeping the costs down for homeowners.

- We have onsite maintenance and are drawing up a maintenance schedule.
- Our staff training programme is ongoing and we are employing several staffs from employment schemes.

EM and NM presented the slide show covering all aspects of the homeowner fee and how the business, is now for the first time in many years the day to day business is subsidising the homeowners.

Following the presentation, the floor was opened for questions.

Ms. T - said that in 2013 she voted for an option that said going forward there would be no levy or it would be less, but in fact we are paying more.

Response from Eileen Meredith – to put it into context in 2011/12 we all got a note saying the centre was untenable. We spent 18 months looking the options that we as owners could consider. We sought legal advice and was categorially advised that we were the legal owners of the building and therefore we had to find an agreed way to take the centre forward as a shared asset and not the noose around our necks

After the 2014/15 AGM All homeowners got a letter setting out the implications of closing or selling the building if we could, but we all agreed that we did not want a derelict building in the middle of the estate. Charities wouldn't take it on due to costs. All actions were taken in good faith and decisions were made once costs were looked at.

Ms. T – felt she had been misled but was reminded that like all other owners she received a detailed letter, advising what our options were and to contact us within two weeks if there were questions or disagreement with the plan. Not one response was made.

Eileen Meredith –stated that Ms. T has been in dispute over several years because she doesn't want to pay her legal obligation to the costs of running the centre which is clearly stated in our deeds etc. EM recalls have the very same conversation with Ms. T on her doorstep in 2011. EM stated that over the last 8 years of being involved she and the Board have taken decisions based on the best interest of all homeowners whether they use the centre or not. If anyone feels that the Board has misled them, we are happy to meet to go through all the accounts and documentation. Reinforcing the fact that most of the Directors are homeowners so it is in their best interest to keep costs as low as possible.

The slide presentation was discussed. The home owners fee has not increased; however, a further charge has been included to cover repayment of the loan. Agreement for securing the

loan and homeowners making the repayments was taken at the 2015 AGM. EM again reinforced the Board's commitment to accountability and transparency.

Response Neil Meredith (Director) stated we can't relinquish responsibility and the additional £4.00 per month is limited to the pool refurbishment project.

Geoff Dutton – Asked about the frequent user card detailed in the newsletter

Response Eileen Meredith – Asked if we can come back to this when we talk about the pool refurbishment.

A lengthy exchange with Mr. Neil **Gordon**, who acknowledged that he had lived on the estate for four years and tonight was the first time he had been in the building His main issue was the fact that it appeared we did not have the software which could deal with capital charging. He feels this is where our problems lie as we are asking for money for unplanned work which should have been factored in in previous years. He gave various examples of where he thought we were going wrong. He stated that all assets should have costs put down for their lifetime and money/revenue should have been put to deal with these things. One thing that should be looked at is the temperature of the pool why do we heat it to 32 degrees when the national standard is 30 degrees, it only needs to be 32 degrees if babies are under 3 months and it is not recommended they swim at that age. Mr. Gordon continued to raise technical issues about temperatures, capital charges etc. drawing examples from national organisations, it is difficult to relate to the Centre. It was acknowledged that there is a long history about the centre and the way it has been managed. It was not until 2015 that we had a business plan, we are now on a strong business footing. We have an aging population who have no call to use the centre so would resist drastic annual increases. Our aim has been to increase the income to allow us to build a capital fund, but owners are not using the facilities. Whilst we continue to do well, this is a high cost business - the building is open every day from early morning to late evening - in line with customer need. We continue to balance between focussing providing and community service whilst trying to increase income

Response – Neil Meredith stated that the pool renovation has been considered for the last couple of years attempts have been made to secure the substantial financial grants. Whilst we will continue to seek financial assistance from the Runcorn Environmental fund, but the only option we have now is to ask owners and pool users to pay for the renovation. The discussion continued, and audience members were becoming frustrated about Mr. Gordon's position and he stated that he was not being negative, but we do need to be realistic about costs. EM and the Board members fully agreed with this and are doing all they can.

Eileen Meredith said we are more than happy to discuss and would welcome advise on this matter from Mr Gordon as he seems to have knowledge in this area so would it be possible to meet.

Peter Bazley – said biggest income was from the pool and the function room so why are we only charging for function room which is £65.00

Eileen Meredith responded that we must remain competitive. Like most venues in the town we only charge for bar services (staff cleaning etc) a not a room hire fee. Bar charges are higher in the function room, so we do have additional revenue from those higher prices. However, has mentioned earlier although we generate a good income with a realistic profit margin. We are still not making enough to cover big projects such as the pool renovation,

Swimming Pool Refurbishment

Several slides were presented that outline the rationale for the refurbishment, how the project would be planned and paid for and the various legislation that we needed to adhere to.

The following points were presented by the board:

- We have not been able to secure a grant yet for help towards the renovation, but we were still lobbying and had got several councillors and our MP involved.
- A full facility report has been commissioned and it is clear from that that work must be done to bring the pool up to the standard required. Maybe such a huge project should have been costed 30 years ago by previous Boards, again as mentioned earlier the history of the centre was to keep homeowner costs as low as possible. During the last 8 years we have focused on the overall refurbishment and extension of the facilities to ensure we have a customer friendly environment ensuring we improve the facilities and keep the centre open increasing our business income streams which has been successful as detailed in the presentation.

The Board acknowledge that the pool renovation plan is a significant undertaking, meeting the costs we must spread the costs between the centre owners and the swim school and other users. This will be a fairer way of sharing the costs particularly, when most of the owners do not use the pool.

Renovation project will be funded by:

£4.00 per month from homeowners

£4.00 per month from each of the 690 registered swim school users

Non-homeowner swimmers will be charged an additional £0.50 per swim

We are also bidding for match funding

Timetable we are looking at is 6 – 7 weeks through our summer period which is our quietest time. We are looking at two contractors who are both experts in this field, highly qualified and come with excellent testimonials. Once we have a realistic costing and timescale we will let all project contributor know via our website, FB page and on our notice boards.

Questions from the floor

- **Tom Court** – has the downtime revenue been factored into the costs

Response – Eileen Meredith replied that it will be factored into project plans. Clearly there are lots of issues to address in terms of staff and customer retention timescales and communication.

Peter Bazley asked whether we are putting to cost of swimming lessons, Brookvale have recently put up their prices and Whether to £4.00 be kept separate.

Response – Eileen Meredith We increase our swimming lesson fee each year. The additional £4 renovation fee will be kept separate from the lesson fee, as they will continue to have an annual increase.

Response - Neil Meredith – if you think we are missing something we are happy to discuss ideas/issues with individuals

Mrs T asked why if the **War** Memorial & Buffs are self-sustaining, why do we have to pay.

Response - Kellie Ledward – We have remained competitive these places have a membership fee, we are unique in as much as we own and our responsible for our building. The point is (as outlined in the presentation) we are a successful business with an annual increasing turnover. However, we would like to have the money for the renovation without coming back to the owners, but we all need to remember that our home owner fee has not increased for several years - perhaps at the next AGM we need to debate how we as owners plan for future capital expenditure (just like we have to do with our own homes.

Response – Eileen Meredith – agreed with Kellie that we own the building and must pay for its upkeep. It is important to remember that we have turned the business around in 7/8 years with little additional cost to us as owners.

The following was then put to the floor:

- **Do those present understand and accept that the pool renovation needs to be completed to ensure we meet our health and safety requirements.**
- **Do those present accept and agree that we must get the project underway this summer**
- **Do those present accept the cost of the renovation be shared by us as owners and those who use the pool as set out above. done and that we, the homeowners.**
- **Do those present understand and accept that the timescale and final costs cannot be given until the project plan and tenders have been submitted.**

Over 95% of those attending confirmed their agreement to the renovation plan Ms. L. Templeton objected to having to pay towards the project. Mr. N. Gordon objected because he has concerns about the accuracy of our accounts (which he had not had sight off) so it is assumed that his objection was more to do with the issue of capital charges.

Steve Thomas independent accountant confirmed that the accounts were accurate. He also stated that most small businesses borrow funds for projects it is recognised that most small businesses cash flow and the fact they cannot afford to build capital fund.

It was therefore agreed that the renovation project should go ahead with the costs being shared between owners and pool users. The Board will keep all contributors updated via social media, notice boards and the Beechwood website.

Eileen Meredith stated that a letter to all homeowners will be sent later this week. advising them of the decision taken tonight for the renovation will go ahead. Giving those owners who did not attend the AGM an opportunity to ask questions or raise any objection.

At the point of finalising these notes on 30th April - we have not received any objections or indeed questions about the rationale for the project. So, the Board will proceed.

The board have been looking at ways to give something back to homeowners the following were presented and agreed by those present.:

£1.00 swims for all homeowners' children and homeowners over 65

Homeowners unlimited swimming cards which results in savings

Free Homeowners swimming sessions

Regular bar/coffee shop promotions

2 exclusive Homeowner events (summer and Christmas) which will include free swimming, free food & free drinks

ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

Peter Heatley has resigned due to personal reasons.

It was proposed that all current directors, Eileen Meredith, Neil Meredith, Kellie LEDWARD, Keith Davies and Richard Wilson carry on.

Proposed by Mark Milledge

Seconded by Alan Bennett

Peter Bazley was elected to the Board.

Proposed by Kellie LEDWARD

Seconded by Batty Mahon

AOB

It was noted that single homeowners receive a 25% reduction on their community charge, we have been asked whether this could be considered in relation to the homeowner fee. The matter had been discussed but the view taken was this could raise issues because other groups may also come forward for such a reduction i.e. People on pension credit or income support.

One homeowner asked if tickets for functions could be put on sale to homeowners before general sales – agreed

Eileen Meredith thanked everyone for their input and comments those present showed their appreciation. Many of those present joined the directors for a complimentary drink in the lounge bar.