

*Heart of Hastings Community Land Trust  
Minutes of Annual General Meeting – 14 September 2022 at Eagle House, 27-29 Cambridge  
Road, TN34 1DJ*

Attendees:

(Voting members are in bold)

**Darren French – Chair**  
**Adam Wide – Treasurer**  
**Emily Berwyn – Board Member**  
**Felicity Scott – Board Member**  
Jess Steele  
Bob Thust  
John Brunton  
Kit Godfrey  
Pippa Le Bas  
Shelley Feldman  
Pasha Milburn  
Sherry Clark  
Ian Solley  
Lloyd Shackelford

Nick Gibbs  
Tara Reddy  
Rafael Alexander  
Alison Arran  
John Purdey  
Chris Purdy  
Michelle Esterman  
Daniel O'Connor  
Des Wilson  
Alexander Wilberforce  
Ian Studley  
Richard Wistreich  
Ronan Larvor  
David de Gruchy

Represented by a voting representative (proxy):

**Suzy Tinker**  
**Linda McCanna**

Apologies for absence:

Felicity Lawrence  
Alison Purdy  
Karl Horton  
Christopher Munn  
Barbara Schultz  
Daisy Macdonald

1. Welcome

Adam Wide (AW) welcomed participants and all gave brief introductions. The meeting was quorate with more than 5% of the members present.

2. Minutes of the 2021 AGM and matters arising

AW asked participants of the 2021 AGM whether they were willing to accept the minutes and whether there were any matters arising. The minutes were accepted by a show of hands and there were no matters arising.

3. Annual Review

AW and Darren French (DF) introduced the 2021/22 Annual Review, with DF giving a personal view of his experience with Heart of Hastings CLT since the Ore Valley project. He said that whilst challenging, it has made him more resilient and certain that he wants to continue working to benefit the community and future generations.

AW talked about the successes achieved over the last year in challenging times, including:

- OB – roof off, concrete saved, heating & plumbing installed, tenants in!
- 12 Claremont – signed 125 year lease from ESCC for £1, now needs £2million refurbishment!
- Rose Cottage – classroom space has been well used, the artists studios let
- 39 Cambridge Road – has continued to provide four homes
- Towns Fund – £4million secured to support the redevelopment of 12 Claremont, Eagle House and the Observer Building
- Trinity Triangle HAZ – programme sustained despite challenges, has laid excellent foundations and is highly respected by Historic England

AW then discussed the issues we've faced, including Covid lockdowns, high staff turnover and the resulting lack of leadership. The board felt that the previous organisational structure was not working well and that a more integrated one, with clearer leadership and consistent management was needed. They had therefore asked Jess Steele (JS) to step in as CEO under the Hastings Commons banner, to inspire and bring together the various teams and to work with board and staff to develop a new more cohesive approach.

#### 4. CEO Report

JS presented the CEO's report, starting with a history of the CLT since 2016. She talked about the current problems of massive rent increases and unprecedented inflation rates, contrasting with our living rents model which is more affordable. The OB offices are going well and we have the ground floor and mezzanine level ready to use for major events from October.

JS emphasised that we are not fixing or servicing people, but rather creating environments to be alongside each other. The Hastings Commons banner is intended to bring together the portfolio of buildings and to be a resource that helps people shape their own place and change their own lives. Hastings Commons combines all the separate organisations which are the "builders and gardeners" of the Commons: Heart of Hastings CLT, White Rock Neighbourhood Ventures, Living Rents, Leisure & Learning, and Project Artworks – and their teams, tenants and trustees.

Richard Wistreich (RW) enquired about the timeframe for the full ownership by the CLT. JS replied that the plan within the Shareholders Agreement is for the CLT to own 100% of WRNV (and therefore hold the buildings in perpetuity for the community) after reaching steady state in three years, when the income covers the costs and on terms and at a price that ensure the CLT is taking on a sustainable business. BT added that a huge amount of work is happening to animate the spaces, such as the Digital Arts Hub in the OB and all the TTHAZ work.

Alexander Wilberforce asked whether the Debenhams project is a competitor. JS replied that it has no housing and is profit driven, whereas we are community led and creating a local community using our fourfold criteria (need, local connection, enthusiasm for the Commons ethos, willingness to contribute) to ensure that prospective tenants are engaged. We will stick with our values and approach, which works well. AW said that he is proud that our selection process is very serious.

ME asked where the funding for all buildings came from and JS answered that we've had 94 grants and loans since 2014, including mortgaging Rock House in order to buy the Observer Building. Broadly the OB has been renovated with Getting Building Fund, Growing Places Fund, Historic

England and Architectural Heritage Fund; Eagle House is being purchased and initial renovations through the Towns Fund; and the majority of the Towns Fund money is allocated to renovate 12 Claremont. ME asked whether we want private investors and JS said yes, we would like to re-start the Investors' Collective which helped purchase 39 Cambridge Road in 2017/18.

#### 5. Annual Accounts

BT introduced the annual accounts and gave an overview, explaining that they are not yet fully audited. Ian Studley queried the use of auditors and BT confirmed that we have had auditors for at least three years and that it is normal practice for an organisation of our size.

RW asked whether rental income from 39 Cambridge Road appears under charitable activity in the accounts. BT confirmed it currently does, but that may change in the future as different properties are assigned to different organisations to make best use of the separate organisations within the Commons and protect the CLT from risks.

BT stated that we are creating a Commons-wide spreadsheet for financial reporting which is split by organisation but also shows the picture "in the round". He asked that the minutes note that this piece of work would be formally presented at next year's AGM to allow members to appreciate the complete situation.

The members accepted the accounts by a majority show of hands subject to there being no material changes and the fully audited accounts being shared when approved.

#### 6. A resolution to give the board powers to appoint auditors for the financial year 2022-2023:

BT asked the meeting to give the board powers to appoint accountants and auditors for the coming financial year, proposing that Third Sector are reappointed. The meeting accepted this resolution with a majority show of hands.

#### 7. A resolution to change our name:

This resolution was previously introduced by AW and expanded upon by JS. Key reasons for the name change proposed:

- To create more coherence across the different and connected entities and reflect the common staffing and governance
- Drive engagement across all entities with potential new CLT members, with tenants, with staff, funders and the general public

The assembled members voted by ballot paper to change the name of Heart of Hastings CLT to Hastings Commons CLT by a majority of 25 to 2 in accordance with clause 66 of the Rules.

#### 8. Election of Board members:

BT explained that in line with our governing rules (clause 74) one third of current board members are required to stand down (usually those who are longest serving). AW and Sarah Macbeth had

submitted their resignations. AW stated that he intended to continue working with the Hastings Commons in an advisory capacity.

Emily Berwyn and Tor Evans have been serving as trustees of Leisure & Learning and were recommended for election as CLT trustees. Three further board members have been co-opted by the board this year and require election by the members in accordance with clause 75): Ian Solley, Claire Phillips and Lloyd Shackelford. Nick Gibbs is standing as a board member for the first time. Each introduced themselves to those present.

All six standing were voted in as board members by a majority vote of 26 with 1 abstention.

9. Any other business & questions from the floor:

IS asked about a historical possibility of six plots in Ore Valley, as announced by Sea Space in their press releases relating to the private sale of the site to Gem Select. JS reported that there has been no contact from the current developers who appear to have no interest in this idea.

Michelle Esterman (ME) asked about the origins of the funding for the Trinity Triangle Heritage Action Zone and JS confirmed that HAZ is a programme funded by Historic England and led by the CLT. ME also asked for the reason for Leisure & Learning's charitable status and JS said that some funders prefer that to be the case.

10. Closing remarks:

AW thanked those present for attending, thanked Shelley Feldman for her exceptional commitment, help and hard work over the last few years, and ultimately thanked JS for creating the whole Hastings Commons community project from scratch. He commented that the future is so exciting that he has goosebumps.

JS thanked everybody for coming and thanked AW for everything he's done, all the emotional hard labour, commenting that we are lucky to have his input now and in the future.

She stated that she hopes to grow the CLT membership to 20,000 so that membership of the Hastings Commons CLT would become a normal part of life for Hastings residents.