



# Minutes from the Annual General Meeting 2023

## Windmill Hill City Farm Café 13 November 2023

Attending: Mike Lees, Isobel Wales, Gemma Instrall, Laura Demery, Liz Lewington, Christopher Higgot, Peter Ford, Hazel Winter, Gemma Matthews, Alix Hughes, Jamie Darwen, Jon Lund, Stephan Frost, Tom Mitchell, Fran Inman, Claire Jeffwitz, Jane Wadham, Tom Hutchinson, Susie Dunham, Liz Waren, Chris Heaton

Proxies: Alice Marshment, Bonnie Hewson, Catherine Shanks, David Demery, Helen Dupressoir, Jo Sayers, Juan Jose Martinez-Suguenza, Lianne Pinfield, Stefan Edwards, Tessa Fitzjohn

Staff: Steve Sayers, Hannah Aspinall, Monse Buitrago

## Agenda

### **Welcome and apologies for absence.**

Apologies from Anne Sharp and Alice Clarke.

### **Minutes of 2022 AGM**

**The board recommends approval.**

**Resolution. To approve the minutes of the 2022 AGM as a correct record of the meeting.**

Approval proposed by Sally Jones, seconded by Jamie Darwen. Minutes from the 2022 AGM approved.

### **Presentation of annual report and accounts**

**Copies were made available in advance of the meeting from our website. The Directors have approved the annual report and accounts. No resolution is required.**

**Jamie Darwen (trustee) presented an overview of the year.**

2022-23 has been a challenging year in many respects, albeit with largely positive outcomes. The farm has continued to develop and grow.

Highlights:

- Windmill Hill Markets – successful pilot of monthly markets brought a different visitor mix to the farm, and café benefited from more visitors. Monthly markets are now continuing.
- Garden Theatre also bringing in new visitors and providing another bookable space.
- Secured funding from the Henry Smith Charity, which will support our health and social care work over the next three years.

Hartcliffe:

- Big improvements to onsite infrastructure and engagement with local community.
- Balancing the ongoing work at Windmill Hill whilst expanding the Hartcliffe site has demanded a lot from staff this year.



#### Challenges:

- Recruitment for nursery staff has been a significant challenge – this is an industry wide issue.
- Continue to review recruitment and employment practices to ensure we are attractive.
- Longstanding nursery manager resigned during the year – but we were able to promote from within.
- Despite challenges, we once again achieved the Bristol Standard quality mark.

#### New strategy:

Published our new 3-year strategy in March, covering period 2023-26

#### Five key aims in the strategy:

- Education
- Developing wellbeing
- Community spaces
- Community leadership
- Stronger organisation

We make extensive use of volunteers across all areas of work. In 2022-23, the farm worked with 113 independent volunteers and 81 supported volunteers. Huge thanks to all these people for the contribution they make to the farm.

We have a strong board. We have 8 current trustees. There was some change during the year as 3 trustees have resigned – however there is good interest from potential new trustees. The trustees thank all staff for their commitment and hard work through the year.

#### **The Chair of the Finance Sub-Group, Jon Lund, presented an overview of the accounts.**

Over the past few years, the farm has been able to build up a surplus. Turnover is up to £2.4 million a year, which has grown from £2 million the previous year. There is a small accounting loss of £46,000 for the year – the operating cash levels are up but the depreciating building prices played into this loss.

Over the past year the fundraising team won £485,000 in funding (the third highest figure of the last 10 years). There were 27 separate bids received, which is the highest ever number. Thank you to the fundraising team for their work on this.

The free reserves are at £487,000, which is a very reasonable figure, but the organisation is working towards having £600,000 in reserve. These reserves allowed some investment to go ahead – such as the accreditation of Windmill Hill City Farm as a Living Wage Employer.

A lot of work has gone in to integrating the Hartcliffe City Farm accounts and to clarifying the ownership and operation model. Thank you to Steve and Alia for their work on this.

Looking to the future, the organisation is halfway through the next financial year and there are challenges ahead. Inflation and the cost-of-living crisis continue to impact on costs throughout the organisation and the nursery capacity is still down due to the recruitment issues (that are affecting



early years services across the UK). The next big challenge to face is the government announcement regarding changes to early years provision.

#### **Questions and comments from members.**

A question was raised around whether it has been a challenging year because of the wider situation or if it was specific to the farm.

Steve Sayers (CEO) responded that the cost-of-living crisis is a big problem that is causing impacts on the organisation. For example, the organisation's energy bill has more than doubled, from ~£20,000 to ~£40,000. Becoming a Living Wage employer has also come with its own challenges – the whole farm received a 10% pay rise in April and the new Living Wage released this month means that a 10% pay rise could be on the horizon again. A 20% rise in staff costs in under 18 months puts a lot of pressure on finding the extra money in a short space of time. Costs to the organisation are going up faster than finances can be raised, and the challenge is to work out how to raise extra money without just passing on these higher costs to everyone who visits.

A question was raised around what the monthly loss in farm finances was, and whether it was normal to see a loss.

Steve Sayers responded there has been loss in the finances before and that this is a tricky question to answer as it is not always a cash loss and it's not easy to tell the overall loss until the years end. The organisation has built up resilience which is good, and this buffer means that the farm can keep working towards being in a more stable position. The organisation has reigned in some ambition and cut some costs, and is actively looking to raise extra income by utilising the assets the farm already has and doing more fundraising.

#### **Appointment of auditors**

**Godfrey Wilson carried out our audit this year (1st year as auditors following an open tender in 2022). The audit went well. The directors recommend engaging Godfrey Wilson as our auditors for the coming year.**

**Resolution. To appoint Godfrey Wilson as auditors.**

Jamie Darwen proposes Godfrey Wilson as the auditor. Seconded by Jon Lund.  
Approved.

#### **Election of Trustees**

Two trustees must retire by rotation at the AGM. This year it is the turn of Susie Dunham and Jamie Darwen to stand down. Both wish to be re-elected.

Three directors resigned since the last AGM: Stefan Edwards (19 Apr 23), Liz Lewington (23 May 23), Karina Nicolson (18 Sep 23).

One director has been co-opted in the year and must stand for election: Claire Jeffwitz.

Five trustees are continuing in post: Anne Sharp, Jonathan Lund, Sally Jones, Alice Clarke, Fran Inman.

The Board recommends appointment of those standing.

**Resolutions.** To re-appoint Jamie Darwen and Susie Dunham to the board of trustees.

**Resolutions.** To appoint Claire Jeffwitz to the board of trustees.



All voted in favour of appointing Jamie, Susie, and Claire.

The board would like to give thanks to the boards members who resigned this year for all their hard work.

### **Close of AGM business**

**Update on new developments. Steve Sayers, Chief Executive, gave a short talk to update members on the plans at Windmill Hill and Hartcliffe City Farms.**

The farm will be putting even greater emphasis on fundraising – both from institutions and the individual giving.

Steve showed the campaign video for the farm's Big Give fundraiser for the farm's Warm Spaces project. Last year WHCF provided a weekly meal and warm space in our cafe for families in the area. Similar funding is not available this time so we are hoping to raise the money through the Big Give Winter Challenge, which pairs charities with other organisations that can offer match funding. This will take place from 28<sup>th</sup> November to the 5<sup>th</sup> of December.

Alongside that specific campaign, WHCF will be pushing for general donations and has produced a Social Impact poster to show the work that is done on the farm that people may not know about. These will be going up on the farm's social media and around the farm itself.

There is a new tenant on site running a sauna and plunge pool which will open in the Orchard area before Christmas this year, run by an outside individual who rents the space. The proposal was raised at the September board meeting, discussed, and approved.

Work on the Climate Action Plan has been a big part of the year. Steve received money from Power to Change to develop the Climate Action Plan; it is now complete and has clear actions that are being put into place. The District Heat Network will be putting part of their pipeline through the edge of the gardens and in return will be installing a new path, fence, and gate. They will also install the pipe for the farm to connect to in the future. Upon connection the farm will be able to eliminate 6 gas boilers and take a step closer to the goal of net zero by 2030.

Hartcliffe City Farm has been running for nearly 2 years now and the site has completely transformed. There are a number of groups run by WHCF there for volunteers, schools, and families.

A lot of work has gone into the governance structure of HCF as there is a lot of interdependence between WHCF and HCF. WHCF will still be running services at the site, but HCF needs to be more autonomous.

It was asked whether there are fewer funding pots available now due to the cost-of-living crisis.

Steve responded that there are fewer big funds to apply for and there are plenty of medium sized funds, but a lot more competition.

Close of meeting.