

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING AND ANNUAL GENERAL  
MEETING OF EDGWARE & HENDON REFORM SYNAGOGUE

HELD ON SUNDAY 20 OCTOBER 2024 AT 118 STONEGROVE, HA8 8AB

There were 60 EHRS members present

The Chairman Jeremy Harrod welcomed all those attending and said he needed to start with a serious point. There have recently been instances of people having loud disagreements within the Community and not always treating other members as we would expect and with respect. Jeremy asked that for the duration of this meeting and thereafter that people please remember that we are all on the same side.

**Extraordinary General Meeting:**

**1. Apologies: Bradley Trainis, Jonathan Kramer and Kito [Daniel] Holtz**

Robert Brand introduced the special resolution to the EGM with a reminder that the Synagogue has two constitutional documents: the Bye Laws and the Articles of Association. Whilst all EHRS members are members of the Community with membership subject to the Bye Laws, only Council members are members of the Company itself, otherwise all members of the Community would be subject to the statutory requirement for public access to their personal data via Companies House filings. Council has agreed to act solely in accordance with the instructions of the Community, hence any proposed resolutions whether to alter the Bye Laws or to alter the Articles of Association of the Synagogue will require the approval of an EGM of the Community

**2. Special Resolutions:**

**(a) Proposed changes to the Bye Laws of the Synagogue**

These proposed changes are set out in the notice calling the EGM.

Most of the proposed amendments are self explanatory

With regard to the proposal to no longer elect wardens, Robert advised that there will no longer be a Junior Warden. Instead there will be a Committee of wardens in which any member will be eligible to participate.

Richard Harris asked, regarding the change to the appointment of wardens, how this will work without elections. Robert advised that Andie Lucas will stay on as Warden co-ordinator and will be assisted by previous wardens and other members. Richard asked if this will rotate and Robert responded that this will be a decision for the Committee.

Morris Hoffman asked, regarding Special Resolutions 7 and 8, who is making the decisions on expenditure? The Chairman responded that decisions are taken by Honorary Officers.

Andie Lucas asked, with regard to Special Resolutions 2, 3 and 4, if family members will need to live under the same roof. Robert responded that this will not be a condition.

With regard to Special Resolution 9, amendment to Bye Laws 19.1, 19.2 and 19.3 Robert confirmed that the President will now be elected for a term of 3 years rather than 5 years as was previously the

case, and that we now have provision for two people to be elected to serve as Joint Presidents. The Chairman stated that all Vice Presidents are in favour of the change to 3 years.

With regard to Special Resolution to amend the Synagogue's Memorandum and Articles of Association, Robert repeated that Council members can only act with the consent of the Community. He said that the Articles require that Council members may be elected for the same position on Council for a maximum of 6 years after which they are obliged to step down. This year there were not enough people standing for election to Council. To avoid having vacancies on Council it was proposed to change the Articles so that existing Council members would not be obliged to stand down in circumstances where no one was standing for the position being vacated.

With regard to this amendment, Keith Price said that traditionally Council members have set out to attract new members. Was there a risk that there would now not be an incentive for them to do this? The Chairman agreed that there was a possibility that this could happen but it was definitely not the intention behind the amendment.

Melvyn Abrahams asked how often does Council meet? The Chairman responded that Council meets 10 times on a monthly basis each year, either in person or via Zoom, with extra meetings as and when necessary.

Melvyn asked what is the business of the Council and the Chairman responded that Council deals with anything concerning the business of the Shul.

**Decisions:** All resolutions were passed as special resolutions. There were no votes against, and no abstentions.

## **Annual General Meeting:**

- 1. Adoption of Minutes** - The minutes of the AGM held 1 October 2023 as approved by Council on 12 December 2023 were passed unanimously. There were no comments or amendments.
- 2. Trustees' Report** – The Chairman Jeremy Harrod reported, with regard to Marketing & Communications, that Bonnie has now left but hopefully a new person will be recruited soon.

Jeremy also thanked everyone who had helped with security during the year.

When questions were invited, Irene Fine said that her son had volunteered to help with security for the High Holydays but that it was necessary for him to remain on security throughout most of the service when he really wanted to be in Shul. The Chairman said that he will take this issue up with Security but the problem is that there are not enough volunteers.

Irene asked if we could pay for more security staff to be available. Jeremy will follow this up.

Maurice Hoffman had some questions about membership and asked what Marketing is doing to bring in new members. The Chairman said that Marketing is not responsible for this.

Maurice said that statistics need to be provided so that we can compare how many are joining and leaving each year. The Chairman agreed that these statistics will be provided. Maurice asked who is responsible for bringing in new members and Jeremy said that we are all responsible, and that events such as the EHRS Fest help to attract new members. Council get updates regarding members leaving, although unfortunately this is mainly due to demise. However new members are being recruited and overall membership numbers tend to be static.

Irene commented that members' children don't seem to be joining and asked if the age limit can be extended by 10 years. The Chairman said this will be considered.

Rabbi Mark said that new membership is always encouraged and that Debbie Drapkin is active in this area, as are the rabbis. We need, as a whole synagogue, to work as a team to encourage membership.

There were no further questions.

**Election of President** – Peter Weber and David Gilmour were elected as joint presidents for the next 3 years with no votes against. The Chairman thanked Richard for his service as President for the last 5 years.

**3. Election of Council for 2024** – The proposed Honorary Officers and additional Council members are as follows:

**Chair** – Jeremy Harrod

**Joint Vice Chair** – Jo Sigalov and Andrew Woolstone  
**Joint Honorary Treasurers** – Kevin Maddison and Michael Lerman  
**Honorary Secretary** – Michael Weber  
**Honorary Officers** – Robert Brand and Daniel Mitchell  
**Additional Council Members** –  
Kevin Darvill      Neil Flash      Sharon Garson      Alex Hirsch  
Ben Konyn      Rob Koster      Tania Levy      Angela Lipman  
Daniel Stiassny      Bradley Trainis      Gideon Wittenberg      Nick Mailer  
David Mendoza-Wolfson

This includes 3 new members – Angela Lipman, Natasha Davidov and Tania Levy.  
The Chairman thanked Eric Sander, who is standing down, and Donna Bryk who is standing down for hopefully a short time for their service as Council Members.

All Honorary Officers and Council Members were duly elected.

#### **4. Approval of the Audited Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023 -**

Michael Lerman presented these and said that in 2023 there was a net deficit of £114,040 which was a significant improvement on the previous year in which the deficit was over £711,000. In addition, surplus on investments and investment income have helped in offsetting operating losses. However there are still challenges in covering core expenses with current income. The primary source of income is members' subscriptions but more than 80% of members are currently given concessions. This reflects our commitment to inclusivity and support but if more members paid full fees this would obviously help to reduce the deficit. A fund raising strategy is under way, which includes targeted fundraising, donor engagement, and generating additional support. The improvements in the 2023 accounts are encouraging but we do need further improvement. Community support is vital and we rely on the continuing generosity of supporters. The Council remains committed to a stronger future for the Synagogue. Michael thanked members for their support and said that by working together we can secure viability.

Kay Bagon asked what our investments are in. Michael replied that these are managed by Cazenove and there are shares and investments in different funds via a registered charity which ensures that investments are ethical.

Melvyn Abrahams asked what is the percentage return? Michael advised that last year this was 6.7%.

Maurice Hoffman referred to page 22 of the Accounts and said that leaving aside investments, as our income is below outgoings, we need to be looking urgently at income and expenditure. Also, if 80% of members are paying reduced subscriptions, what are the annual subscriptions for the whole membership and should some people be paying more?

The Chairman said that we are continually looking at issues around expenses and recently there have been even more concerted efforts to do this.

With regard to Maurice's second question, Jeremy agreed that people's circumstances do change but we need to have a trusting relationship with members and try to be charitable. Rosalind Bloom in the Office does a fantastic job regarding subscriptions but we rely on every member to look at their own circumstances.

We need to find out average subscriptions and will certainly do so.

Keith Price said that as so many members are on reduced subscriptions, and we are being asked to vote on increased subscriptions, will those on concessions be asked to pay more than they currently do?

Keith asked if Expenditure takes into account reduced subscriptions. He feels we are operating on a basis of imbalance and inequality.

Brian Cohen asked if investments in tobacco are minimised. Andrew replied that tobacco is excluded as this is an ethical fund.

Natasha Davidov asked if there are other sources of income in addition to subscriptions. Kevin Maddison replied that there are other sources of income but we do rely on subscriptions. However we are looking at other possible sources.

Janet Brand asked if legacies may be a source of funding, and if members could be asked to include EHRS in Wills. Kevin said that we are considering this.

Des Cohen commented that the Auditors' fees were higher this year. Kevin replied saying that an increase in auditors regulations meant more time is spent by the auditors and the fee was in fact reasonable.

## **5. Reappointment of the Auditors**

A vote was taken and a majority voted in favour of the reappointment of the Auditors. There was one abstention and no votes against.

## **6. Subscription Proposal for 2025 Resolution**

Kevin outlined the proposal to increase subscriptions by 2.6% in line with CPI. The Chairman further advised that the proposal was for a 5% increase, but would be limited to 2.6%, which was the CPI increase for the year to September 2024

Maurice Hoffman commented that the proposal to increase subscriptions in line with inflation has no relation to expenditure and no context. He asked if Council has seen the budget for next year. The Chairman replied that Council has seen a draft budget which will need to be approved. He said that subscriptions will never cover all expenditure but we are in a moment of flux and this point is under review.

Melvyn asked how our subscriptions compare with other synagogues. The Chairman said that they are pretty much comparable.

Melvyn asked if our subscriptions should be reduced in order to attract new members. Daniel Mitchell said that we have incentive schemes for young families which has been successful and much work is going on to publicize this.

The Chairman noted that all shuls have similar problems in relation to subscriptions and expenditure.

A vote was taken and the increase in subscriptions of 2.6% was carried unanimously.

## **Clergy Team Report**

Rabbi Mark opened and said that many people had commented favourably on the improvements to our Shul. It is a lovely open campus and very welcoming. He went on to express thanks to lay leaders as well as fellow clergy and also to the excellent staff team. He said that the four clergy members always work together and form a very close team.

Rabbi Debbie said that the clergy strive to support all generations, are involved in all life cycle events and share pastoral care. There is always more need than there are hours in a week, but the team try to make worship meaningful to all, for instance through provision of alternative services, so that there should be something for everyone.

Rabbi Tanya said how much the team valued lay leaders and volunteers who are a huge asset.

Cantor Tamara said that the team also learn in their own time, inspire each other and are inspired by the membership. One of the main strengths of the team is that they are always supporting each other.

Rabbi Debbie said that they are all passionate about helping everyone to experience life through Jewish lens, which is why there is a choice of services and other activities which support a meaningful Jewish life. The team also strongly support EHRS youth and family teams. They have transformed the journey to Bar and Bat Mitzvah including helping young people decide on their next steps within the Community.

Cantor Tamara spoke of the diverse musical community and the wonderful choir. Also the various bands which provide both traditional and less traditional music. One of her passions is to find new singing voices and she has experienced great joy in singing with all generations. The direction of travel is very exciting and we will constantly endeavour to continue building on this. Music is something very personal and meaningful and there is a constant conversation about music in services which should always be accessible. In this regard we welcome feedback and are always happy to recruit and train members who wish to join the choir. Also for members to sing along with the choir!

Rabbi Mark spoke about the tragic events of 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023 and asked how everyone is coping. We still have constant links with Israel and try to help by sharing our stories with each other, including that of a member of our community who was killed while attending the Nova Music Festival.

There are also concerns for our own security and the Shul needs to provide a balance between necessary security and a welcoming openness. We also have links with local councils and of course (and very importantly) with the Movement for Reform Judaism, Leo Baeck College and the Board of Deputies.

Rabbi Mark said that the Clergy Team also need to aid with fund raising, and are always ready to listen, reflect and review where necessary when moving forwards.

Keith Price said that the Clergy are central to the Community. He said that there should be targeted fundraising to cover all that the Clergy team do. The Chairman said that this is being done.

The Chairman expressed thanks to Andrew and the team for this morning's EHRS Fest in which there were many more tables than in previous years! This is a great sign and shows how much we have developed as a Community.

The Chairman also asked if anyone had any thoughts regarding a possible name change for the Shul. However it was decided that this would not be dealt with at this time.

### **Any Other Business**

Kay Bagon asked what happened to the stained glass windows which had come from Hendon. The Chairman said that some are in storage but that some had been donated including some that

have been incorporated in Maidenhead Reform Shul.

Hilary Mendoza-Wolfson asked if there could be a removal of charges for non-members who come to our High Holy Day services as this may help to attract new members.

The Chairman said that this will be reviewed.

Melvyn Abrahams asked why tickets for High Holyday services have been replaced by membership cards. He said that other shuls don't have this and he feels it isn't appropriate in a place of worship. Michael Weber said that membership cards were brought in two years ago and represent a cost saving as we no longer have to print tickets. It is also a security measure and the cards can be used throughout the year as well as on High Holydays. Melvyn said that he was given a ticket for the Fest rather than using the membership card, and he feels the need for the card is a deterrent to visitors.

The Chairman said that this issue will be taken on board and discussed.

Melvyn suggested that in order to attract new members we could advertise for non members to come to our services.

The Chairman said that this would be quite expensive and there are very many other shuls also trying to attract new members. Rabbi Mark agreed with Melvyn that we need to attract new members and said that this is already happening.

Bernie Joseph said that as someone who had done Jeremy's job several years ago, he was aware of how much work is done by all Council members. Also our new Clergy Team are doing a fantastic job. Of course it isn't possible for everything to be perfect and there are always criticisms, but he suggested that rather than just criticising, people should seriously consider contributing their skills and getting involved in a practical way.

Frank Kalu asked why there are problems with the microphones and if something can be done about this. The Chairman said that there was a proposal to spend £12,000-£15,000 to improve the sound system but we don't currently have the money for this.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.