



## **THE ALMSHOUSE ASSOCIATION**

Registered Charity Number 245668 Company Number 04678214

### **Minutes of the Seventy-Fourth Annual General Meeting held via Zoom**

**on Thursday 19 June 2025 at 09:45**

#### **1. Chairman Update: Willie Hartley Russell (WHR)**

WHR reflected on the past year.

WHR highlighted that The Almshouse Association (TAA) are a national charity, supporting and representing 1600 charities across the country, located on 2,500 sites, and collectively supporting 35,000 almshouses that are locally managed by 8,000 trustees, providing an exemplar form of affordable housing.

The past year has brought with it both triumphs and trials against a backdrop of economic uncertainty, and social change. Almshouses have continued to offer stability and community to thousands of residents across the country. WHR went on to thank each warden, trustee, volunteer, and partner who have helped sustain that legacy.

Today, we continue to face challenges, such as the growing demand for social housing, the complexities of regulation, the need for sustainable funding models, and the urgent call to make our homes more energy efficient. Through collaboration, shared knowledge, and advocacy, we are making real strides.

2024 has been a transformative year for the Association, and one of significant impact for the movement as a whole. As Chairman, WHR has sought to put the Association on a more secure financial footing, which has been achieved. For many years, the Association has only covered about half its running costs through membership subscriptions. The Association's level of service and advice has increased significantly over the past few years, as such, the board felt that it was pertinent to increase subscriptions to cover 75% of our running costs and to fully cover our running costs by 2027, allowing our reserves to be fully directed towards grants and supporting struggling almshouses.

The Association has been fortunate to have been located at Billingbear in Wokingham for many years, gifted to the Association by the late Leonard Hackett, one of the founders and general secretary of the Association. In recent years, the Association has continued to outgrow these offices, making it no longer fit for purpose. The board took the decision to identify new, modern offices that would serve the Association for the next 50 years.

The board were fortunate to identify a set of freehold offices contained within two adjacent buildings in central Windsor with ample parking for both staff and visitors. The Association hopes to offer more seminars and training events at our new headquarters, which we hope to move into in the early Autumn. The new offices will also provide the Association with additional income by letting one of the two buildings, known as “The Keep”. The move to Windsor will help future-proof the Association, allowing it to grow organically and offer a broader range of services to our members. The board has decided to sell both the house and offices at Billingbear, which we have recently exchanged on. The expected proceeds of the sale will broadly cover the cost of buying the new offices. The new office will be named “The Leonard Hackett House” in memory of one of our key founders.

2024 has also seen the introduction of the Almshouse health-check, which we hope to roll out to all members by 2030. All members are encouraged to participate in this new initiative. Over the last 12 months, we have opened numerous new almshouses, launched a well-being initiative, secured funding and kept the standards of almshouse management updated.

His Majesty the King continues as our Royal Patron, and His Royal Highness, The Duke of Gloucester, as our Vice Royal Patron. The Duke of Gloucester undertook three almshouse visits last year and, has an undertaken to do a further three visits this year. We thank him for his continued interest in our movement. We thank our many founders who have had the foresight and generosity to create many of our almshouses.

As we look forward to 2026, TAA will celebrate its 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of The Association. The College of Arms has kindly agreed to grant The Association some arms with the moto “Amicitia et hospitalis” (Friendship and Hospitality) with the costs being fully underwritten.

In the year ahead, we will continue to support our members with guidance, training and representation. We will champion the unique value of almshouses at every opportunity. Reminding policy makers, in particular, and the public alike, that we offer not just housing, but community, security, and hope.

WHR thanked the TAA board of trustees for their tireless work in supporting the Almshouse Movement.

Over the last year, we learnt of the sad death of Richard Knipe, who was a long-serving trustee and Chairman of the Finance & General Purpose Committee.

**WHR went on to thank the following for their support and service to TAA as they move to retirement:**

- Rob Douglas – long-standing trustee of the Board
- Margaret Stewart – long-standing trustee of the Board
- Francesca Quint – long-standing advisory trustee to the Board
- Simon Ling – previous in-house Accountant and more recently our Treasurer

WHR welcomed our new Treasurer, John Graham. John, a Chartered Accountant, has had a distinguished career as Finance Director of the NSPCC, and more recently, The Royal British Legion. John will also be joining the Board.

WHR finished by giving his personal thanks to Nick Phillips and the entire team at TAA. Their leadership and vision continues to move us forward with energy, integrity, and purpose.

Finally, WHR encouraged everyone to leave today, reinvigorated in our shared commitment. The work we do matters, people we serve matter, and together we will continue to ensure that almshouses remain a shining example of social housing in the UK.

## **2. Introduction: Chairman of the Board: Willie Hartley Russell**

The Chairman welcomed all members and outlined the procedures for the meeting:

The minutes of the Seventy-Third Annual General Meeting held at One Great George Street, Westminster, London on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2024, were voted upon and agreed to be correct.

**Proposed: Katherine Bird – Andover Municipal Charities**

**Seconded: Paul Mullis – Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes**

**The minutes of the Seventy-Third Annual General Meeting were taken en bloc.**

Carried and adopted.

## **3. Re-election of Board Members: Willie Hartley Russell**

Article 32 states that each Board member can serve for a maximum of three terms of three years then must retire, seeking reappointment through the voting procedure every three-year interval. The nominations are within that context and overseen by the Nominations Committee.

The board members below are seeking re-election to the board.

Andrew Barnes

Quentin Elston

David Healey

Paul Mullis

Adam Sedgwick

**Proposed: John Broughton - Hull United Charities**

**Seconded: Rob Douglas - The Makaton Charity**

**The re-elections were taken en bloc.**

The Chairman thanked and congratulated the re-appointees.

## **4. Election of five new Board Members: Willie Hartley Russell**

The individuals listed below are seeking election to the board.

Ed Christian

Peter Edwards

Stuart Holland

Andrew Sage

Claire Warren

**Proposed: Rob Douglas - The Makaton Charity**

**Seconded: Clive Cook**

**The elections were taken en bloc.**

The Chairman thanked and congratulated the appointees.

## **5. Presentation and adoption of the 2023 Annual Report and Accounts: Mr S J Ling (SL) – Honorary Treasurer**

2024 was an important and significant year for The Almshouse Association, with the many issues affecting almshouses, and the various parliamentary and policy initiatives to raise the profile of almshouses and achieve a more appropriate, regulatory environment. This kind of effort requires a significant amount of time on our staff and therefore has an impact on our finances and resources. In addition, we purchased the new property in Windsor which will become our headquarters later this year.

The overall outcome for the year was a net surplus of net income before investment gains of £142,221, reversing the deficit of £142,438 for 2023, and we had an increase of the value of our investments of £887,000, also reversing the reduction of the previous year.

Much of the funds we hold are restricted which can only be used for purposes specified by the donors. With regards to the day-to-day running of the association, TAA relies on unrestricted income to meet staff salaries and other costs. We enjoyed a surplus of unrestricted income over expenditure of £114,530 in 2024 compared with a deficit in 2023 of £160,528. Last years result benefited from the increase in membership fees in 2024 as we sought to reverse our historic reoccurring annual deficit.

In 2024 our total income amounted to £1,268,016 from a number of sources. Restricted income is used for specific purposes as requested by the donors, at about 17% of the total, consisting of mainly investment income with some gifts and donations. In 2023, restricted income was about 18% of our total. Unrestricted income totals 83% of the total amount.

Expenditure last year was £1,125,795, 16% of that related to unrestricted funds. Spending from unrestricted funds formed about 84% of the total, of which staff costs were 47% and other expenses 37% of the total.

Income available to the Association for its general purposes compared with expenditure on staff salaries and running costs. Our expenditure has been greater than our income for the past 6 years. In the past we have been fortunate to benefit from our relatively substantial reserves, but our unrestricted reserves have reached a significantly low level to cause concern. In recent years we have used some of our reserves to improve our offering to members by increasing the support and services available. Our free reserves as a result have dropped substantially. This is why in 2023 the board took the decision to increase subscription fees with the intention of raising them eventually to a level that will enable the Association to meet running costs from subscriptions rather than relying on other more erratic sources of income. The Association is very grateful to the membership for their support in this.

We do not have a large amount of undesignated, unrestricted reserves, but the Association is in the fortunate position of having quite substantial funds for restricted purposes to benefit our members.

Allocation of funds at the end of 2024 totaled £13.7m, well over half of that, 55% is restricted and can only be used for specific purposes. This is the fund out of which we make interest free loans to our members. 37% is held as investments to provide income to fill the gap between member subscriptions and our total expenditure. Part of this is endowment, donated for this purpose, and part is a fund designated by the trustees. We also hold a terminal reserve to cover possible extra costs in the unlikely event that the Association would have to wind itself up, this amounts to less than 4%. A further 4.2% is our strategic reserve to fund new initiative which has been successful but is now nearly exhausted, leaving just 2.4% of our resources for general purposes.

SL went on to explain how the purchase of our new offices has affected our balance sheet. Not all of the Wokingham or Windsor properties will be used for operational purposes. In Wokingham the house was let as residence, and in Windsor, the Keep will be let out for commercial use.

In our balance sheet the operational parts are classified as tangible fixed assets and the let part classified as investment properties. At 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 we had the Wokingham property stated at a low figure, which was the cost acquired about 50 years ago. At 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 we also had the Windsor property stated at its purchase price. Listed investments were valued at £8.3m at the beginning of the year. During that year we bought £910 worth and sold £2.4m worth. We asked our investment company to sell £1.5m worth during the year to enable us to buy the Windsor property. We finished the year with listed investments valued at £7.8m including some cash held pending investment. Overall our investments have not changed much.

The Association continues to be financially strong and well positioned to continue to provide the support that its members need and expect.

Our Auditors, Buzzacott LLP, have signed off the financial statements with a clean report.

The motion to adopt was proposed.

**Proposed: Tara Stenning**

**Seconded: Rob Douglas - The Makaton Charity**

The votes were unanimously recorded in favour, with none against, and no abstentions.

**Carried and adopted.**

## **6. Re-appointment of Auditors recommended: Buzzacott LLP**

Buzzacott Audit LLP have informed us of their willingness to continue as the Association's auditors.

**Proposed: John Broughton – Hull United Charities**

**Seconded: Paul Mullis – Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes**

The votes were recorded unanimously in favour, with none against, and no abstentions.

**Carried and adopted.**

## **7. Chairman Presentations: Willie Hartley Russell (WHR)**

**WHR went on to thank the following for their support and presented each with a small gift of thanks.**

Simon Ling for his wise council and support for the Almshouse Movement over the years. Originally, Simon was our part-time accountant and then he stepped into the role of Treasurer. Each year Simon has presented the accounts very clearly. The Board and the staff at the Association would like to take this opportunity to present Simon with a small gift to mark his retirement as our Treasurer.

Rob Douglas for his support to the Association as trustee to the Board over the past 9 years. Rob retired last year when we took the opportunity to present him with a small gift to show our appreciation and mark his retirement as trustee.

Margaret Stewart who has not only been a local champion in Lancashire, but also a long-term trustee. Sadly, Margaret has decided to retire this year, and we would like to take this opportunity to present Margaret with a small gift to thank her for her time on the Board.

WHR also paid tribute to Tricia Scouller, who is not retiring from the board, but is stepping down as Chair of The Leonard Hackett Memorial Committee, and our Awards panel. We would like to take this opportunity to present Tricia with a small gift to thank her for her support.

Peter Wilkinson following his decision to step down from our Awards panel. Sadly, Peter was not able to make today's meeting, but he will ensure that Peter receives a small gift by way of a thank you for his support.

## **8. Any Other Business**

There was no further business.

**WHR declared the 74<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting closed.**

## **9. CEO Update: Nick Phillips (NP)**

A presentation highlighting the key areas from the strategy that will be delivered by The Almshouse Association during 2025 that will take the almshouse movement through to 2030.

NP gave thanks to the team, specifically, Gerry Harmon for her efforts in helping raise the profile of almshouses. Gerry has managed to get us on BBC TV, Channel 4, Radio 2, and in all the broadsheets as well as the trade press.

NP touched on the work with the government, seeking to change the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to recognise almshouses. This will continue.

As part of our strategic objectives, we are aiming to encourage the establishment of five new almshouse charities. NP is currently engaged with six organisations and individuals to help start a new charity. It is anticipated that, within the next couple of years, a new charity will illicit a great deal of interest in the media.

Work with local government is about to take a step forward. Local government are a critical part of delivering engagement with our members around planning opportunities, section 106, and rural exemption schemes. We are also working with local government to exempt our almshouses from selective licensing.

Research is continuing, with some terrific research not just by TAA, but a number of different people from different sectors, and countries who attended the Research Conference. The next piece of TAA research will be 'The Residents Voice.'

The service to members continues to develop with your guidance and feedback. TAA are working hard to simplify the complexities of legislation. The health-checks have been well received, with just over half of our members having completed one. TAA is looking to turn those health-checks into certification, which will indicate a code of practice that will be recognised by local government, giving them the confidence to offer support to almshouses that are not registered providers under section 106. A number of local governments are moving away from their planning guidance to support members because of the confidence you give them in delivering warm, safe, secure homes.

TAA is going to develop greater support from volunteers. Moving to Windsor will allow us the opportunity to engage with individuals and bring them into the team. Particularly around historic

buildings and planning.

TAA are not yet at a level of fundraising that it feels comfortable with. TAA awards about just over £1m a year in grants and loans to our members. We will continue to work hard to encourage the larger organisations to donate funds which in turn will help support our members.

Friends of the Almshouse Movement receive invitations to visit some of our historic buildings. Just last week, we had a tour of Charterhouse. These visits not only include a tour, but also a glimpse of what goes on in these almshouse charities. If you would like to become a Friends of member, please contact either Gerry Harmon or David Burton.

**10. Q&A**

There were no further questions.



Signed: .....

Chairman

Position: .....



Date: .....