

## Levenshulme Old Library CIO

### **Annual report for the Seventh Annual General Meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2023**

Registered Charity Number: 1165870

First registered 4 March 2016

#### **The Objects (purposes and powers) of the CIO are:**

To benefit and further the residents of Levenshulme and the neighbourhood, without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or other opinions by associating together the said residents and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure time occupation with the objective of improving the conditions of life for the residents.

In furtherance of these objects but not otherwise, the trustees shall have power: to establish or secure the establishment of a community centre and to maintain or manage or co-operate with any statutory authority in the maintenance and management of such a centre for activities promoted by the charity in furtherance of the above objects.

#### **Our Vision and Mission**

Our vision is to grow as a vibrant, safe and welcoming community-focused hub, in order to enable people within the community to enrich their lives.

Our strategic objectives are:

- To grow our income to ensure the sustainability of Levenshulme Old Library as a community asset.
- To deliver internal improvements to the building.
- To develop an active community of co-producers, volunteers and participants around Levenshulme Old Library.
- To widen and diversify our audiences, creating positive impacts on community wellbeing.
- To review the possibility of the asset transfer of the library building from Manchester City Council.

## History of Levenshulme Old Library 2016-2022

When the council closed Levenshulme's former public library on Cromwell Grove in February 2016, Levenshulme Old Library (LOL) group set up as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) to re-open the building. Their mission has been to retain and develop the space as an arts and cultural centre that celebrates the energy, skills and passion in our community.

By Christmas 2017, LOL, ALLFM and Manchester City Council had agreed a temporary arrangement giving access to the old Library building, which enabled ALLFM to move in at the beginning of 2018. Since then, a number of current and former community tenants and user groups have used the venue as their base, and we have built a core group of hirers, who host regular activities and events. In the last year a number of new groups have become regular users.

Over the course of LOL's operations, a team of staff has been built to support and run the organisation, starting with one part time member of staff, and growing to include the current team of six part time employees.

## Operations September 2022-September 2023

We have worked to build flexibility in the building whilst considering our short- and longer-term sustainability. We now host a range of tenants, including the long-term ALLFM, who broadcast from the building, Manchester Library of Things (MCRLoT) in an on-site shipping container, and Irish Community Care and Interference Art using partitioned spaces. We have full use of the Main and Studio spaces and an increasingly user-friendly outdoor space, thanks to a community crowdfunder and volunteer days.

Our regular groups and audiences are rebuilding numbers. We are confident in local demand, and looking to introduce gradual changes that ensure we are working with existing users, diversifying user groups and working effectively with local partners to develop a complementary, community-led provision.

Our pricing structure had not changed since opening in 2017 and in consultation with existing users in 2022, was reviewed and increased by 10%. We plan to host quarterly user meetings alongside the formalisation of membership and volunteering at LOL and continue review of our operating model to ensure accessibility and affordability for all members of the community, and sustainability for the space.

We did not apply for funding to repeat previous programmes (such as Levy Fringe or Windrush events) in 2022, but have hosted events to build visibility and footfall, inspiring a wider range of groups to engage with the space. We have increased the number and variety of in-house activities taking place in the building, including LOL Art Clubs, Ghosts in the Library and *Levolution!* in the past 12 months.

We also used funding to develop and launch a Levenshulme Volunteering Network (VOL), which demonstrates a community-cohesive project between LOL, ALLFM and Levenshulme Inspire, and creates a more localised opportunity for volunteer-led organisations to recruit, and for residents to find relevant and local ways to get involved in their community.

We have increased our activity with regards to sustainability, with MCRLoT as a tenant, as well as hosting the monthly Levenshulme Repair Café and regular Extinction Rebellion and Carbon Coop events. This, and our work on the VOL project, will contribute to this community-engaged and enabling approach.

Our new business plan projections demonstrate a necessary evolution here and we are developing plans to invest in short- and longer-term changes to the space to allow for increased occupancy.

## Our Future

Over the next 12 months we want to increase usage of and engagement with the building.

In particular, we want LOL to be a home for local creatives and a space for the whole community to have access to and engagement with arts and culture. In the current climate, we believe it is particularly important that local people have access to cultural experiences, and that artists have spaces in which to be creative and networks to support them in their work.

We are currently in the early stages of developing an active and engaged membership. This is being developed in part to meet constitutional requirements, but most importantly so that we can fulfil our goal of being a community organisation which is run in collaboration with and *for* the community.

We are pleased to see new community-led initiatives such as Bluebell Green opening at Chapel Street Park, the opening of Station South, and community projects including the Levenshulme Art Trail, which are representative of the changes and post-Covid recovery in the local area. LOL's mission is as relevant as ever within this changing landscape and offers exciting possibilities on the horizon for collaboration and further community engagement.

We hope to sympathetically redevelop some of the internal structure of the building, maintaining its historic characteristics but also increasing the usability of the space and making it more readily able to serve the needs of our users.

The building is currently owned by the council but our medium-term goal is to complete an asset transfer from Manchester City Council, taking on full ownership and protecting the longer-term future of LOL. To do this we need a strong financial forecast and an action plan that ensures our financial viability in a sustainable manner.

## **Chairs Report: Laura Carroll**

Over the last 12 months the Board of Trustees has prioritised clarifying the strategic objectives, adjusting staffing structures and creating actions that are serving these objectives. Alongside regular monthly trustee meetings, we have had longer strategic planning meetings which have successfully moved us forwards.

One of our core objectives is: “To develop an active community of co-producers, volunteers and participants around Levenshulme Old Library”. Alongside fantastic initiatives like the Art Clubs and the volunteer website, we have just launched a new membership scheme, with a view to increasing the active engagement of the wider community. Our vision is for LOL to be run by and for the community, and hopefully this moves us closer to that goal. Trustees have been working to clarify the nature of the membership and how it fits in with existing structures and democratic practices. It remains a work in progress, but the launch has been successful and we are excited to see how it develops.

We have also taken steps to make internal improvements to the building which, given the age of the building and the intricacies of the lease with the council, is a big challenge for the organisation. We have completed a drone survey which has provided useful information for planning these improvements. It has also provided us with a real sense of the building itself and its potential to house and enhance the activities within it.

With all the intricate challenges to achieving our strategic goals, a realignment of staff structure was necessary to give autonomy and ownership to the staff. This has resulted in a shared managerial role between Laura and Richard; the expansion of the Trustee Administrator role to include a focus on membership; bookings and buildings being assigned to Jason; the recent addition of Chloe in HR and finances role; and Neil continues as the caretaker for the building. We as a board of trustees feel this will allow the staff to build upon the relationships we already have with partner organisations working within the building as well as building up a membership to develop active engagement with the community and partners.

We have been gathering applications for new trustees and have been very pleased with the response. Thank you to all those who applied and to Jen Wilkinson who has been working hard to promote and develop the Board of Trustees. There will be an election at the AGM to decide these posts.

We also want to take this time to acknowledge the wonderful partnership with ALLFM and all of the fantastic groups that use the building who are very much the spirit of LOL and part of the LOL family.

Moving forward, our focus is on increasing and stabilising our income in order to demonstrate a clear business plan which will enable us to complete a community asset transfer. Once this happens, we are in a stronger position to make the internal changes to the building which we think will increase the usability of the space.

**Laura Carroll, Chair of Trustees at Levenshulme Old Library (2022-2023)**

## Treasurer's Report

I'd first like to give thanks to our wonderful staff team, for ensuring our bookings system and invoicing runs smoothly and the building runs efficiently. And Helen Guest, our accountant for helping to prepare our annual accounts and manage our payroll. As well of course everyone who has helped raise and spend the grants and donations we've received during 2022-23.

Due to family and work commitments, and after many years, I have decided to stand down as a trustee and treasurer at this AGM. There will be a handover period to ensure continuity, but this will be my last AGM. I remain committed to supporting such a valuable community resource and a beautiful building. Jayne also stood down this summer from her role as LOLCIO finance manager, and has been replaced by the very able Chloe Cheadle. My heartfelt thanks to Jayne, without whom my role and the success of LOLCIO would not have been possible.

As we have moved beyond the pandemic and rebuilt our programme of activities, we have seen increased use of the building. Accordingly, the amount of work all our staff do has grown. Always they look to find best value, go beyond, and 'make do and mend', meaning we can continue into the 23/24 year in relatively good financial health. Notably summer 2022 saw our first modest increase in hire charges for our building since we opened. But we've always kept these low and supported projects that serve our community. Plus, we gave an inflation matching pay rise to staff last autumn. In the coming few months we will be reviewing our staff contracts and will ensure we make another annual pay rise.

Overall, I believe LOLCIO has managed its finances well in difficult times, and retains a significant reserve for the future. We are aiming to be here for the long term. Yet the future remains very uncertain. The cost-of-living crisis affects everyone, causing uncertainty over our income generation, making grants even harder to find, and raising our costs. However, we continue to work closely with other organisations in our community, build our knowledge, collaborate with our user groups, and support them and the community as best we can. I'm proud that we have raised in excess of £100,000 in grants the last 7 years, and probably nearly double that through hiring out the building. More importantly, offered a great service and recruited wonderful staff, trustees and volunteers. Most importantly keep one of Levenshulme's heritage buildings in pretty good order. We are solvent and positive about the future.

The 2022/23 accounts show a net balance between income and expenditure enabling us retain a little over £30,000 of assets over liabilities (the same as the previous year.) Noting Trustees reviewed the 2022/23 accounts at our 13th Sept 2023 Trustee meeting. Copies are available to view at this AGM.

**Jeze Hall, Treasurer at Levenshulme Old Library (2022-2023)**

## Trustees of Levenshulme Old Library

### Trustees serving at or since September 2022 AGM

Name	Role (2022)	Joined	Reselected	Retired/ Retiring
Jez Hall	Treasurer	2016	Oct 2022	Sept 2023
John Roby Brown		2016	Oct 2022	Sept 2023
Brittain Adams	Secretary	2017	Sept 2020	Sept 2023
Sidra Iftakhar		2017	Sept 2020	Sept 2023
Jean Bernard		2018	Sept 2021	Mar 2023
Claire Sharples		2019	Sept 2022	June 2023
Harriet Morgan-Shami		2022		
Laura Carroll	Chair	2022		
Ali Fletcher		2022		
Noel Connolly		2022		

**Number of available Trustee places under the constitution: 12**

**Number of Trustee places currently filled: 4**

**Number of Trustees standing for re-election: 0**

**Current trustee vacancies (AGM 2023): 8**

### Rules for Trustee elections

Trustees serve for a term of 3 years. Trustees may join at any point in the year, but if new, must be approved at the AGM. Formally,  $\frac{1}{3}$  of trustees stand down at each AGM. If fewer than  $\frac{1}{3}$  (i.e. 4 out of 12) voluntarily stand down and there are no other vacancies, those serving the longest since being re-elected as Trustees stand down. If those standing down wish to continue as Trustees, they must be approved at the AGM before they begin a new 3-year term (the maximum number of terms any trustee can serve without a break is also 3 - i.e. 9 years). If the total wishing to become Trustees would create more than 12 trustees, then a formal election may be required.

### Trustees Standing Down

Four people must stand down at this election. Jean Bernard and Claire Sharples have voluntarily stood down over the course of the year. Sidra Iftakhar is being removed for long standing non-attendance. Brittain Adams, Jez Hall and John Roby Brown are also standing down at the AGM. Brittain Adams is stood down after serving a 3 year term, and is not seeking re-election. Jez Hall stands down after serving a 7 year term. John Roby Brown stands down after also serving a 7 year term. 6 people stand down in total.

## **Trustee Positions 2023-24**

Accounting for trustees who have resigned, we therefore have a total of 4 trustees at this AGM. None of the sitting trustees need to stand for re-election. So there are 8 spaces on the Board.

We have received 7 applications for new trustees (as of 8.09.23).

At the July meeting of the Board of Trustees it was agreed to reserve positions for a youth representative and a tenant representative on the Board. We have actively sought applications for both of these positions.

We have received one application to the youth representative position.

We have not yet received an application for the position reserved for a tenant representative.

Under the current composition of the Board, we would therefore **not** need to hold an election at the AGM.

There has, however, been a motion submitted to expand the Board to include a non-voting youth board member representative and a non-voting tenants representative. If this motion is successful there will be two available positions for additional people to join the Board.

N.B. The election of any officer roles is confirmed at the next Trustee meeting in September 2023.

## **Eligibility for becoming a trustee**

- (a) Every charity trustee must be a natural person (i.e. not a group, company or other body).
- (b) No one may be appointed as a charity trustee:
  - if he or she is under the age of 16 years; or
  - if he or she would automatically cease to hold office under the provisions of clause [15(1)(f)] of the constitution.
- (c) No one is entitled to act as a charity trustee whether on appointment or on any re-appointment until he or she has expressly acknowledged, in whatever way the charity trustees decide, his or her acceptance of the office of charity trustee.
- (d) At least one of the trustees of the CIO must be 18 years of age or over.

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## **Trustee Board recommendation**

*The Board proposes we:*

1. *Approve the nominations of Mary McGuigan, Charlotte Marshall Thomson, Wardeh Al Nasir, Jen Taylor, Emma Collins, Gaby Harrison to the Board of Trustees*
2. *Approve the nomination of Jessica Smith to the Youth representative position*
3. *Approve the nomination of the person selected by ALLFM to be their tenant representative.*

*If this changes it will be reported at the AGM 2023. If any further applications are made, there will be a formal election at the AGM where a members' vote will determine the outcome (subject to applicants completing their application forms).*