

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
EDGWARE & HENDON REFORM SYNAGOGUE
HELD ON SUNDAY 16 OCTOBER 2022 AT
118 STONEGROVE, EDGWARE, MIDDLESEX HA8 8AB**

Present: There were 91 EHRS members present

Apologies: Michael Weber

In attendance: Rabbi Mark Goldsmith, Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers

Janet Brand, Chairman of EHRS, welcomed everyone to the 2022 AGM. JB was very happy to see so many members now able to attend the meeting in person.

1. Adoption of the Minutes of the AGM held on 26 September 2021:

The minutes had previously been approved by Council on 9 November 2021 and were approved by majority vote.

2. Trustees Report: Report from the Trustees on Activities held during 2021:

JB introduced the Trustees Report and asked for any comments. She advised that the Shul had adapted very well to lockdown and had been able to attract new members during this time. As the year went on we were able to provide more in-house, in-person activities with groups being run by members for members.

Rabbis' Report:

JB expressed thanks to the Rabbis for the enormous contribution they had made, never giving less than 100 per cent.

It was acknowledged that for such a large synagogue it is necessary to have more than two Rabbis and JB advised that as of 1 November Rabbi Tanya Sakhnovich will be joining EHRS for one year. During this time we will be looking to recruit a full-time third Rabbi. Hopefully there will be a full contingent soon.

JB also wanted to thank Rabbi Jackie Tabick and Rabbi Roberta Harris-Eckstein.

Maurice Kauffman commented that while he appreciates the need for another full-time Rabbi for such a large congregation, it may also be useful to have associates, ie members from the congregation who could cover if necessary. JB agreed and said that it would be good to have a cohort of lay leaders. MK felt that they would not necessarily need to be leaders and that what is needed is a re-think of what people can do.

Services:

There was then a question from Stuart Winton regarding the Torah Service. He commented that when there is a Bar or Bat Mitzvah the Torah portion is sung but at other times it is usually just read with an English translation. SW felt it would be preferable if the Portion could generally be sung rather than read.

JB said that this will be referred to the Services Committee but the Rabbis are very busy and it would take some time to learn the chanting for each week

Sharon Price commented that speaking as another congregant she prefers the Portion being read rather than sung.

Addressing this issue, Linda Kann said that she is able to chant and is prepared to do it, but so far has not been asked for several years.

There was then a question regarding music in the Shul and what is happening with regard to the choir and music more generally. JB answered that this is important to all of us and a committee has been set up in order to actively seek out cantorial soloists. There was a further question as to what has happened to the choir but JB replied that she is unable to answer due to employee confidentiality. However she reiterated that the Shul is actively looking for people who can contribute towards all areas of music provision. She confirmed that choir members who have left had been asked if they would like to return.

Education, Youth and Community Care, Young Families:

JB wanted to highlight the fantastic job done by all those working in these areas, particularly in the light of the difficult times we have been living through.

Tzedakah:

JB was very pleased to report that a substantial amount was raised in the appeal for our chosen charities.

Beyond EHRS:

JB asked if there were any questions and Kay Bagon commented that there is currently no Israel Society and asked if this could be re-started, ideally involving younger members. JB said that this was an excellent idea.

Maurice Kauffman then raised the subject of environmental issues. While it is of course a good thing that the Shul now provides so many activities for members, MK wondered whether some of these could be more localised to avoid the need to drive which creates carbon emissions. MK felt that there is a need for more thought to be given to environmental

issues. Rabbi Mark replied that the Shul has teamed up with a new environmental group and details are available on the website. JB agreed that these issues are very important and there is information in the Rabbi's Report.

Jewish Affiliated Organisations:

Ron Shelley wanted to highlight the AJEX Parade which will take place on 20 November this year and to ask for members to attend. It is particularly important that the contribution of Jewish ex-servicemen is recognised, especially in the light of recent anti-semitism.

3. Election of Council 2022/23

JB read out the names of the proposed Honorary Officers and Additional Council Members as follows:

(i) Chairman: Jeremy Harrod - Proposed by Mr M Lerman; seconded by Mr R Brand

(ii) Joint Vice Chair: Jo Sigalov - Proposed by Mr J Harrod; seconded by Mrs J Brand
Andrew Woolstone - Proposed by Ms J Staal; seconded by Mr B Konyn

(iii) Joint Honorary Treasurer: Kevin Maddison - Proposed by Mr P Newton;
seconded by Mrs M Allen

Michael Lerman - Proposed by Mr J Harrod; seconded by Mrs J Brand

(iv) Honorary Secretary: Michael Weber - Proposed by Mrs V Lewis;
seconded by Mr D Landes

(v) Honorary Officer: Daniel Mitchell - Proposed by Mrs J Brand; seconded by Mr J Harrod

Additional Council Members:

Fiona Aitman - Proposed by Rabbi M Goldsmith; seconded by Mrs V Joseph

Robert Brand - Proposed by Mr L Stein; seconded by Mrs Sharon Garson

Donna Bryk - Proposed by Mr P Newton; seconded by Rabbi D Young-Somers

Kevin Darvill - Proposed by Mr J Harrod; seconded by Mrs J Brand

Neil Flash - Proposed by Mr E Allen; seconded by Mr B Konyn

Sharon Garson - Proposed by Mr R Brand; seconded by Mr L Stein

Alex Hirsh - Proposed by Mr J Harrod; seconded by Mrs J Brand

Ben Konyn - Proposed by Miss B Lemer; seconded by Ms J Staal

David Mendoza-Wolfson - Proposed by Ms J Sigalov; seconded by Mrs J Brand

Eric Sander - Proposed by Mr D Mitchell; seconded by Mr S Garfinkel

Jo Weber - Proposed by Mrs S Koster; seconded by Mr P Newton

JB advised that there are two other proposed Council members whose names have not yet been put to the membership. They are Bradley Trainis and Daniel Stiasny. They will be co-opted onto Council at the first Council Meeting of the new session.

4. Election of Junior Warden

The Junior Warden is Andrea Lucas - Proposed by Mr K Price; seconded by Mr S Gilbert

JB said that it would also be good to have some newcomers for this role, which is a very rewarding one.

5. Election of Young Member to Council: 18-35 years of age

The Young Members' representative is Elliott Allen - Proposed by Mrs J Brand; seconded by Mrs M Allen

The meeting unanimously approved all members of Council

6. Approval of Audited Accounts 2021 for discussion

Michael Lerman and Kevin Maddison presented the audited accounts for 2021 and went through the highlights as follows:

Net income before investment returns: £20,873

Net gains on investments: £412, 072

Net income/(expenditure) before transfers: £432,945 (compared to £155,065 in 2020)

The total reserves as at 31 December 2021 amount to approximately £13.9M. In 2020 the figure was approximately £13.4M.

ML and KM advised that our cash position is strong and is being closely monitored.

They expressed thanks to the accounts staff who always do a very good job, and also to the Auditors. They advised that there was a clean audit report.

The Draft Income & Expenditure Accounts for year ending 31 December 2021 were presented by Michael Lerman and Kevin Maddison with accompanying slides.

ML advised that income from membership subs has been decreasing due to concessions but there are now more younger members which will help to address this, and there are exciting plans to improve the Synagogue.

The Joint Jewish Burial Scheme has increased subs but with some concessions and there is now a moratorium for six months fees.

Maurice Kauffman had various questions.

Referring to the Safeguarding statement on p.16 of the Annual Report and Financial Statements he asked what training is given. JB answered that this is taken extremely seriously and that everyone involved in working with children or vulnerable adults has ongoing safeguarding training. This includes staff, trustees and volunteers.

MK then asked if gift aid is included in relation to income. KM answered that gift aid is included but not as a separate figure.

MK had a further question relating to investments and how these are managed in relation to costs. KM referred him to p.13 of the Annual Report and Financial Statements where there is a statement regarding Investment policy.

Linda Kann then raised a question regarding the Reform Judaism subscription which had increased by more than £20,000 in 2021. KM advised that there had been an error in the figure from previous years so that the amount stated was artificially low, and this has been corrected this year.

LK observed that at least one large synagogue has suspended subscriptions, and she feels that we pay a lot and receive little in return. JB agreed and said that she is in conversation with the Chair of the Movement. She has made her feelings known; large synagogues must be made to pay subscriptions.

A question was raised regarding the time of year accounts are published. This used to be done more frequently and earlier in the financial year. While acknowledging that accounting staff have been doing a very good job, especially in the light of Covid etc., might it be better for accounts to be done earlier in the year? JB said that she appreciates the point being made but we are now doing things slightly differently in that originally the EGM was solely to discuss subscriptions and accounts whereas now all areas are discussed in one meeting. However discussions will continue.

Approval of Accounts 2021 proposed by Mr K Maddison, seconded by Mr B Trainis.
The accounts were approved.

7. Approval of Auditors

Proposed by Mr K Maddison; seconded by Mrs J Sigalov. The Auditors were approved.

8. Subscription Proposal for 2023 Resolution

The full proposal is set out in the Agenda.

Maurice Kauffman asked whether the gross amount for annual subscription includes gift aid. KM

answered that gift aid is not included in the gross amount.

MK then asked for more information regarding the Special Projects Fund. KM advised that there is a specific Projects Fund for building improvement work, etc.

MK asked about funding for the Environment Project. Daniel Mitchell said that this is still under discussion but it will be addressed.

Regarding the Environment Project, there was a question as to whether the Synagogue building could be more energy efficient.

JB answered that this is being looked at especially in the light of increased heating and energy bills. However we also have a commitment to the Community and to those in financial hardship. The heating will be on when necessary as it is very important that we provide a welcoming space for all who use the building. It has been necessary to increase subscriptions as we have had very large bills but there will be concessions where needed.

There was another question regarding what we mean by 'gross' and if this includes gift aid. KM answered that gift aid is not included. JB said that with gift aid individuals do not pay extra but the Synagogue benefits. She agreed that the wording is not very clear and this will be revised.

Proposed by Michael Lerman; seconded by Stuart Abbey. The Subscription Proposal was approved.

9. Any Other Business

The Rabbis wanted to share their hopes for the future. Rabbi Debbie said that the Community is many things and the Synagogue is a house of meeting, not just for services although of course these are very important. But there is so much going on within the Community and the Rabbis are here to walk with you through all life events whether in joy or sorrow. She thanked all the teams working within the Community and spoke of the importance of partnership.

Rabbi Mark spoke of the Rabbis' vision for 5783 which is to resource our rabbinical team and all those working with the Community so that every member's Jewish journey is included. He spoke particularly of the achievements of those working with young families and within Youth and Education, and of the immense value of person to person communication. There is also an important role, created by the Council, for the Membership Engagement Team who will work with those aged 21-65, again with an emphasis on working with individuals and person to person communication. The more that people feel their needs are met, the more they will be willing to contribute. Members of our Community have many skills and it is important that we are aware of what people can offer.

Rabbi Mark then expressed thanks to Janet Brand for all that she has done in the last three years, particularly in the light of the pandemic. The Chair has a vital role in helping us to grow

as a Community and to support each other. Janet has steered us through these difficult times and we are a Community at peace with itself which is a great achievement.

JB then responded, observing that this is her last AGM in her role as Chair in what has been an extraordinary three years. She expressed huge thanks to all those she has worked with, both volunteers and professional teams, for their wonderful support; also the Vice Presidents and the President, Richard Harris and of course Rabbis Mark and Debbie. She also thanked all members for their support. She expressed the hope that the Synagogue has emerged from the difficult times as an even stronger and more vibrant Community and said that it has been an honour to serve as Chair.

President Richard Harris expressed thanks to Janet Brand on behalf of the whole Community for her dedication, perseverance, and all she has done. He observed that there were at least five distinguished past chairmen at today's AGM. The role of Chair is always a demanding and fulfilling one but what JB has had to deal with over the past three years of Covid and lockdowns exceeds all that has gone before. However JB dealt with it admirably and with the help of our Rabbis, staff and volunteers we were able to carry on, albeit via Zoom etc. JB was always anxious for people to be able to return to the Synagogue in person and the large congregation attending the Yom Kippur service was testament to her achievement.

A question was then raised by David Warshaw who was concerned about non members being able to login to our services without paying as anyone can log on to the Classic Channel. He asked if it could be password protected. JB responded that this also applies when people attend synagogues in person. She understands his concerns but we can't limit access. Rabbi Debbie said that some new members have joined as a result of online access.

DW also raised the point that there are a number of proficient lay readers within the Community who could assist at services. Rabbi Mark asked members to let the Rabbis know if they are able to help in this way. As relatively new Rabbis within this congregation, he and Rabbi Debbie were not always aware of what people could do. Linda Kann advised that there used to be a list of lay people who were able and willing to help in various ways and JB said this will be sought out.

Stuart Winton wanted to thank the technical staff who enabled services to take place via Zoom, and who ensured that this online access was perfected over time.

The meeting closed at 2.25pm