

Friends of Monkton Wyld Court (MWC) Association

Inaugural General Meeting Report

Draft Minutes of meeting held on 16th October 2023 at the Village Hall in Wootton Fitzpaine.

Introductory Remarks

The Chairman of the meeting, Charles Bevan, advised the meeting that its main purpose was to elect officers of the proposed Association of the Friends of Monkton Wyld Court, and the related Rules of the Association. It was not to try and resolve the current dispute between the current Trustees and the Community. It would however provide an update on the on-going dispute.

It was hoped that the Association would be able to help prevent future disputes by proving a sounding board for discussion and advice in conflict resolution.

Election of Officers of the Association of Friends of Monkton Wyld Court

- Anson Harford was elected as Chairman.
- Richard Waite as Treasurer and
- Jon Hill as Secretary

All three officers were elected unanimously by those assembled, following due procedure of proposal and seconder.

Adoption of the Rules of the Association

Copies of the **Rules** had been circulated widely prior to the meeting. Members of the meeting were advised that the text was not cast in stone, and that in future changes could be made as and when necessary. The assembly approved the Rules as presented.

Update on situation at Monkton Wyld Court.

Jasmine Hills, reported that she and two others had been sent notices of eviction by the Trustees on grounds that they had not complied with instructions from the Trustees and had used inappropriate language in discussions with other members of the community and in email correspondence with the Trustees. She also reported on the successful festival recently held at MWC in August/September that showcased the range of activities provided at MWC. It was reported that the Trustees had demanded the community not to go ahead with the festival but had given no reason for this instruction.

Simon Fairlie reported on the 'Whistleblowing' complaint raised by an individual against him. He reported that he had sought legal advice on whether or not the complaint raised against him, was legally a case of whistleblowing. He was advised by a lawyer specialising in such cases that it was NOT a case of whistleblowing.

Report on status of a Complaint against the trustees being prepared by some members of the Community.

Simon Fairlie reported that he was preparing a complaint about the Trustees that would be submitted to the Charity Commission. He said this complaint was based on 4 factors -

1. There was harm being done to the people living at MWC
2. The Trustees are not meeting the aims and objectives of the Charity
3. The Trustees are prejudicing the financial position of the Charity
4. There is damage being caused to the reputation of the Charity

Simon continued by mentioning The Abbey, Sutton Courtenay, a spiritual community in Oxfordshire, where a senior member of staff, in dispute with the Charity's Trustees, committed suicide. He reported that the stress on MWC community members had reached such a high level that he thought a major mental health issue could be imminent and the CC should be forewarned.

After the suicide at The Abbey, the Charity Commission wanted to shut the charity down, but local people stepped in, stating that they wanted to save the charity, and took over trusteeship, setting a precedent for what might happen at Monkton Wyld Court.

Letter of 3rd of October by Malcolm Ramsay (Jurist)

The meeting was told that Malcolm Ramsay, who had visited MWC some 10 years ago, had at his own volition decided to follow the events of the current dispute and provide an opinion on the legality of the actions taken by the Trustees since March 2023. His basic assessment is that much of the action threatened by the Trustees, if it was to go to court, would fail. Furthermore he has indicated that if the current Trustees do not resign by 4th of November 2023, he will be writing to the Charity Commission saying they should resign, and that he may also be writing to the London Magistrates Advisory Committee saying he does not think the current chair of the Trustees, Laura Guest, should be a Magistrate.

Questions and Discussion from the Floor

Broadly speaking three topics were discussed.

1. Plans of the current trustees. The Trustee present was asked to provide an indication of the main thrust of objectives that the current trustees have for MWC. He reported that they saw the main objective being education of sustainable living practices. On further questioning he was unable to provide any detailed elaboration, although he indicated sustainable agricultural practices would be retained. He also failed to mention anything regarding the recent (11th October) changes to the Mem & Arts for the Charity, posted on Companies House.
2. Location of Trustees. There appeared to be a consensus among the assembled that ideally the trustees of MWC should live locally, and not far away.
3. Mediation. Similarly there was a consensus that the dispute is becoming existential as far as MWC is concerned and that it was time to involve professional mediation. To this effect the Chairman specifically requested the MWC Trustee present to raise this suggestion with his fellow Trustees.