

Minutes of a meeting of the Trustees of the Matthew Smith Almshouse Charity held September 17th 2025

Present. Christopher Charlton, in the chair, George Jones, Dick Watson, Katie Harris, George Henshaw, John Faulk and Paul Hodgson.

1. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies were received from Bernard Holden, Tim Gully and Vickie Minion.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held May 14th, 2025.

The minutes were approved

3. Matters Arising.

3.01 The resident who has fallen behind with the wmcs has paid regularly at an enhanced rate but not at the fully enhanced rate suggested. It was agreed the matter had been satisfactorily dealt with for the time being. It would be reviewed at the end of the year.

3.02. It was agreed the new website should include a news section, improved photographs of the inside of a flat plus external shots with people. John Faulk to liaise with Dick Watson whose daughter would take the photographs. When complete the chairman will circulate the full draft before submitting it to Andy Myers. It was accepted there would be additional costs attached to the new site unless additions/ alterations might be made in-house.

3.03 George Jones reported the satisfactory completion of Alex Carrington's work on the Coat of Arms and lettering. He would circulate photographs. Alex Carrington has been paid. A bill for the scaffolding is awaited.

3.04 The CIO constitution amendment. At the time of the meeting a response had not been received from the Charity Commission. Subsequently it has been established a form of words has been agreed, though not those submitted.

4. Financial Matters.

4.01 Reports had been circulated.

There had been a gain of over £18,000 in the Charity's financial resources since July.

4.02 The HSBC account would be closed shortly. The new charity had been registered for gift aid.

4.03 Key expenditure had been the purchase of a washing machine £809 and website maintenance £360. The final payment for new windows would be due.

4.04 The Financial control policy, previously circulated was approved.

It was agreed the delegated limit for expenditure would be increased from £800 to £1,000, expenditure still subject to two signatures.

4.05 It was agreed to consider fixed asset policy.

5. Residents' Matters

5.01 John Faulk reported urgent works were in hand to resolve damp problems previously identified in the Quinquennial Report. It was agreed he and George Jones should liaise to determine the best course of action.

5.02 It was suggested Almshouse residents might be eligible to take advantage of current free boiler schemes. The chairman agreed to contact the AA for advice.

5.03 Katie Harris agreed to contact Belper Town Council regarding the Chapel yard hedge which requires attention.

6. The Milford fields

6.01 The fencing had been completed and the signs would be attached shortly. There had been no complaints or evidence of trespass. The neighbours in Derwent Avenue would be permitted access in order to manage their hedge. They would receive a written statement setting out the position.

6.02 The negotiation with Simon Hayes had been concluded with an agreement to pay an annual rent of £600. Trustees were aware that this fell short of the rent identified by Edward Marshall in his review of the Milford land but were reassured that realistically, given the poor access to the fields, Hayes was the only grazier likely to be interested and that in the circumstances John Faulk had done all that was possible in achieving this rent. It was agreed Hayes should be offered a grazing agreement at £600 for three years. It was considered probable Hayes would insist he had a tenancy under the 1986 Act. This could not be conceded. There were doubts that trustees had the powers to agree a tenancy. The chairman agreed to ask the AA.

7. The New project

7.01 The meeting with Jonathan Davies MP had been extremely successful. His support had already borne fruit in an approach to AVBC. A meeting with Mr Arkle was expected.

7.02 Richard Smith had now received a contract from NHS. Paul Hodgson agreed to confirm trustees' understanding of the agreed price and decision to purchase an option with an horizon of twelve months.

8. Any Other Business

8.01 Housing ombudsman Return

The trustees noted the Self Assessment return and the completed Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report and approved these for upload to the website.

8.02 Trustees noted there had been no complaints in the 2024/5 period covered by the report. It was considered this reflected well on the engagement the trustees enjoyed with the residents.

8.03 Two actions were agreed in the report.

- (1) To share a copy of the revised Complaints Policy with each resident.
- (2) To add a specific item to each agenda for Residents' Complaints and Service Requests.

8.04 There are a number of policies recommended by the AA which the charity has yet to adopt. A Safeguarding policy is in preparation. The chairman agreed to revisit the Reserves and Investment policies.

8.05 It was agreed to engage a gardener at £15 per hour for two hours per month during the Spring and Summer months.

8.06. The need for a secretary. Since the death of Margaret Hinchcliffe the charity has been without a Secretary. George Henshaw agreed to take on this role.

8.07 The chairman agreed to ask the AA whether the Almshouse units were required to have Energy Performance Certificates.

9. Date of next Meeting — NOTE CHANGE OF DATE!

This was agreed to be November 12th but was altered subsequently to November 19, at No. 28 Belper at 7pm.