

Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM)
Penicuik Community Arts Association (PCAA)
Monday 28th October 2024 7pm
Arts Centre, 4 West Street, Eh26 9DL

1. Welcome and apologies

1.1 Apologies: Marian Hunter, Alison MacDonald (M), and Alister McDonald (M), Rhona Petrie (M), Rosemary Campbell, Trish Santer, Roma Robertson (M), Amanda Airey (M), Alan and Susan Reid

Present: PCAA committee members - Susan Owen (SO - Chair), Carol Mann (CM - Treasurer), David Owen (DO - minutes), Rebekah Dyer (RD - Membership and minutes), Andrew Gillie (AG), Jackie McDonald (JM), Sheena Stewart (SS), Jenni Thomson (JT), plus non committee attendees (please see appendix). Total - 30, of which 27 were PCAA members.

2. A report on behalf of the PCAA committee was delivered by the Chair.

2.1 Questions after Chair's initial statement:

2.1.1 How much of the arts buildings in use belong to the PCAA?

Answered by the Chair, who outlined the current situation of lease/ownership and returning the owned building to the council upon vacating. Responsible for all upkeep, maintenance, repair. Up until last year, we had a grant for maintenance the loss of which is part of our financial crisis.

2.1.2 Does everybody who uses the building have membership? Should they not be members?

Answered by the Chair: not all uses by members; use by all the community draws more payment.

2.1.3 Has anybody sounded out the council?

Answered by Chair: yes, will come to that in report.

2.1.4 Have you considered use of the town hall?

Answered by Chair: yes, certainly another option although not spoken to them as yet.

Same member noted camera club has put on exhibitions there and considering relocating - could be worth considering for PCAA. £15 per hour for use of town hall room.

2.1.5 If you lose the building, that is forever - a great shame. Interested to hear about investigations into possible grants.

3. Treasurer's presentation

3.1 Treasurer reported that it has become clear through projected finances that there is not enough money available to remain in the building.

3.2 Balance from income 8,163.

3.3 If we stay in the building, shortfall is projected at around -£7,557 (this is just from basic running of the building - no maintenance).

3.4 There are greater expected costs not factored into these calculations. Even if we make it through this year, we are likely to be in the same position this time next year.

3.5 We cannot charge any more for room hire as we would do ourselves out of business and lose out to other venues.

3.6 If we vacate the building, risk groups leaving.

3.5 Questions

3.5.1 Do we pay for the lease?

Treasurer responded: We used to, but that was offset by grant. We now pay £150 per year to the council. It is the insurance premium that is a greater concern.

3.5.2 Accounts at AGM indicate income from events and exhibitions - are these included in projections?

Treasurer: No, as these tend to only make even or make a loss. There is not a significant enough amount of income coming in from these events to include in the projections.

4. Chair's report of consultations and steps taken

4.1 Chair added that we have heard today that our People's Postcode application has been unsuccessful.

4.2 Questions

4.2.1 Could raising the membership fee help?

Chair: Survey responses did indicate a willingness to pay more for membership. Again this is not enough to keep us in the building.

4.2.2 Doesn't insurance include some cover for legal advice? What about vacating the building - is that something that the council could waive? Who else is going to use the building?

Treasurer: That's up to the council. This is one of the arguments we made to the council but no success.

4.2.3 What was the outcome of the meeting with the Storehouse?

Treasurer: An encouraging meeting; Storehouse are keen for other organisations to use their building, e.g. upstairs facilities. This gives them a stronger position for grant applications. Space would work well for concerts and exhibitions. PCAA plans to go back to them once we know the outcome of our situation.

4.2.4 Isn't it in the interest of Midlothian Council for PCAA to stay in the building?

Committee agrees. Treasurer commented that the maintenance costs are going up and up. Why spend all the money now on the building when we may have to vacate?

4.2.5 Any way that the cafe could expand and produce more money?

Treasurer: Cafe break even.

Jenni: If we upgraded kitchen to manage higher demand, it would still be difficult to expand serving area. High competition from other cafes.

4.2.6 This crisis is typical of many organisations. Emotional attachment makes it difficult to let go. Have we looked into partnership with other organisations?

Chair: We have begun exploring with the Storehouse with use for their building.

Treasurer: It would be limited by terms of the lease to go into partnership to use this building - would need another arts-based organisation.

Question-asker reminded the meeting that working in partnership could be the beginning of a bright new future even with the sadness of losing the Arts Centre.

4.2.7 Regarding the Storehouse vs use of town hall - considering levels of control for activities in those buildings.

Chair: Yes, a lot of work would be required to assess all options.

5 Chair's report on other issues to be resolved

5.1 AG added that this has been a difficult and emotional process for the committee to face up to the reality of the financial situation. He reiterated this is not a one-off scenario but a year on year problem that, with inflation, is likely to only get worse.

5.2 Q&A and observations

5.2.1 Other sources of income - Taylor Woodrow has a fund for supporting community organisations and have invested in Penicuik before. Have these been tried or just too much at the moment?

Treasurer: We have done so in the past but only attracted a couple of hundred pounds.

Chair: Contacted a number of building companies putting up estates locally (for another project) but no response. If members have contact to rich landowners, please let us know!

5.2.2 Comment: Increasingly difficult to raise is funding for running costs, fire prevention across the sector. These costs are often unexpected and surprisingly large. The general situation of available funding - all that suggests a scenario in which these costs are not going to be covered. Space is lovely but small; it has very large problems; and is not the most accessible space. All this consumes community resources to keep a building going rather than the arts flourishing in Penicuik.

5.2.3 If you have friends or wealthy supporters, there might be people who would be willing to pay £1000 per year (say) for supporting the building.

Chair: We are in a crisis now; we have no time to find these people.

Treasurer: We need a model that will be sustainable year on year.

5.2.4 The problem is 'now'. We are talking about vacating the building by April/March. It seems the Storehouse would be an ideal situation to relocate to - but seems like that's not going to be April. Could you consider moving to the town hall as a stopgap before moving across to the Storehouse?

Chair: There are a lot of options. For a while we may need to be nomadic. The arrangements and details need to be worked out at the right time once we have got through this difficult stage.

5.2.5 Any feeling of what the council might do with this building? Might we end up being able to rent rooms back?

Chair: Unknown.

5.2.6 It was noted that the attendees are appreciative of the committee's work and effort. What about CIC (committee interest company) instead of SCIO? CIC can be inexpensive. However, might remove charitable status.

Chair: We can look into that option.

5.2.7 SCIOs - burdensome in cost and time, but worthwhile route.

Treasurer: Without the building, the cost would be considerably less. There would still be a legal cost.

5.2.8 Have you always been in this situation where the committee has always been liable?

AG: Quite possibly, that's our understanding - this has just been uncovered.

5.2.9 Is the other leaseholder aware?

Chair: He has not yet been informed.

5.2.10 Is the building listed?

Jenni: We were eligible for regeneration project.

Chair: In a conservation area - have to follow guidelines for any changes to building exterior.

5.2.11 If we lose the building, do we lose the cafe as well?

Committee: Yes.

5.2.12 Shouldn't the entire membership be consulted and asked for help?

Chair: Survey consulted 400 members and friends.

AG: We could consult for a long time but we need action now. Information has gone out and feedback received but hasn't turned up what we need.

6. Final discussions and provisional voting

6.1 Anyone able to take on committee membership, raise the money and take on responsibility for the building? Show of hands: 0.

6.2 Does anyone object to the recommendation of the committee to vacate the building? Show of hands: 0.

6.2.1 The meeting expressed sadness at the prospect of vacating the building.

6.3 Should we fold up completely? Show of hands: 0.

6.4 Does anyone need more time to consider? Show of hands: 1 (Ulla Hipkin - notes the committee has done very well; Chair notes we will pass that to our advisor). Ulla Hipkin withdrew her request post-meeting.

Congratulations and round of applause was given to Sue from the floor for guiding the meeting.

Meeting closed 8:20pm.

APPENDIX

Full list of attenders

NAME	PCAA MEMBER?	NAME	PCAA MEMBER?
Andrew Gillie	Y	Morag Barry	Y
Ann Beveridge	Y	Roger Hipkin	Y
Sue Owen	Y	Anthony Edge	Y
Dave Owen	Y	Jennifer Edge	Y
David Stevenson	Y	Jane Kelly	Y
Jackie McDonald	Y	Catherine Freeland	N
Rebekah Dyer	Y	Stephen Beaumont	Y
Sheena Stewart	Y	James Garry	Y
Eve Greenwood	Y	Kirsty Fawcett	N
Gordon Peerless	N	Carol Mann	Y
Ulla Hipkin	Y	Gordon Kerr	Y
Neil McDonald	Y	Christina Suter	Y
Christine Finlayson	Y	Jenni Thomson	Y
Lynda Smith	Y	Gnome Liston	Y
Florance Kennedy	Y	Rik Smith	Y