

AHCH Ltd AGM Chairmans Report May 2026

ASHTON HAYES COMMUNITY HUB LTD. (AHCHL)

Annual General Meeting (AGM) — Chairman's Report

Prepared by Hugo Deynem

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Well, firstly, it gives me an equal amount of gratitude and of pride in the support given to this project by you—the shareholders, volunteers, supporters, tenant, staff and committee members. Without this tremendous level of commitment given to such an ambitious project, we would not be presenting these accounts or celebrating this monumental milestone at our first proper post-opening AGM.

To stand together today with **The Golden Lion** not just saved from the threat of residential redevelopment, but beautifully refurbished, open, and thriving as the true "Pub & Hub" of our community, is a feeling that is hard to put into words. This report could have been a very lengthy one bearing in mind where we were just a couple of years ago, but today is a celebration of a vision fully realised.

2. Looking Back: Our Funding and Purchase Foundations

It is worth reminding ourselves of exactly how the solid financial foundations of this project were laid. We received the confirmation of our vital £360,000 Community Ownership Fund (COF) Grant in late December 2023. This transformative funding was made up of £250,000 Capital, £50,000 for Revenue towards repairs and refurbishment, and £60,000 split between three additional mini-projects: the IT infrastructure, the new pedestrian access, and the Solar PV installation. On the back of this great news, your committee began revisiting our detailed business and renovation plans and structuring the Share Offer launch.

We launched that share offer at a packed and enthusiastic public meeting at St John's on the 2nd of May 2024. Our community stepped up magnificently, raising an initial total of over £311,000 during that vital fundraising window. I am thrilled to note that this incredible backing has since grown in support to **424 shareholders**, all passionate community investors joining our ranks from as far away as Canada & Australia!

This phenomenal community backing allowed us to officially complete the purchase of the freehold of The Golden Lion on Friday the 14th of June 2024. The asset purchase itself was concluded at an agreed formal offer of £342,000, financed through our £250,000 COF Capital Grant and £92,000 drawn from our hard-raised share offer funds.

3. The Refurbishment Journey and Capital Overhauls

Once the keys were securely in our hands, the real physical work began. The "back to brick, roof down" building refurbishment commenced immediately. We started from the top down with a full roof strip, replacing timbers where required, and felting and re-slating all the main roofs to ensure the historic structure was entirely watertight.

It was always our firm intention—guided by our comprehensive building condition reports and the factual position that this is a 300-year-old building—that wherever possible, we should address all structural issues head-on. We chose to address both the known problems and those yet undiscovered to the best standard that our budget constraints would allow. As I have noted

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previously, not to do so would simply be storing up serious risks for the management of the building further down the line.

Due to the age and construction of the walls, we encountered a number of unknowns that required specialised building skills and traditional materials. While resolving these effectively did introduce some unplanned costs, it allowed us to systematically upgrade the core infrastructure originally outlined in our prospectus. This included replacing old single-glazed windows with efficient double-glazing, executing a total rewire of both floors, installing an entirely new heating system, completely overhauling the toilets to modern standards, and fully renewing the kitchen, beer cellar, and beer pumping systems.

I am also delighted to reference here for the report on the completion of our three specialised COF mini-projects:

- The new **pedestrian path** is fully in situ, providing safe walking access to the site for all residents.
- The **IT infrastructure** has been fully installed, bringing high-speed connectivity to our Hub and pub spaces.
- After successfully navigating the necessary formal approvals from our District Network Operator (SPEN), our **Solar PV installation and microgeneration energy grid framework** is live. This green energy integration is a beautifully fitting tribute to Ashton Hayes' famous carbon-neutral legacy, heavily reducing our carbon footprint while contributing to keeping the Pub and Hub's utility overheads sustainable.

4. National Recognition:

Our ambitious vision didn't just catch the eyes of our village; it resonated across the country. We were extremely pleased to have been shortlisted for a national Rural Community Business Award, sponsored by Bestway Wholesale and the Plunkett Foundation. Kate Harrison and I had the absolute honour of representing the Ashton Hayes Community Hub in London, where we proudly walked away winning the award for the **“One to Watch”** category.

Many of you will have attended the second nationally recognised award presentation a few months ago when we received the runners up award in CAMRA's annual Pub Saving Awards scheme that celebrates communities who have rallied together to fight for their local.

We have also very recently had an extremely positive write up in an extensive article published in Cheshire Life magazine.

All of this wide recognition is a wonderful validation of our collective effort, proving that the wider community business sector recognises what a special project we were building together.

5. The Grand Re-Opening

The true climax of this journey arrived on **August 27, 2025**—the historic day The Golden Lion officially reopened its doors to the public. After standing shuttered, empty, and silent for 12 long years following its closure in early 2013, our village's heart fell silent no more. More than 100 enthusiastic guests packed the launch night, and we were privileged to have the Sheriff of Chester, Simon Eardley, join us to officially cut the ribbon.

Walking into the pub today, it is hard to believe the state it was in before renovations. The interior has been beautifully and thoughtfully restored, balancing premium modern comforts

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with a keen eyed respect for the building's heritage. In a moving nod to our past, many of the original fixtures and fittings that were in place when the pub closed in 2013 were carefully preserved, lovingly restored, and put right back into service, welcoming old friends and new faces alike.

6. Thriving Operations under Lance & Leanne Warburton

A core tenet of our long-term business model was finding the right professional operators to handle the day-to-day business under a tenancy agreement, ensuring the society remains protected while aligning community goals with professional delivery. Following a comprehensive recruitment process, we secured our fantastic tenants in Lance and Leanne Warburton, who have done a stellar job breathing life, warmth, and unparalleled hospitality into the space.

Trading performance and community feedback have been nothing short of exceptional, perfectly reflected in a superb 4.9 rating on Tripadvisor. Customer service, food and ambience are all at the very heart of the pub's current success, driven by an experienced team both front of house and equally importantly behind the scenes in the kitchen, all expertly led by Michael. Their menu focuses on high-quality, locally sourced fresh ingredients and classic home-cooked favourites, featuring incredibly popular weekly fixtures like our Monday Pie and a Drink nights, Thursday Burger Nights, and rotating weekend Chef's Specials.

Crucially, Lance and Michael have wholeheartedly embraced our dual mandate as both a traditional village pub and a supportive Community Hub. The Golden Lion operates completely free of tie, giving them the freedom to showcase brilliant independent local breweries such as Weetwood. At the same time, the pub has become a vital asset in combatting social isolation by providing a central, warm point of contact for local gatherings, celebrations, and events. From hosting private christenings and birthdays to running incredibly successful quiz nights—with our first quiz drawing 98 participants and kicking off a local charity collection fund—the pub is performing exactly as we envisioned. As we develop collectively, we explore new offerings and interests, we adapted the calendar to screen the 6 Nations rugby live on a big screen as trial, and have recently completed the upgrade of the old garden area to provide additional car parking spaces while maintaining a green space suitable for community events, proving that with considerate planning we can accommodate vibrant community events while maintaining our signature calm, village and family-pub atmosphere.

7. Votes of Thanks and Financial Acknowledgments

An achievement of this scale belongs to an absolute army of individuals. I want to extend my deepest thanks to our exceptional, hard-working volunteer steering committee who have selflessly steered this project through every stage of its development over the last 13 years. It was often challenging in more ways than we care to remember, but the resilience of the team was phenomenal. As we have always planned, we as the original committee would resign and allow the selection of new committee members to steer us through the operational phase of the project and on in to the future. I would like to express my personal gratitude and also I am sure, that of the whole community for the dedicated service given by all those on the committee, 4 of which have decided to stand down, and who can blame after such a stint of community service. I'd personally like to thank Lisa Allman, for providing her invaluable knowledge on the compliance and constitutional requirements of community organisations, Kate Harrison for her enormous contribution to fund raising, share offers and a direct point of contact to the Plunkett

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Foundation, James Lutton for his estate and land agency skills which we could not have done without and of course David Wilson who has been our stalwart treasurer and finance manager over all these years. I would ask you to minute these thanks and to give all the retiring committee members a huge round of applause.

I would also like to extend a very special thank you to our supporting local organisations including the Ashton Hayes Parish Council, the Ashton Hayes WI, ASHRA and the Village Hall and of course our neighbours at the Ashton Hayes & Mouldsworth Community Shop. Proving the true power of local collaboration, all of whom were willing and able to support the redevelopment of the Golden Lion during our critical phase. Finally, a massive thank you to our local volunteers who rolled up their sleeves to strip demolish, rebuild, paint, clean, and landscape, and to you—our shareholders—whose shared investment has protected this asset for the community in perpetuity.

8. Formal Resolution

We have successfully bought the freehold, completed the refurbishment, and opened the doors. The Golden Lion is officially back where it belongs—at the absolute centre of life in Ashton Hayes.

I now officially move that the Annual Report for this historic period be received and adopted.

Hugo Deynem

Chairman of the Board of Management

Ashton Hayes Community Hub Ltd. (AHCHL)

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