

An Invitation to join the Board of Headingley Development Trust

- Have you recently moved to Headingley and wondered how and why things are done the way they are?
- Do you have a BAME background and feel you'd like to see your community better represented?
- Are you a young person with ideas about how things could be done differently and maybe better, in Headingley?
- Have you ever wanted to become more involved in your local community but wondered how?
- Would you like to try taking on new responsibilities and help to run an organisation?

If any of these apply to you, maybe you'd like to consider becoming a Director of Headingley Development Trust.

What is HDT?

Briefly – and you can read more about it on their website - HDT was set up in 2005 to develop initiatives and enterprises that help to develop and support the community. Its flagship project is HEART (Headingley Enterprise and Arts Centre) in Bennett Road, but it is also involved in many others, including the Farmers Market, The Natural Food Store, The Headingley Greengrocer and the Community Orchard as well as several more projects. One of these is Headingley Homes, whose aim is to provide affordable houses to rent for those hoping to put down roots in Headingley. Each of HDT's projects has a link with a Director from the Board, who liaises with them and provides support when necessary.

My experience as a new Director

I was co-opted on to the Board at the 2020 AGM, so have had just a year's experience as a member of it, but this is how it's been for me.

I've found the Board of Directors to be a friendly, welcoming and inclusive group. We meet monthly on a Tuesday evening for a couple of hours. During the last year, meetings have all, of necessity, been on Zoom and this has inevitably made it harder to get to know the other Directors and gain a feel of the Board, but hopefully this will change in the coming year.

As someone who doesn't have a background in anything obviously relevant like management, finance or law – and who isn't too hot on computers either! - I was initially hesitant about joining the Board, as I wondered if I'd have any specific or relevant skills to offer. My main reason in fact, for putting myself forward was simply that I wanted to put something back into the area where I've lived for many years. Because of this, I agreed just to be co-opted onto the Board initially, to enable me to try it out.

My link project is Table Tennis at Heart, as I have a particular interest in this – but for obvious reasons, this has only occasionally been able to take place during the last year, because of Covid

restrictions. Another responsibility I have shared during the last year, along with other Board members, has been to act as an HDT presence at the monthly Farmers Market and provide visitors with information about the role and scope of HDT. I've also helped to promote an on-line conference on '15 Minute Neighbourhoods' in November, which was great fun, well-attended and has led on to potential new areas for HDT to become involved in, such as greening up Headingley, creating new cycling and walking routes into Leeds and exploring how to rewild the area.

Future aims, for both myself and the Board as a whole, include how to support local residents in a post-Covid world and how to reach out more effectively and engage with younger residents and incorporate their ideas into future planning.

If any of this sounds as if it might be of interest to you – and I really hope it will be – do please think about joining the Board. If you want to just try it out for a year as I did, then you could be co-opted on and hopefully, like me, you will decide you want to stay.