

**East Mallong Institute Hall - Charity No. 253531
Chairman's Report 2019**

EAST
MALLING
INSTITUTE

It is my pleasure to report to you on behalf of the Hall's Management Committee upon our activities over the last year and the priorities we have been pursuing. Once again, we have been busy, with our overarching priority being to ensure that we maintain a Hall that is fit for purpose that will meet the needs of our many user groups.

We hope we're doing something right because the Hall remains a popular choice for events in East Mallong, and by and large we have retained our regular hirers and have added some new ones. We are pleased to still be welcoming the East Mallong Conservation Group, East Mallong Singers, LARA Arts & Crafts, LARA Singers, the Heath Players, the Kumon Centre, Music Mayhem, the Wateringbury Flower Club, the WI, the 2 Yoga classes, and Zumba class. We thank them all for their loyalty and continued support. In addition, the Hall has been hired out to others during the year for family parties and celebrations, workshops, exhibitions, quiz nights and so on. We have also hosted some important public meetings on behalf of the Parish Council and for KCC in respect of their consultation upon the future of the 58 bus service.

Wherever possible we use our website and Facebook page to publicise what is going on. If any of you, as our hirers, wish to have some publicity for your events, you need only ask – we will be very pleased to give you a mention.

So, what have we been doing around the place this year? At the time of last year's AGM we had just embarked on a redecoration project assisted by the Community Payback Team. The work took quite some time to complete as it was only possible for the Team to have access for about 5 hours on a Tuesday and the number of people within the Team varied from week to week. I'd like to thank our users for their patience while the work was in progress. There were a few issues along the way but generally the work proceeded well. The key benefit for us was that the labour was provided at no cost, which was a great help. I would like to thank the Community Payback Team for their hard work – I hope the opportunity for them to work at the Hall was as positive for them as it was for us. In addition, I would like to thank B&Q at Larkfield for kindly donating around £200 of paint and other materials which was good news for us.

If you are a regular hirer who dips in and out of the store cupboard you should have noticed that it's a lot clearer. Roger and I spent an afternoon having a spring clean and removed quite a lot of items including old and broken chairs, items that appeared to have no home, and general clutter. We tried scrubbing the floor but sadly it didn't look any better afterwards! The Committee did discuss whether to paint the floor or even put down carpet tiles but we have had to put this to one side while we look at other issues. We didn't manage to find a home for the large iron gate – so if anyone can find a use for it you would be very welcome to have it!

You may have also noticed that a new set of steps has appeared in the store room to give better access to the stage from that side and to free up some space. We have the multi-talented Heath Players to thank for those. They have also given up their time to paint the stage and stage walls with a more durable paint – generously, all of this has been down at their own cost.

In the main Hall we have provided some new notice boards for our regular user groups and we hope these are of help in enabling easy sharing of information. We do ask that they are used for displaying details relevant to your groups rather than more general information that does not relate either to the Hall or the group. Thank you very much to Lewis Ireland for providing these notice boards and to Roger Roud who put them up.

An additional notice board has been purchased for the lobby for Hall-specific notices, including those that we must display by law, and a new large notice board has been installed outside as the old one had been looking worse for wear for some time – it had barely been possible to see what was displayed. Again, thank you to Roger for putting these up.

Following the installation of new lights in the Hall in the previous year we moved on to replacing the lights in the corridor. These are much better. An emergency repair was required to the kitchen lights just within the last couple of weeks and while these are now working again arrangements are in hand for a full replacement so that these too will be LED lights.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Parish Council we were able to make some changes to the exterior lights at the rear of the building. The previous lights were not so bright and did not light the car park for very long before the sensors switched them off. The new lighting is much more effective and I hope you will agree that the situation is much improved.

We haven't yet purchased the space-saving clearing station that the East Malling Conservation Group offered to purchase for the kitchen but I'm sure we will get around to it.

Earlier in the year we thought the urn in the kitchen had stopped working and although it was later found to be working it did make us think about the possibility of a wall mounted urn and we hope this will soon be up and running. We have also come into possession of 2 new microwaves and if they are not in the kitchen yet they should be very shortly.

With the donation from the Watlington Flower Club that I reported upon last year we purchased a carpet sweeper that can be used on both carpeted and hard floors. We researched options and bought what we believed to be the best manual one we could find. Reviews have been mixed, and it may not be perfect, but it is of some help if you need to give the floor a quick tidy up after your hire. If it really isn't picking up well you may find it needs emptying. If anyone using it could empty it after their use that would be very helpful.

From time to time we do have issues with the thermostat in the Hall. Roger usually knows what the problem is – and may wish to offer some comments when he gives his Booking Secretary's Report in a little while.

We haven't yet had the window repaired in the Committee Room. There is no special reason for that other than that we haven't got around to it – but we will.

The priority at the top of our list is the condition of the floor in the main Hall. This has been deteriorating for some while and its repair cannot be put off for much longer otherwise we will have a very serious issue. We have obtained quotes for replacement and are in the process of finalising a Village Hall Grant Application to Kent County Council. As part of this we are also seeking funding for replacement chairs as our current chairs are not only looking tired but are pretty heavy which makes them difficult to move and therefore they are stacked

in the Hall. This in turn makes it difficult for the ends of the Hall to be cleaned. We think that sometimes the chairs are dragged across the floor and this doesn't help the surface at all.

The WI have very kindly indicated that they would like to make a donation of £500 towards the purchase of chairs. This is a great help to us and we are very grateful for their support. In addition, and just within the last week or so, I have received a cheque for £1000 from the Parish Council which is also most welcome! Assuming we are able to persuade KCC to meet 50% of the overall costs of our project, these two additional grants will greatly reduce the amount we need to find from our own reserves and so I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the WI and the Parish Council for supporting us in this way.

Our Treasurer, Vanessa Johnson, will present her report shortly. As always, we have to keep a close eye on our reserves but at the same time, it would be a false economy not to have a rolling programme of improvement and repair. We know that in the not too distant future we may need to spend some money on the roof which has been leaking sporadically so in the next financial year I expect we will start to look at exactly what we need to do to make the building watertight again.

As I come towards the end of my report I would like to take an opportunity to thank all those who have helped out at the Hall during this last year in any shape or form including Vanessa who has done an excellent job keeping the accounts in order for us, and Roger who has continued to look after bookings. Thank you also to Pam Roud who continues to act as our Secretary and take our Minutes for us. And to all those who help out with odd jobs including Roger who does a lot of jobs around the place, Colin Powell – who often meets contractors on site and arranges our Fire Inspections and so on - and members of the Heath Players who regularly step in to solve practical problems, Glenis Bryant (who amongst other things organised the dry cleaning of the curtains for us this year and was up and down ladders several times), and the WI who keep an eye on the inside of the Hall and do such a wonderful job looking after the flower beds. Thank you also to all the members of the Committee, all of whom are volunteers who give up their time to help steer what we should be going. The contribution you all make is extremely valuable and much appreciated.

Our thanks go to our hirers for continuing to support us and choosing us as the venue for your activities. We hope the improvements we have made over the last year have enhanced your enjoyment of our Hall and those we have planned will do so further. If you have any suggestions that you would like the Committee to consider as part of its future plans please let us know. And if at any time we fall below your expectations at any time we would encourage you to tell us so that we can put things right.

And finally, my thanks to you all for coming and taking an interest in what goes on here. We very much value your interest and your support.

Michelle Tatton, Chair – 24th November 2019