

East Malling Institute Hall - Charity No. 253531 Chairman's Report to the AGM July 2021

EAST
MALLING
INSTITUTE

You will understand if I say at the outset that this has been an unusual year! And I am sorry that we have not been able to approach this year's AGM in the usual way. Not only has the Covid-19 pandemic delayed the date by many months but we have not advertised so widely so as to keep numbers manageable and attendees comfortable, and we will not be having refreshments at the end. Next year I hope we will be 'back to normal', and we will be able to have more in attendance – and cake!

As we are little out of sync, it is worth noting that the AGM is looking at the period from October 2019 – September 2020 but of course we have been dominated by lockdowns, changes in processes, and ever-moving Government regulation and guidance and so, forgive me, but my report focuses on these unprecedented events.

As far as I can recall - as it is a long time to think back - the period from the last AGM in November 2019 to March 2020 was uneventful, certainly in comparison to what followed from 23rd March when lockdown was announced. The Hall swiftly shut its doors and remained closed for 5 months. We took the decision that we would not furlough our cleaner who continued to call into the Hall to check on security and water leaks and keep the dust down.

All our income was lost overnight and this was obviously a serious concern as certain overheads continued and bills needed to be paid. We do try as a Trust to maintain a reasonable level of reserves to deal with 'rainy day' events and so thankfully we had a financial cushion to soften the blow. We were able to suspend or alter some services – such as window cleaning, waste collection, and water supply – and I would like to thank our Treasurer for sorting this out for us.

Thankfully, Government grants became available and, as a small charity, we qualified. At each stage when these became available we applied and were successful. I am grateful to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council for assisting with our claims and administering the grants so quickly and painlessly. This gave us reassurance that we would be able to weather the financial storm and, in fact, has placed us in a strong and resilient position as we look to the future and bouncing back from our period of extended closure.

As lockdown went on, we continued to monitor the situation and responded to the regulations and guidance as it became available, and gradually, began to prepare for re-opening, working with our regular hirers to ascertain which groups anticipated an early return so that we could address their particular concerns and needs. Naturally some groups did not feel able to return during the first re-opening phase, and indeed some will not be back until this September, but we have been pleased to welcome back the yoga groups, Zumba, Kumon and Saturday Circuits.

Getting ready for re-opening was quite a task as we endeavoured to understand the risks and put in place measures to make the Hall 'Covid Secure'. Thank you to everyone who tolerated receiving very long emails from me as we worked through what needed to be done. This has included limiting numbers to a maximum of 25, the installation of a hand sanitizer dispenser inside the front door of the Hall, a one-way system through the corridor to avoid people having to pass in this confined space, closing off all but one of the ladies' toilet cubicles, and closing the kitchen to avoid contamination through shared use of utensils. We have worked with returning hirers to ensure they can operate safely. For those who have returned, the guidance applying to them enables them to have more than 6 people in attendance but there are certain conditions they should meet such as, for as example, continuing to maintain social distancing, keeping the venue well ventilated, and complying with 'Track and Trace'. As part of our processes we have produced a revised Booking Form together with Special Conditions of Hire. We have a comprehensive Risk Assessment and our hirers are required to assess their own risk and provide us with details.

Keeping touch points in the Hall clean is a priority upon which our cleaner is concentrating. In addition, our hirers wipe down touch surfaces both on arrival and upon leaving. This helps to keep their own groups safe and those attending after them.

Purely social events have been restricted for the most part. We have allowed one day time family gathering in the last few weeks. As of 19th July, restrictions are being lifted and the Hall should, in theory at least, be able to return to normal footing, but we await further Government and sector guidance on what we should continue to do alongside the lifting of restrictions to keep our Hall a Covid safe space for people to visit.

On a more positive note, towards the end of the first lockdown period, and taking advantage of the Hall closure, we were able to arrange for the floor to be replaced. The need for replacement had become urgent as the surface was breaking up badly and it was looking very scruffy and, potentially, unsafe. My thanks both to The Heath Players and East Malling & Larkfield Parish Council who both donated £1000 towards the work. This covered almost half of the full cost with the remainder coming from our reserve funds. Speaking of 'rainy day' funds, unfortunately we had a leak in the roof and had to use a little of our reserves to plug the hole although thankfully it cost less than we feared.

We have spent some time investigating the possibility of replacing the heavy green chairs with something lighter and easier to move around. My thanks to Karen Hargreaves of the WI who has been looking at options, and to the WI who have made a £500 donation. As the Hall has only had limited use recently we have not rushed to find a solution but would like to sort something out relatively soon. As the chairs are likely to be folding ones we will also be investing in some new trolleys, and will be looking again at whether we could create some space under the stage either for the chairs and/or the tables.

We have also returned to investigating broadband. A local resident with his own IT business has been supporting us with this given our previous experience with BT who were going to charge in excess of £2,000 to install the line. Unfortunately, while we are going through another supplier, installing the cabling comes back to BT and we have now had 3 or 4 aborted visits where engineers have turned up, scratched their heads and gone away again. The matter is being escalated so we hope we will soon have an internet connection which should make the Hall more attractive for hirers.

Attached to my Report is the Treasurer's Report upon our finances. My thanks to Vanessa Johnson who does an excellent job keeping our books in order – not an insignificant task by any means. And to Chris Hubbard who, once again, has carried out the important job of audit.

My thanks also to Roger Roud who continues to look after bookings and investigates any maintenance works as they arise – all this despite now being elected Mayor! And to the WI who have continued to keep the garden looking bright and tidy.

Pam Roud and Glenis Bryant, together with Vanessa and myself, are the Trustees and I would like to thank each of them, and Roger, for their help and patience in working through the requirements for re-opening. There were many questions, often with answers that were not clear cut. It took us a while to get to where we needed to be but we persevered and all still have a head of hair, although during lockdown I did find my first grey ones!!

After a year that has been so difficult and challenging for us all, it is a pleasure to be able to put out the message that the Hall is back in business. To the hirers who have already returned - we are delighted to have you back! And to those regulars who have not been able to return just yet, or to those who would have booked the Hall for parties, celebrations, workshops and so on – a warm welcome awaits you and we looking forward to seeing you very soon.

Stay safe and well.

My best wishes.

Michelle Tatton, Chair – 9th July 2021

EAST MALLING INSTITUTE TRUST
Balance Sheet
as at 30 September 2020

ASSETS

Cash in Bank	£ 9,435.91	
Cash held on deposit by COIF	£ 7,487.49	
	<u>£ 16,923.40</u>	

LIABILITIES

Hall deposits outstanding	£100.00	
	£50.00	
	£150.00	
	£150.00	
	£0.00	
Unpresented Chqs issued pre September 2020	£150.00	1662
	£311.96	1665
	£0.00	
	£0.00	
	<u>£ 16,011.44</u>	

REPRESENTED BY:-

Opening Balance at 28 September 2019	£ 5,443.45
Opening Balance held by COIF at 30 September 2019	£ 7,457.28
General Fund	£ 3,992.46
 COIF Interest	 £ 30.21
	<u>£ 16,923.40</u>
Less liability	£ 450.00
Unpresented Chqs	£ 461.96
	<u>£ 16,011.44</u>

..... Hon. Treasurer

The above Balance Sheet dated 30th September 2020 and the accounts for the period 01/10/19 to 30/09/20 are in accordance with the Trust records and, in my opinion, give a true state of the financial affairs of the Trust as at 30th September 2020

..... Hon. Auditor