



The Hall Get Involved Limited (THGI) Directors Report - 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019

Community is Strength

Having had our 6th birthday as collective owners of Exeter Street Hall on 8 August this year we can again say that we've continued to make progress as a Community Benefit Society, furthering our aims and ambitions for the Hall and its role in the wider community. In many ways this continues the spirit of the Hall's existence since the 19th Century and on into the 21st Century.

Once more we're indebted to our volunteers for their dedication, fortitude and for maintaining a sense of humour. We equally acknowledge the selfless commitment of our two employed staff - the Hall Manager and the newly created post of Caretaker/Cleaner, both appointed during the latter part of this financial year, and who also serve as volunteers. Without them the central tasks in the day to day running of this enterprise would not happen. As an enterprise we can safely say our finances are sound not least because we've once again increased the number and frequency of hirings of the Main Hall and the Community Room, and thus increased our revenues at a faster rate than the increases in our outgoings.

We feel that we have a solid basis to build on and further establish the Hall as a valued contributor to people's lives in ours and the wider community as well as an inspiration to others for whom the strength of community is an aspiration.

Please join us for the Annual General Meeting (AGM) at 7:30pm on Friday 4 October (doors open 7pm) and participate according to your rights as Shareholders. The meeting will also be an opportunity to learn more about the proposed changes to your Society, to ask questions and to vote on the proposal.

The Directors present their report and accounts for the year end 31 March 2019.

Core Business/Viability - Key Achievements

1. Our income from Hirers in 2018/19 was £21,506, an increase of 26% on the previous year.
2. Operating costs for 2018/19 (excluding restoration expenditure) were £17,857, an increase of 15%. This was due to modest improvements in staff terms and conditions plus increases in energy and insurance costs.
3. Fundraising from grants was less significant than in the previous year, partly due to the timing of our restoration work and partly due to the need to amend our legal footing in respect of the 'Asset Lock' issue (see below) which has meant halting any further grant applications until the matter is resolved and we are again compliant with the eligibility criteria required by grant providers.
4. Nevertheless, the fundraising events organised by our excellent volunteers made £12,079, up 50% over last year, so that we now have e.g. the performance lighting and are able to afford long needed repairs and refurbishment to the rear west facing windows.

5. We strive to meet the ambitions of our Business Plan (2018-21) and over time every effort will be made to raise the estimated £100k required to complete the restoration work including a new toilet block, improved storage, refurbishing all the windows and a more sustainable heating and energy provision system.
6. Shareholders will be aware that we are in the process of making changes to the legal basis of our Community Benefit Society due to a change in legislation that impacts on the effectiveness of our existing 'Asset Lock'. This process has taken up a significant amount of Management Committee time, and continues to do so. The AGM will need participation from shareholders in taking this to a conclusion.

As is usual at this time, we urge anyone who's interested in being part of this great project to take the plunge and support it in any way you feel able to, be it practically with the building, in communications and our IT function, organising events, helping with administration or making a financial donation....all are always needed.

The Building

Last year changes were noticeable due mainly to the completion of the 'Access For All Project', this year less so partly due to the 'Asset Lock' issue (see 6 above) that has prevented us going ahead with our major improvements programme. This year we have completed much needed minor works, e.g. adjustments, repairs and behind the scenes renovations.

Once the Asset Lock matter is resolved and we can again apply for grants and we will inevitably be working to maintain and even possibly increase the Hall's level of daytime use whilst also trying to restore and improve your lovely but previously neglected building. Finding blocks of time for work to take place will continue to be a challenge over the medium term, and whilst this can be frustrating it's also a measure of our collective success in that this community asset is being well used.

Our 'to be done' list of minor works is constantly added to as soon as items are completed and we always need volunteers prepared to undertake any of the practical tasks that are so necessary for the Hall to be used safely and securely.

Our THGI Events and Community Groups

As is customary our volunteers staged some spectacular and well attended events, real collective endeavours often involving our highly trained and disciplined bar staff who are now adept at taking contactless payments.

Here's what you may have missed during the year:

Silent discos, music quiz, book sale, Halloween party, theatrical performances, 'Nae Pasaran' film showing, film quiz, Plastic Free Prestonville.

Also of course *The Great Get Together street party in recognition of the need for solidarity action following the murder of Jo Cox MP, organised in conjunction with St. Luke's Church, and the Prestonville Community Association (PCA).*

Likewise here are the regular Community activities:

Stay and Play, table tennis club, children's film club, defibrillator training, volunteer days, FareShare food collection point, Brownies, Boys' Brigade.

In the community room:

Monthly Tea Club, two weekly art classes. Also...

Monthly meetings of Hall Action Group (All welcome, 2nd Tuesday every month), Building Team (3rd Thursday every month), Management Committee.

Regular, Occasional and One-Off Hires/Hirers

These remain central to our ability to keep the Hall viable and able to progress:

Yoga (5 different providers/types), Pilates, Fitness League, Tai Chi, adult tap dance, high impact exercise class, Gong Bath meditation, table tennis coaching, learning disabled adults' enrichment activities, baby sensory sessions, children's ballet classes, Mini Athletics, pre-school football.

In the community room:

NHS meetings, fostering drop-in, parenting sessions, massage, Spanish classes, Greek classes for children, children's mindfulness.

Also our one-off or occasional hires, all of whom add more vitality as well as revenue to the Hall:

Singing/musical workshops, rehearsals, performances (4 groups), dance rehearsals, classes and workshops, drawing workshop, Brighton Fringe Festival performances, film shoot, children's parties, family celebrations, Christmas makers' market.

The many and varied groups, classes and activities have increased this year and provide a valuable range of options for local residents, enriching and contributing to community life.

"A wonderful venue! I have hired the hall myself for a charity fundraiser and supplied equipment for a party run by the hall themselves to raise funds. Both times the communication has been friendly, helpful and in good time. The venue itself is a great asset to the local community and Brighton at large. The hall is huge, and works well for all kinds of parties. The kitchen is massive with lots of space and equipment. I wish I lived closer!"

Hirer 30 April 2018

"A great space in a lovely location. Perfect for a range of occasions as the facilities are great. The people involved are all local and you can tell that they really care."

Hirer 17 July 2018

Social Justice and Low Cost Hires

This is an area of our activity that recognises some of the human needs that are evident in society currently, and aims to contribute towards campaigns that seek to meet those needs, as well as offering support to other community groups. Here are those we hosted:

Samaritans jazz breakfast, Maternity Worldwide ceilidh, Calais Action Brighton public meetings and clothes collections, School Bus Project fundraising dinner, Thousand for £1,000 fundraising events, Save the Dyke quiz.

In the community room and kitchen:

YMCA cookery classes, refugee cookery and English classes.

Links and Networks

We continue to develop good working relations with e.g. Brighton Open-Air Theatre, Community Works, Community Building Network and the Sustainable Business Partnership. We have also participated in a collaborative project with Brighton University Business Students who have made detailed

recommendations for improving our social media presence and the presentation of our website. We just need time and expertise to implement them! Again, if you think we can help we'd like to hear from you.

Summary / Conclusions

We are clearly at the stage when the initial excitement of a new, appealing project has settled and we're in the business of consolidation and development for the longer term, whilst not neglecting day to day operation, decision making and implementation, and therefore the need for people to become involved and remain involved. Your Hall helps to improve the local social infrastructure and is a necessary, valued contribution to the people of our community by the people of our community.

Please consider what you can do to support the Hall, through:

- Volunteering (and maybe becoming our Volunteer coordinator?) - we always need people regardless of skills and ability. Come along to a Hall Action Group meeting, or join the Building Team or the Events Team.
- A *Friends of the Hall* regular donation (form available from secretary@exeterstreethall.org)
- Telling your neighbours about the Hall, particularly new arrivals in the area who may wish to become Shareholders like you.
- Continuing to support events and other activities.

Directors

The following people served as Directors during the year:

- Jo Camplisson (Treasurer) - appointed 6 October 2016.
- Norman Wright (Communications Supremo) - appointed 6 October 2016, re-elected 28 September 2018.
- Sunita Shier - appointed 28 September 2018
- David Fellows (Chair) - appointed 17 July 2015, re-elected 5 October 2017

Secretary

The following people served as Secretary during the period:

- Louise McGowan - appointed 6 October 2016, stood down November 2018
- Graham Thomas - appointed November 2018

Co-Opted Management Committee Members

- Dexter Coombe (Bar Manager)
- Graham Thomas (Secretary)

The Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31 March 2019 is available at:

www.exeterstreethall.org/agm-2019

This report was approved by the THGI Management Committee on 28 August 2019 and signed on its behalf:

Dave Fellows - Chair