

**The Lopping Endowment**

**Chairman’s Report for the 137th Annual General Meeting 2022**

**This report covers our Financial year to December 2021.**

## **Hall usage (Room bookings)**

For the second year, the pandemic has seriously impacted our income from bookings.

We were able to reopen on 17th May and bookings came in at reasonable levels.

As we lost four months of trading, our final room bookings turnover for the financial year was only £34,779.51. However, this still means that our average monthly turnover was similar to 2019 (Non pandemic year)

For this financial year (Ending December 2022) our budget is £65,000.00.

2019 £53,982.00. Actual. (Pre-pandemic)

2020 £24,058.49. Actual.

2021 £34,779.51. Actual.

## **Room letting rate review**

The Board of Directors agreed that the modest increases to our room letting rates, that were to be applied from April 2020, would not go ahead until “normal activities” could resume and the pandemic was control.

Our room letting **base** rates (Before any agreed discounts are applied) were increased and came into effect on **January 1st 2022.**

These increases amounted to £1.00 - £2.00 per hour, dependent on the type of user.

Rates for Commercial Organisations are agreed separately and dependent on such factors as the required room package and whether a day or an evening booking.

Discounts for a small number of “historical users” were reduced from 50% to 40% and will again reduce to 30% when we next review rates. It is likely that the discount rate will then remain at 30%, indefinitely.

Our rates have remained static for three years and during this period fixed and semi fixed costs have increased and at the same time we have made considerable progress in modernising and renovating our facilities

**Of course we now have further cost pressures in 2022/23 relating mainly to power, but also maintenance costs.**

**Commercial Tenants Rent review**

We continue to receive rents from Whitney’s Carpet Shop and we now have an additional tenant, Badshaw News Ltd (Waterlows News Agents), who took over the unit previously occupied by “The Gallery”.

We have tried on at least three occasions to find a way forward for the Gallery, but we were not successful.

I would like to thank Paul for all the work he carried out on various Gallery projects. However, Paul is now keen for us to move forward with Lopping Hall Art and this started with an exhibition held at the hall over seven days.

We will see how these Gallery days or weeks develop for both the artists and Lopping Hall.

Our other commercial tenant was HSBC Bank who decided to close their Loughton branch in August 2021. This was part of a UK wide reduction in their high street network, covering 82 branch closures.

This unit is now being converted into a small, luxury cinema which will operate during the evenings, however during the day it will be converted into a mixed-use workspace.

The new tenants started the strip-out and refurbishment in May and are currently in the process of completing the strip out and making some structural changes so that the space can be opened up further.

Given that we now have income from what was the Gallery and also from the ex-HSBC unit, our income from commercial rents will increase to around £85,000.00 pa.

It should be noted that the loss of HSBC in August 2021, resulted in a reduction in cash flow of around £37,000.00 made up of rent, rates, and services.

## **Marketing and LH new website.**

We are currently marketing Lopping Hall activities using our website, the two High Road facing monitors, together with social media and other advertising spaces on the internet.

These not only advertise LH rooms to rent, but Theatre events (and ticketing) and the activities of all of our regular users.

We are seeing a definite increase in both enquiry and booking levels, which are well up on those we experienced in 2019 (pre-pandemic).

Now that activities are likely to cover both Theatre and Film, as well as the twenty or so Classes covering everything from dance, fitness and Yoga, the Lopping Hall estate has entrenched its position as the centre for entertainment in Loughton.

Lopping Hall Management would also like to hold other events, such as Comedy and Jazz nights.

## **Works Completed**

**Changing rooms and toilets.**

These were in a very poor condition.

In the last AGM we stated that these facilities might be upgraded in 2021. I am pleased to report that this was completed in December 2021.

This also allows us to use the main Gents changing room as another room for hire, when not in use during theatre weeks. We have designated this as THE STUDIO.

**Defibrillator.**

We set up a fund so that we could purchase a fully automatic unit.

We have received £800.00 of the £1,100.00 required and so we have gone ahead and this may already be on the wall outside this auditorium.

**PA System**

A new PA system connected to all rooms used by the Theatre groups, has been installed.

The previous system was functioning intermittently and was not connected to certain rooms.

The loop hearing system in the theatre has now been reinstated.

As well as the PA microphone, there is also a professional wireless microphone which is connected to the loudspeakers in the auditorium. This can also be used to pick up sound from musical instruments etc.

**Works Future**

**Stone work 191 High Road (Previously HSBC Bank) 2022**

Damage caused by HSBC removing the night safe and other items.

Stone work will be replaced and repaired and the frontage will be DOFF cleaned.

This will take three weeks and will be completed in the next two months.

This will be paid for by way of a dilapidations claim on HSBC (CBRE)

**Air conditioning.**

We have decided to go ahead with air-conditioning for this Hall and the small Hall downstairs.

Costs will be in the range of £15,000.00 to £18,000.00. This will depend on whether we can use two units ex HSBC (191 High Road).

Of this total cost, around £3,500.00 is to lay the electrics to the side of Lopping Hall.

The units will not be visible, and they will be quiet.

I have been contacted by the new Mayoress, Councillor Barbara Cohen, who wishes Lopping Hall to become her Charity of choice and this has now been confirmed by the Loughton Town Council.

Barbara will be arranging several charity events for Lopping Hall and the first one will be held at Lopping Hall in April next year.

Barbara has specifically requested that funding should be allocated to the Aircon project.

By that time, we will probably have had the aircon installed (subject to funding from reserves and availability of compressors) but this will be a way of recouping some of these installation costs.

We are grateful to the Mayoress for thinking of us. However, I am aware that this might have something to do with the fact that she was here watching a LADS show when temperatures reached rather high levels.

**Repairs to Stone, brickwork, and Terracotta - Station Road entrance. 2023**

This area, mainly around the large rear door on Station Road is now considered to be essential maintenance as this area has deteriorated further. Mortar and brickwork have crumbled and the 1895 terracotta needs careful cleaning together with some repairs, or the replacement of part of two columns.

Given that this is the original entrance to Lopping Hall and is of historical importance, we are trying to obtain funding for this project estimated to cost somewhere is the region of £13,000 - £18,000.00.

**Front door. 2023**

The entrance will be re-designed to include an automatically sliding door. This upgrade is desirable, if not essential, given the difficulty of accessing the property using the swing doors, especially for those with children, prams and the infirm.

The window and door set will be moved further out towards the pavement and the cost is therefore considerable. As a result, this may not be possible until the summer of 2023, possibly later.

Current signage and monitors can be reused in this design.

**Stage Lighting and sound. 2023 - 2024**

Because of the costs involved, this will happen in two stages. The first part will involve the installation of a basic lighting set and control board that will be sufficient for small performances. This will allow LH staff and those so authorised, to quickly set up and operate stage lighting, without the need to bring in a professional lighting and sound Company.

A sound system suitable for Jazz evenings, other small performances and Corporate events, will also be installed.

The second part will involve the upgrading of the old lighting patch panel which uses 3 pin round sockets to control lighting via a DMX controller and replace this with a modern lighting control system. This will integrate with the system installed in the first stage upgrade.

Full lighting and sound set-ups for major stage performances will still be handled by outside contractors, such as Terry Tew Sound and Lighting.

## **Financial reserves.**

## Our end of year (2021) reserves were good and The Board of Directors consider that this, together with increased earnings in 2022 will allow us to fulfil most of our upgrade commitments and allow us to continue to operate the best activity and entertainment centres in Loughton and the surrounding area.

## **Board and Hall Management.**

I would like to thank my fellow Directors and Hall Management for their help and support over the past year.

There have been no changes to the Board of Directors since the AGM’s held in 2020 and 2021.

## **As is required, two Directors will be putting themselves forward for re-election, as they have come to the end of their three-year term of office. Those Directors are Alan Martin and John Orgar.**

**This will be raised at item 7 on the agenda.**

## **Directors**

Alan Martin Chairman. Estate Management Group / Works Elected

Martin Howarth Treasurer Assumed

Paul Mercer RIBA Lead – Estate Management Group / Works Assumed

Jayna Jogia Website Editor Local Council representative

John Orgar Board Member Elected

Becky Ford Publicity & Events Management. Elected

Lindon Barr Covid-19 Safety and Social Media Management Elected

## Garett Fitzgerald Estate Management Group / Works Elected

## **Company Secretary**

Stephen Radley

## **Hall Managers (Employees)**

John Mahoney Hall Manager

Les House Deputy Hall Manager (Health & Safety, Security and Child Protection).

Diane Peters Assistant Hall Manager

Alan Martin. April 2022.

Chairman.

The Lopping Endowment Corporate Trustee Ltd.

The Lopping Endowment.

Charity 228236