



# The Lopping Endowment

## Chairman's Report to the Annual General Meeting 2021

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**This report covers our Financial year to December 2020 and developments so far in 2021.**

### Hall usage

The pandemic has seriously impacted our income from bookings. The initial instruction to close named businesses was made by the Prime Minister on the night of March 20<sup>th</sup> 2020

Given improved marketing and upgraded Hall facilities, our original target for this financial year (2020) was increased from approx. £54,000.00 (2019) to £65,000.00.

In my last report (Addendum dated June 2020), I stated that due to the epidemic, our total bookings for 2020 were expected to be around £40,000.00 and this assumed that bookings in Q3 and Q4 remained fairly stable.

Unfortunately, lockdown restrictions were extended and as I write this report, a full re-opening of the Hall is not expected until May 17<sup>th</sup> 2021. Even then, we do not expect to see Theatre groups returning until June or July for rehearsals.

2019 £53,982.00. Actual.

2020 £24,058.49. Actual.

### Room letting rate review

The Board of Directors agreed that modest increases to our room letting rates, that were to be applied from April 2020, would not be applied until the Government confirmed that "normal activities" could resume.

When this report was written, this was likely to be in June 2021 and we have therefore agreed that:

Our room letting **base** rates (Before any agreed discounts are applied) will be increased from **January 2022** by between £1.00 - £2.00 per hour dependent on the type of user – For example, not for profit Groups, or small organisations. We will give at least two months advance notice to all users.

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

### Theatre complex and Theatre Suite.

The base rates for the *Theatre complex (Theatre productions)*, which includes the Main Hall (Auditorium), Stage, Backstage and Changing rooms and the *Theatre Suite (Parties and conferences)*, which includes the Main Hall, Kitchen and Bar, are also negotiated with individual users.

These rates will be increased from January 2022 and these changes will be discussed with our regular Theatre Groups at least two months in advance of implementation.

Our rates have remained at the same level for three years. 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.

### **Commercial Tenants Rent review**

The rent that we receive from our two commercial tenants is reviewed every 5 years. There was therefore no increase in 2020 for Whitney's Carpet shop.

As a rent review was due in March 2021, we started to review the lease with HSBC in December 2020. HSBC subsequently advised that they were closing the Loughton branch in August 2021 as part of a UK wide reduction in their high street network, covering 82 branch closures.

At the time of writing this report, we have appointed Bennett Phillips Luton to handle both the marketing and dilapidations connected with this unit.

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

Our new style website that went live in December 2019 has been further improved and I would like to thank Jayna for the many hours of work she has put into this project.

We have also produced a new leaflet to advertise our user groups and our rooms for hire and I would like to thank Becky for completing the artwork.

We have placed a further monitor on the front window to advertise the rooms for hire at Lopping Hall, together with a "What's on" feature for Theatre groups.

The original and larger monitor shows our user groups and their activities.

### **Works Completed**

Further measures were taken to ensure that we continued to be a "COVID-19" secure facility, to include increased sanitiser stations, signage and room safety assessments.

Old wood and signage was removed from the exterior and interior of the front window area.

New electrical connections for the monitors were installed, the area was painted and new signage was put up.

Given that we currently have a very small entrance fronting the High Road, it is essential that this area is attractive, inviting and informative. I would like to thank Jayna for handling the artwork and designing a new logo

The sandstone stairs to the Basement were removed, as over time cracks had appeared and we considered these stairs to be unsafe. A new high quality protected wooden staircase was designed and installed by Four Square Building Services. The safety lighting in this area was improved to cover the stairwell and basement.

There was a flash flood in Loughton in August 2020 which blocked the Loughton High Road drainage. This affected many businesses near Lopping Hall.

We had up to two inches of standing water cover the entire ground floor and up to twenty inches deposited in the basement, which houses the central heating system.

The ground floor areas had just been painted and because the skirting at floor level had been sealed, damage to this area was limited. Thank you to those that came in and helped to pump out the water and clean up. We have since purchased a standby emergency pump and flood barrier kit

The central heating system was written off by our insurers and we now have a state-of-the art system that will keep the whole building at the required temperature and should reduce both our consumption of gas and related maintenance costs.

During the Pandemic we have taken the opportunity to repair and paint the stairwell and upper lobby areas, improve lighting and electrics, install WIFI access points in the Main Hall, Willingale and small Hall and connect a PA / Music system to both floors.

### **Future Plans 2021 / 2022**

In some cases, these plans may not be completed if matched funding cannot be agreed. In other cases, works will be carried out using reserves.

#### **Changing rooms. 2021**

This area will be partly refurbished, to include the toilets and we hope to carry this out during July – September 2021.

#### **Stage re-design. 2022 - 2023**

The stage and Proscenium Arch will be stripped out and the design will allow us to construct a large under stage storage area, accessed using trollies on tracks.

This will allow us to increase the use of the Hall by Theatre and other groups requiring storage. Storage charges may apply.

#### **Front door. 2023**

The entrance will be re-designed to include an automatically operated 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.

Current signage and monitors can be reused in this design.

#### **Stage Lighting and sound. 2021 - 2023**

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.**

Taking into account the reduced income from room bookings and some reduction in expenditure during the pandemic and given the receipt of HMG grants, The Board of Directors consider that our current financial reserves will allow us to fully re-open and operate effectively during the balance of 2021 and at least into Q2 / 2022.

This assumes that when we reopen, booking levels will be at least 60% of normal levels and that we will re-lease the property that is now HSBC within twelve months from August 2021.

## Board and Hall Management.

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

Mr. Garrett Fitzgerald has joined the Board in March 2021 and Ms. Sonia Lard left the Board on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

### 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
Garrett 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 2021.