

Chairman's Report for 2019/20

I write this as the UK is entering the second Covid-19 wave and use of the hall in the coming year looks as depressed as in the year of this report. As of Oct 2020, we have only one regular user and we are unlikely to see any return to our normal usage until well into 2021.

We entered lockdown in March 2019 and suspended all hall activity, reducing outgoings as much as possible with cleaning the major item no longer required whilst the hall was unused. Regular inspections were carried out to ensure the fabric remained in good order and to pick up on any maintenance issues.

We have been lucky in our application for a Covid Support Grant of £10,000 from Cheshire West council which has provided enough of a financial buffer to weather the lack of income from April onwards.

After a Covid risk analysis, the hall re-opened at the beginning of Sept. The cost of implementing the actions from the risk analysis amounted to £106 which will show in next year's accounts.

Pilates was able to restart. However, our other user groups have significant numbers of vulnerable persons in their membership and decided not to restart activities. Following the re-opening, the hall is being disinfected weekly by Committee members, as part of our Covid precautions.

The Committee continues with its policy of not undertaking an external audit of its accounts as the base turnover is well below the £25,000 threshold at which the Charities' Commission requires independent examination of the accounts (CC31). The Chairman, who carries out the internal audit, has no access to money or bank accounts; this clear separation of responsibilities enables the Committee to have confidence in the process.

The accounts show a deficit for the year of £507, due entirely to the Covid restrictions and our need to maintain essential expenditure. Without the Covid Support Grant from Cheshire West, we would be subsidising the hall from our reserves, obviously not a good position.

Two items are noteworthy: the clock motor failed after 20 years of service and needing replacing at a cost of £153, and the gardening bill of £390.

An appeal to users to cover the cost of the clock motor produced a very good response, indicating that the community really does value the hall and we were able to cover the cost entirely from donations.

The garden was planted extensively as part of the steps project back in 2006, and has matured to the extent of needing significant effort to keep it in check. Our committee is unable to provide such effort on a voluntary basis, and we needed some extensive shrub management to avoid the garden becoming a wilderness. Our budgeting process will need to take account of future, regular garden maintenance effort.

Interest on our deposits continues to decline and will probably approach zero. On a positive note, oil prices have been depressed since Covid arrived and look set to continue at close to half what were paying 2 years ago.

Despite all the setbacks of the 2019/20 year, we emerged in a sound financial position and look forward to the time when Covid restrictions come to an end.