



APRIL UPDATE FROM THE TRUSTEES OF THE LEIGH AND BRANSFORD MEMORIAL HALL

A Year in The Life : Looking Back and Looking Forward

By law, each year all registered charities like ours must prepare a set of verified accounts and a trustees' annual report, which are subsequently uploaded to the Charity Commission's (our regulator's) website. The purpose here is to provide a clear picture of the Hall's activities and financial position not just to our regulator, but also to you, members of the Parish and the Community we serve. Another way of looking at this is that it's rather like our *End of Year School Report*.

So, how did we do last year? Here are the headlines.

As trustees our over-arching objective each year is to maintain the Hall, its grounds and facilities as a financially viable and welcoming safe place for all hirers and their guests to use and enjoy. To achieve this, we aim to set hire fees at an affordable level not only to cover annual running and maintenance costs but also, hopefully, to generate a targeted surplus we can then invest back into the Hall to make further improvements to its facilities.

First then, our financial viability. Each year we set target income budget and anticipated expenditure budgets, (including some contingency). Within that process we also set a targeted surplus of income over expenditure to reinvest in Hall improvements. The good news is that, subject to final verification, last year we had a net positive balance of income over expenditure of almost 15%. We had initially expected to generate a larger surplus, but as the months progressed, we experienced higher than average emergency maintenance issues. This meant increasing our contingency budget from the running surplus to cover those additional costs.

We had initially planned to replace the ageing thermoplastic tiled floor in the Small Hall Lobby, do some internal decorating, order some additional tables and chairs and begin the process of refurbishing the original porch (which is in urgent need of attention). But as it became

clearer that our available surplus would be less than hoped, we had either to scale back our plans or find additional ways to fund the improvements. Emma, one of our trustees volunteered to refresh the paintwork in the Small Hall and in November we made a grant application to the Parish Council to cover the cost of additional furniture, which, we're delighted to say was subsequently approved – and we are indeed most grateful to both Emma and the Parish Council for this support. The decorating and the delivery of new tables and chairs have now been achieved. We have lately also had exciting news about a new, local funding opportunity open to us that will enable the porch to be refurbished sooner rather than later – but more about that in a subsequent update.

The 15% surplus will now be put towards replacing the floor and we also have new plans for a Lottery Bid to improve the building's acoustics together with installing an audio-visual system across both halls to include hearing loops.

As for our ambition to maintain an attractive, safe environment with affordable hire fees, it is very pleasing to report that the total number of bookings for the last 12-month period increased by 12% compared with the previous year. In 2024-25 we had a total of 376 bookings – which averages out at just more than 1 for every day of the year. In addition, wedding bookings doubled, from 3 to 7.

The even better news is that at the start of the current 2025-26 year we already have 138 advance bookings (including 7 weddings). This is a 38% improvement compared to the position at the start of the previous year. What we take from these figures is that more and more people see the Hall as an attractive and safe public space that is still very affordable to hire. The hires themselves range from children's and family parties, training events, wakes and naming ceremonies, business meetings, drama, dance and music events and, of course our regular social groups – the number and range of which have also increased in recent months.

As with most reports of course, there is always room for improvement, but all in all, we hope you agree that after another year of careful management due to the diligence of your trustees, our community asset is alive and thriving. Why not try us for that next event you're planning? You'll be made most welcome.

Jon Gamble, Chair of Trustees