

Chair's report 19/20

Year Nine in the Life of the Partnership

Sadly we reported in February that our first Chair, Elizabeth Peel BEM, passed away after several years of ill health. After retiring from the Chair she was given the roll of Honorary President and we had recently named one of our upstairs rooms after her.

For the second year in a row we were able to cover our essential running costs with our room hire income so that our fundraising and donations could be exclusively used to make improvements to the building. We were able to achieve this by maintaining the high occupancy of our rooms. We thank our manager Shirley and Carly, her new assistant, for all their hard work towards this achievement.

The major improvements this year included starting the external painting of the building (which has been completed since the end of the reporting year), upgrading fire doors, asbestos remediation work and major improvements to our staff office. We are grateful to Mid Sussex District Council for continuing to provide us with discretionary rate relief and to the Town Council for supplying us with plants to keep the borders colourful. Our gardener Michael Figg is thanked for his hard work in making the grounds look at their best.

The Trustees of the Friends of The Yews decided that its role as a separate charity was no longer necessary and its residual funds were transferred to the Partnership with the proviso that a portion was to be used to provide grants to the charities that used The Yews.

We reported last year the passing of Graham Cloake, the director responsible for Health and Safety. In his will he very generously remembered The Yews and it was felt appropriate that this money be used primarily for Health and Safety related improvements.

Our fund raising committee were busy again this year and raised nearly £2000. We had two very successful quiz nights, carol singing at the station, and a collection at Sainsburys.

The closure of The Yews due to the pandemic will have a big impact on our users. Although we have recently been able to re-open, the Government restrictions mean that many groups will be unable to restart in the near future. We are fortunate that our finances are strong and we have been able to acquire some new clients that have been able to operate within the restrictions.

I would like to thank my fellow Board directors for all the help and support they have given me this year. Special thanks to Tim Fraser who has ably looked after our finances and to Sue Darnell who as well as leading our fundraising efforts has provided advice and support on staffing issues. Sadly Norah Jefferys has stepped down from the Board and we are very grateful for the legal advice she provided. Finally, I would like to thank the volunteers who have helped Shirley in various administrative tasks and those who advised and supported our sub-committees.

Ian Sanderson, July 2020