



## **Friends of Stretford Public Hall Limited Trustees' annual report for the year ended 31 March 2020**

The trustees present their report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2020.

Reference and administrative information set out on page 1 forms part of this report. The financial statements comply with current statutory requirements, the rules and the Statement of Recommended Practice - Accounting and Reporting by Charities: SORP applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with FRS 102.

### **Objectives and activities**

The Charitable Objects of the Society as set out in our rules are to:

a) Provide or assist in the provision of facilities and service primarily for the benefit of the community and visitors to, and the resident of, Stretford, for recreational and other leisure time occupation in the interests of social welfare, such facilities being provided to the public at large save that special facilities may be provided for persons who by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disability, poverty or social or economic circumstances may have need of special facilities and services;

And/or

b) Providing maintaining improving and advancing public education by the encouragement of culture and arts.

The board have adopted the following Vision, Mission, and Aims.

### **Our vision:**

For Stretford Public Hall to be a unique and thriving multi-purpose venue at the heart of Stretford owned and run by the local community.

### **Our Mission:**

As guardians of Stretford Public Hall, we will restore and protect this historic landmark enhancing opportunities for regeneration. Through ongoing engagement with the local community, we will host a wide range of activities that meet Stretford's needs. In partnership, we will help to improve the lives of residents by providing opportunities for employment and involvement as well as access to arts, culture, heritage, and a range of wellbeing services.

The trustees review the aims, objectives and activities of the charity each year. This report looks at what the charity has achieved and the outcomes of its work in the reporting period. The trustees report the success of each key activity and the benefits the charity has brought to those groups of

people that it is set up to help. The review also helps the trustees ensure the charity's aims, objectives and activities remained focused on its stated purposes.

The trustees have referred to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and in planning its future activities. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives that have been set.

The main activities undertaken in relation to those purposes during the period have been:

- Investing capital funding to restore key areas of the building so it can be utilised for improved and expanded multi-purpose community use
- Securing further capital funding to continue the investment in our heritage asset
- Expanding our dedicated staff team to effectively develop and implement our plans to increase our charitable activities and income generation
- Hiring the hall and rooms to a range of organisations providing services to the community
- Running health and wellbeing community events
- Hosting and running a variety of cultural and social events and activities
- Hosting heritage open days to raise awareness of the hall
- Working in partnership with local organisations to extend and expand our outreach and wider community engagement
- Developing our operating model and income from the building to establish a sustainable income base to sustain the building and the community activities we host.

#### Achievements and performance

The charity's main activities and who it tries to help are described below. All its charitable activities focus on local residents and are undertaken to further Friends of Stretford Public Hall Limited's charitable purposes for the public benefit.

#### **Our people**

Our excellent Centre Manager Kate McGeevor oversees a fantastic team comprising our long-standing and dedicated Bookings and Events Manager Joanna Jones, Culture Champions Project Co-ordinator Jessica Loveday, Administrator Vic Payne, and our committed Caretaker/ Cleaner Mark Etherington. We have also been grateful for the support of our bookkeeper Imogen Thomas, from Third Sector Accountancy.

We welcomed Dan Williamson as our new Chair of the Board and were extremely sorry to say goodbye to Junaid Patel, a founding member leaving after 5 years. We also said goodbye to Jonny Haslam. We welcomed new Board members Michelle Farrington, John Naughton and most recently co-opted Anthony Williams as our new Treasurer. We are extremely thankful to Simon Borkin for the excellent job he has done as our acting Treasurer. Beyond our staffing and board developments, we continue to benefit greatly from the time and hard work of our volunteers who this year have supported our regular activities and events, as well as our community response to the coronavirus pandemic.

#### **The building**

We have developed an excellent working relationship with our architects, Buttress Architects, secured full planning permission and Listed Building Consent (LBC) for the Ballroom renovation works in April 2020. The ballroom renovation, a £383k contract of improvement and refurbishment, is due to complete by January 2021 at the latest.

#### **Capital funding**

We were successful in securing further funding to complete the ballroom renovations including grants from the Power to Change Community Business Fund (£195k) and the Veolia Environmental Trust (£72k).

## **Events and activities**

Prior to the outbreak of coronavirus in March 2020, we had been continuing to develop new activities and events at the hall. Having secured planning permission to use the building until later at night, we held a number of events between November 2019 and March 2020, including three community cinema events, our annual Christmas fair, and a community 'clothes swap'. The Art Exhibition held in November 2019 was a huge success with over 1200 visitors over the weekend, and almost 600 attending the opening night. Thanks to funding from Trafford Council, the exhibition featured the work of various community organisations, including the work of young people from Gorse Hill Studio and an older person's drawing club based at the Limelight Centre. In March, we partnered with the Muslim Arts and Culture Festival (MACFEST) and Journeys International festival, to host a special cinema screening to mark International Women's Day. In addition to these larger events, we have continued to run weekly activities such as our Wellbeing Tuesdays (health and fitness activities), children's art classes, life-drawing classes, a weekly textiles group and our community choir.

## **COVID-19**

On 26 March 2020, the UK went into 'lockdown' and the Hall instigated business continuity plans; closing the hall to the public, instructing staff to work from home, and carrying out scenarios-based financial planning exercises. In line with government guidance, all activities and events were cancelled. The Board, staff team and volunteers all adapted brilliantly and stepped up during these difficult last few months.

In particular, we are extremely proud of the Hall's establishment as Stretford Community Response Hub, which led to FOSPH working closely with Trafford Council, Trafford Housing Trust and a wide range of local partners, to deliver an emergency response service across Stretford. For five months, FOSPH staff and volunteers worked tirelessly to deliver support to the local community: setting up a dedicated telephone helpline, delivering emergency food parcels, making wellbeing phone calls to keep in touch with the isolated, and collecting prescriptions.

The staff team also worked hard to secure additional funding during this time, allowing the delivery of the Community Response Hub and allowing the staff team to remain employed without the need for furloughing. We are grateful to the following funders for their support:

- Trafford Housing Trust (THT) Covid-19 Emergency Relief Fund (£8,900)
- Trafford Council Business Rates Relief fund (£10,000)
- Power to Change Community Business Emergency Grant (£28,247)
- Trafford Partnership (£1,900)
- Forever Manchester (£4,900)

We are grateful to the efforts of our architects Buttress and the rest of the Ballroom Renovation design team, who worked hard to keep our renovation project on track during lockdown. We were still able to press ahead with tendering for contractors for the Ballroom Renovation works and successfully contracted Rosslee Construction. Work commenced in June to install new toilets, new storage facilities, new lighting system, changes to existing doorway openings, the building of new kitchen / bar areas as well as improvements to our heating system and full redecoration.

## **Looking ahead: from Community Response to Community Support**

Our work over the past four months has highlighted three particular areas which the staff team have been focusing on.

- Digital exclusion –the extent to which local residents cannot afford or do not have access to the internet.
- Access to information –there is a lot of existing support available to residents to help with a variety of health and social issues but it is often difficult to find out about these services or to access relevant information.
- Social isolation & loneliness –particularly among older men.

Over the next six months, we are developing projects which will focus on these three areas.

### **Our operations**

We have continued to improve our operations, to make the everyday running of the hall and its activities more efficient. The appointment of our part-time administrator Vic Payne, in January 2020, has led to improvements in the management of our reception and communications, and we are continuing to improve how we manage room bookings and ticket sales. Our financial management has improved following the adoption of new budgeting software, and thanks to hard work of our bookkeeper Imogen who has improved the financial tracking and management of our accounting system. Imogen coordinated our first VAT return, in June 2020, and has been continuing to manage returns since then.

### **Beneficiaries of our services**

Beneficiaries of Stretford Public Hall are diverse, representing our local community. Use of the hall and activities have been planned to attract interest from all age groups, cultures and faiths, and efforts have been made to ensure our facility remains accessible. Over the past six months, much of our work has been focused on the delivery of the Stretford Community Response hub, which supported local residents impacted by lockdown. In particular, this work benefited those who were self-isolating (eg older people and those who were shielding), who did not have friends and family that could support them.

### **Financial review**

At the end of March 2020, we continue to maintain a suitably healthy financial position, recognising the investment in the building through the renovation works, while continuing to maintain a suitable level of unrestricted reserves to reflect ongoing liabilities associated with the hall, that has lacked investment for many years.

Our efforts to secure further capital and revenue funding is notable through our increase in restricted income from the previous year. Alongside this, we have maintained a good level of unrestricted income, almost exclusively generated through charitable trading which we have maintained in line with the previous year's figures.

Our expenditure has increased, largely a result of our increase in staff costs from the previous year, but we are continuing to keep other overhead costs at a reasonable level - despite the increase in activity in the hall.

Our Ballroom Renovation has been progressing well, thanks to the leadership of Buttress and a number of successful grant applications. In March 2020, we learnt that our application to the Power to Change Community Business Fund has been successful, securing an additional £160k capital funding towards the renovation. Responding quickly to the news of this additional funding, Buttress were able to adapt the tender package and to progress with the Ballroom Renovation as a complete package of work - rather than having to split it into further phases. Spending on the renovation remains in line with the budget and we are confident that the work will be completed by early January 2021.

### **Treatment of our community shares investments**

We continue to benefit from the patient investments provided by our members following our community share offer in 2017 which raised £255k from over 800 members to fund our ballroom renovations.

Given our satisfactory financial performance over the last year and the progress with the Ballroom renovation works, the directors believe that it is timely and fair to offer our members interest on their share capital, in line with the terms and conditions set out within our original prospectus.

So all investor members will be offered 2% interest on their community shares this year, and we will be writing to all of those with community share investments in the next few weeks to make arrangements for this. However, given the ongoing uncertainty of coronavirus restrictions, we will give members the option for the interest to be credited to their share account and added to your share capital balance to be withdrawn at an appropriate time in the future. Furthermore, investors will also be able to forgo interest on their shares altogether, should they wish to. Both these arrangements will ease the pressure on our overall cashflow, but equally we have sufficient funds in place to allow members to take their interest as cash, if they would like to do so.

Finally, our share offer document indicated that we will begin to allow members to withdraw their shares from April 2021. Accordingly, we will be working on plans over the next few months to hopefully allow some level of withdrawals by this point, in particular exploring a move to an “open offer” where new members can invest at any time which will allow existing members the opportunity to withdraw their investment.

### **Reserves policy**

Our reserves policy is to maintain three months of operating costs in order to provide a cashflow buffer so we can remain solvent when faced with unknown costs. Based on the last financial year, this figure is approximately £30,000. We are currently operating in line with the policy.

### **Plans for the future**

Our immediate focus is on completing the ballroom transformation works successfully, which we hope to finally be completed in January 2021. In addition, we have appointed Buttress Architects to lead a new building condition survey, which will help us to prioritise future capital investment in the building.

Alongside this, our dedicated staff team with support from the Board, will continue to grow and to extend our activities, events, community and commercial offer. We have secured funding to launch a new project focused on helping local people to get online, and we'll be serving as a Census Support Centre in March - May 2021, supporting people to complete the online census. We have also recently appointed a design agency to work with FOSPH to design a new website, which we hope will improve our communications and make room bookings more efficient.

We have a number of weddings booked for 2021 but it remains to be seen whether these will go ahead, due to coronavirus restrictions. We are working on an alternative business model, with scenarios that allow for the possibility of social distancing remaining in place throughout 2021.

### **Structure, governance and management**

The organisation is a charitable society limited by guarantee, incorporated on 5th October 2015 and registered as a charity with HMRC on 9th February 2016. The society was established under rules which established the objects and powers of the charitable society and which set out the proceedings of meetings of directors and members. These rules were updated in 2019, a decision approved at the 2019 AGM.

Members of the charitable society each have at least £1 of shares in the society. The total number of members at 31 March 2020 was 871. Shares are non-refundable and non-transferable. Shares may be repaid at par but do not carry any right to participation in assets in the event of a winding up, beyond their £1 par value. The trustees have no beneficial interest in the charity. Trustees give their time voluntarily. Trustee remuneration for specific work is disclosed in note 8 of the accounts. Any expenses reclaimed from the charity by the trustees are set out in note 8 to the accounts. Trustees are elected by the membership at the society's AGM.

## **Statement of responsibilities of the trustees**

The trustees (who are also directors of Friends of Stretford Public Hall Limited for the purposes of society law) are responsible for preparing the trustees' annual report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Society law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable society and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable society for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable group and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable society and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.