

Baldock Town Hall Limited

Chairman's Report June 2012 – May 2013

This has been a year dominated by the proposed lease for the Town Hall, with many meetings including those with NHDC, since August 2012.

During this time we have also appealed to Cabinet a couple of times and secured an overall £140,000 from NHDC to ensure that the building is opened fit-for-purpose.

We have also spoken at Council and received full support for our project, although to keep the discussions on track, NHDC have given a deadline for completion, which is tomorrow! – 11th June 2013

However, this year has not been solely about the lease.

Our 'Friends Events', which were promoted by the 'non-professional events' sub-group were very well attended, despite the pouring rain in respect of our October Ghost walks. Formal thanks go to Brendan King for his splendid 'Surprising Baldock' walk and Maureen and Marilyn for the October Ghost Walk, ably assisted by Rob, in the Orange Tree, afterwards.

The friends of Baldock Town Hall now stand at 220, although our friend's events this year have concentrated on raising volunteer effort.

From our existing membership we have started a new volunteer file and appealed for volunteer help. We have also attended volunteer fairs, with the most recent of these being an event run by nhvs on '*recruiting and keeping volunteers*' a course attended by Richard Winter, where policies relating to volunteer assistance have been received. From volunteers a new 'planning' sub-group, was formed which Jeni and I also joined.

This group is looking into aspects such as the building work required to enable us to open as an Arts and Heritage Centre, the Volunteer (and other) policies that we need to have in place, the operational aspects of running the Arts and Heritage Centre and the equipment required to enable us to do so, as well as items that

require funding. The group are also identifying potential areas where future funding is required in order for us to get the building equipped.

These have been very interesting discussions and will carry on in earnest in the next few weeks and will form the basis of our formal operation management.

We have also looked into our own governance documentation in order to complete our charity application, which has been started, but this cannot be completed until our governance document has been agreed. Anna attended a Trustees Course earlier in the year and this will be helpful when we have signed the lease, as we will be obliged to ensure, as trustees, that the Charity is run in a proper and lawful manner.

We have also had to provide a maintenance schedule to complete repairs, which will be attached to the lease. We reviewed the requirements for our proposed phasing and to this end updated our business plan with a new Chapter 7. This includes a Phase 0 (completion of repairs, maintenance, redecoration and fit-out) which makes use of the available space with no structural repairs or planning permission required), apart from the application to erect scaffolding for a 4 week period at the start of the programme.

Going forward it is our intention to complete Phase 0 within an 8 week period, to enable us to open for business by the end of August at the latest.

If we can complete external maintenance works within 4 weeks, make good the Theatre and first floor areas, we can perhaps have an 'friends' event where we formally name the Thomas Pryor Theatre and introduce our forthcoming programme of events, with perhaps a couple of ad hoc performances thrown in to whet the appetites and promote our events.

So the summer will be a hive of activity and hands-on working to secure our future. We have had NHDC support, albeit a little slow at times to respond, but nevertheless supportive in their actions. We need to formally thank them in any correspondence, together with our local Councillors.

This committee/ board also need's to be thanked for continued support and commitment to the project. We can only positively move forward with this united goal as this is our strength and the importance of that, especially over the last 6 months of lease negotiations and the coming 6 months of hard work in the building itself will keep us united and therefore resolved.

To be honest I believe we are all a bit fed up with talking about what we want to do, as we have done for the past two and a half years and can finally get on with the actual putting it into practice!

As someone who was somewhat thrown in at the deep end last year, with little experience in these things, at least since 1987, I have to say that it has not been an especially easy year for me. I have other personal, as well as work commitments, but I hope you feel that I have given some direction to the project thus far and would like to thank you all for your support.

Alison Gentle
Group Chairman