

St Edmundsbury Masonic Hall Co Limited

Commentary on the Accounts 2021-22

The year to 30 June 2022 is the first year since the pandemic where operations have gradually got back to normal. The third party use of the facility has increased and is being maintained which is essential for the future.

Firstly, I will address the large loss as per the accounts. On 1 November we replaced the members' loans with one lender. We were able to negotiate an 8-year term which gives us certainty and at a fixed rate for that term. To enable the loan to be made, we had to have the premises valued to ensure the security was sufficient. Professional valuers valued Ashlar House at £880,000. Generally accepted accounting principles require the value of assets to be considered regularly and falls in value should be reflected in the accounts. Thus, a provision of £265,341 has been made to reflect the valuation. This is a book entry only.

If we exclude this provision, then there is a profit of £37,218. We did receive Covid grants of £8,273, so the true profit was 28,945.

As we have repeatedly stated, the success of the Masonic Hall company relies on non-masonic income. Our overheads now run at £100,000 per annum, to keep the premises in a good state of repair and to make it attractive for potential hirers. Our utility cost increases have been so far lessened by fixed price contracts previously in place. We have negotiated new contacts and we will see larger increases in these costs in the current year.

Non masonic income was £131,088 and there is potential to considerably increase this. We have a few regular clients using the Hall and the numbers attending these functions are increasing again. We are in the current year getting new clients and the website has been completely updated to provide stand alone websites for weddings, celebrations, conferences and Masonic activities which are all interlinked. Certain areas of the members site is password protected for masonic information only. The websites are continually being added to and improved.

Masonic income from resident lodges, chapters and other units run at around £26,000. This has been supplemented by other Masonic hire of around £5,000 per year, so we are some way short to cover the overheads. The income from lodges, because we now must charge VAT is less than that received by the Hall company when at Chequer Square.

The directors have held the charges to Lodges, Chapters and other permanent units for 4 years now. Annual increases were previously made at 6%. Had the increases been made the charges for the current year would have been 26% higher than those charged in 2019 to 2020 year. A review has recently been made and increases will be introduced for the next Masonic season as well as increases for the non-masonic hire. These will be published shortly.

Bar income is increasing but is somewhat short of previous levels £55,462 this year. In 2018 it was £94,704. This is not due just a fall in numbers, but more responsible drinking. The contribution to profit from the bar is quite small after the cost of bar stocks and bar staff.

Income and profits are constantly monitored and the directors are continually looking at all areas where improvements could be made, but the drive is to expand the outside use and we hope that all members will assist by looking for opportunities to recommend Ashlar House for corporate or private hires.

The results for the 2022-23 financial year, ten months to date, are showing profits of £37,000 to the end of April, without any grants.

All the directors have worked hard to grow the business and there is a good blend of knowledge and experience to continue this.

The aim is to increase profits to pay down the loan so that the Hall company will be debt free in the medium to long term.

Any member who feels they can contribute towards the growth of what is their facility or to assist in any way, should contact one of the directors or the secretary.

Ian S Gray
Treasurer.