

Thank you Chair, and thank you to the Town Council for inviting me here on behalf of the Guildhall Management Committee tonight to give my report on the Guildhall.

As we exit our 2nd full year post pandemic, it has been another busy year for the Guildhall staff and committee.

We have overseen extensive renovations and refurbishments throughout the GH, the bar has been refreshed, we have created a tea & coffee room, the stage has been completely refreshed including brand new curtains, the balcony has been completely stripped out and refurbished and we are currently refreshing the dressing rooms.

We continue to support many locals groups and classes, and currently host 11 regular classes per week bringing in an estimated 5,250 pairs of feet through our doors a year. This is likely to increase by some 27% over the next year as we bring new classes on board.

We have hosted 23 productions so far this financial year, ranging from tribute acts, theatre performances and comedy nights, these productions have reached an estimated 11,200 members of the public. I know from 1st hand accounts that local traders really see a difference in their takings when we put on an event due to the increased footfall in town, it is personally heart warming that the hard work we at the Guildhall put in on a daily basis not only supports local groups and classes, entertains our residents but also helps to support other local business to thrive.

When we hired our Guildhall manager Leigh Conley in October 2021 his remit was to make this building not only a space for local groups and classes but also The Entertainment Hub for the local community and surrounding areas and in the last year we have hosted our first TV comedians in Omid Djalili and Gary Delany who both sold out this venue. In the coming year we host Francis Rossi in a couple of days, another TV comedian in Chris McCausland and 80s pop legends Paul Young and Hue & Cry are still to come. I know for a fact our Guildhall is the envy of residents in other local towns for the diverse performances we bring to this building. Thanks to Mr Conley's hard work, and in some cases literal blood, sweat and tears, we have a minimum of 44 productions and events booked in across the next financial year. There really is something for everyone. The best way to ensure this building survives in its current state is to buy a ticket well in advance, leaving it till only a few days

before or on the day can lead to performers cancelling their booking, so please do pick up a flyer from the foyer or check out our “what’s on guide” on the Guildhall website.

It has been very encouraging to see returning acts increase ticket sales year on year. Our 5 best attended performances have all come in the last 5 months and again this is testament to Mr Conley’s hard work. Our monthly comedy club, Giggle at the GH, held in the Jubilee Rooms, has seen it’s best figures in the last couple of months and so much so we are bringing the show into the main hall in October for a special event. Working the numbers on the additional events planned this year, we are likely to see nigh on 30,000 people come through our doors in the coming year.

You may remember from last years report that we were behind with our accounts for the charities commission, I am pleased to say we are now fully up to date and expect this years accounts to be ready for our accountants in the first couple of weeks of April.

We do have some vacancies on the Guildhall Management Committee, 2 of which are for Town Council members, so may I now call for nominations from the Town Council for these two vacant Council trustee roles on the GMC trustee board which we could fill by way of co-option this evening.

We also have two vacant public trustee roles on the GMC trustee board. I would like to ask members of the pubic to consider putting themselves forward for these positions. If you would like to know more about the Guildhall and the committee, please speak to me after this meeting or contact Leigh Conley at the Guildhall.

In closing my report, I would like to put on record the Guildhall Management Committees thanks to the Town Council for its continued financial support, especially post pandemic which has enabled us to renovate this building, continue to support local groups and classes and bring entertainment to the residents of Axminster and further afield.

Thank you chair and TC for your time this evening. If appropriate, I am happy to answer any questions.