

# **Friends of Pontardawe Arts Centre 2022-2023 AGM**

## **Chair's report.**

2022/23 has a year of both making progress and treading water a wee bit. Much to celebrate with a feeling there's more to be done once the new investment has started.

## **How do we work?**

We operate both as a 'Committee' [who do the work] and as Trustees who are the formal custodians of the Charity. That is, not all Committee members are Trustees, the latter are charged with "governance" – such as this AGM and formally submitting accounts to you and to the Charity Commission. I say this as we are a formal Charity, with roles and responsibilities – accountable to you, the 98 members.

It is important to recognise the work of the committee – done on a voluntary basis and in their own time. We meet at least monthly with work progressing in between meetings. I particularly say thanks to Martin Davies who has been Vice-Chair and provided much welcome cover when I've not been able to attend. John Puzey is standing down as a regular member of the committee – thanks John for your valued input.

## **What have we been doing?**

A common goal we have with the great team which run the Arts Centre is to help broaden the reach of the Arts Centre and, in particular, to help disadvantaged groups access its services. We provided funds which subsidised tickets for some groups and to help develop the centre as a "warm hub". We also made funds available to subsidise groups / classes struggling since the pandemic – these weren't called on as the Council provided funds.

We've run one successful Friends Music night with the Willis Soul Band. It made a "profit" of £672. A few words covers a lot of work by the organisers! Thanks to all who helped organise this and particularly to Huw Pudner who is just great at selling tickets! Every one had a good time.

Other activities include supporting the Pontardawe Old Age Group's Christmas Charity Concert including a donation of £100; running a table at the Heart of the Valley Show in September. The volunteer project run by Mess up the Mess, which we funded, was continued and is something we need to look at again.

Myndd y Betws windfarm provided funds a few years ago which we used to supply a sound desk for the studio. They came to see that recently (an audit on the quiet) to gain reassurance it was put to good use. They were very happy with the Arts Centre and what 'The Friends' have achieved.

We are in the process of setting up with PAC a local Art project: more of this on the night of the AGM!

A key activity is promoting the Arts Centre - including within Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. They are developing a Culture and Heritage Strategy - we've actively engaged in the consultation used to inform it. We've had an early meeting with the new Director of Culture to make sure he knows the importance of this venue. Heather and Kathleen in particular engage actively with the Volunteer groups in Neath who are working collectively on the strategy.

Of course a strategy is only a road map of choices to get to a destination. Our main goal is a secure and thriving Arts Centre. One frustration is the time it is taking to start the new Cinema / refurbishment work. It's close we understand - it's been close for a while! So fingers crossed 23/24 is when it all happens. IF we need to campaign for greater speed/resolution we will do so - the time is not yet though.

Linked to this: what we haven't done - deliberately and for debate - is spend a lot of our financial reserves which stand at over £30000. We took a decision in previous AGMs to keep the bulk of the money "intact" in case it can support the new Cinema/investment. This remains the case - for now. We are developing ideas to invest in other activities - e.g. Health and the Pontardawe Arts Centre.

We're also grateful to the Arts Centre Team for the help they give to these nights and widely for all the work they do. Post Covid attendance numbers are recovering well, there's a good programme of events and activities, a refreshed website and comms system. Well done team!

*Thanks to you for continuing to support the Arts Centre by being a Friend.*

*Stay safe, stay well.*

*Grant L. Duncan (Chair)*