

# Patcham Memorial Hall COVID-19 CRISIS STRATEGY/POLICY

Jan Mulreany, charity secretary / Hugh Woodhouse, Treasurer

6th MAY 2020

## Rationale

The Charity Commission has created guidelines for charities to help cope with the impact of the Government restrictions set out in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic. NVCO<sup>1</sup> and other agencies have suggested that business and voluntary organisations create a crisis policy with clear steps about managing the finances, personnel and communications of the charity. This will support management committees in running the organisation under the stress of the crisis, and ensure they are prepared for emergency actions, ticking over and recovery. In turn it will also supply proper evidence of the charity having made clear and reasoned decisions about practical and financial matters, which will be invaluable for the completion of CC annual reports.

## Principles

In any decision-making, the responsibilities of Trustees to maintain the Hall in perpetuity for the benefit of the community (Mems & Arts 1967) is paramount.

In addition, the health and well-being of staff and users of the Hall is a priority. As a charity, PMH will do whatever it can to support the livelihoods of those who carry out regular work for us.

We will manage the crisis to maintain the charity's survival, and look for opportunities so that PMH emerges more resilient as a going concern.

## Financial Strategy

The decision is that PMH will use its reserves to help manage this crisis, as recommended by the Charity Commission.

## Actions

**Financial projections** for profit and loss, and available reserves, will be produced and regularly updated. This will need to be extended to 31 Dec 2020, to capture the PMH financial year end and to coincide with what the UK Govt might set as limits to social gatherings that will have a detrimental impact on PMH finances. If necessary, this projection will be maintained into 2021, to its next year end. HW to create & update monthly.

PMH has a discount on **business rates**, but we believe that the Business Rates Relief grant might be applicable to PMH. (10-25K available to businesses in receipt of business rates relief as part of Covid-19 relief). HW to pursue.

**External resources** will be sought from government, funders, supporters, where this is possible, subject to restrictions, such as the Aviva Crowdfunding sum. Jan Mulreany will seek clarification from the Aviva Crowdfunding scheme to discuss any conditions on restricted funding following receipt of the funds.

**Closure:** The Hall was closed from 24 March 2020 (letter).

Hire of all facilities in the Hall will be suspended from that date, which coincided with Government advice. A Bookings Refund policy was agreed by Officers<sup>2</sup> thus: hirers were offered a choice of a refund or PMH keeping the sum "on account". Bookings that have been cancelled by hirers handled by John Williams, working with Hugh to arrange refunds.

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<sup>1</sup> National Council for Voluntary Organisations

<sup>2</sup> John Williams, Hugh Woodhouse, Elisabeth Story and Jan Mulreany  
PMHTrustees COVIDStrategypublic 6 May 2020

John Williams will contact hirers (groups, private etc) and ascertain their wishes regarding refund or carrying forward. A record will be kept (JW), especially if this extends beyond the current financial year. Where possible donations of the booking fee will be encouraged.

**Employees & Contractors.** PMH has no PAYE employees. John Hogg as Estates Manager will be asked to continue overseeing maintenance of the Hall; this might include bringing in contractors to repair/maintain etc. as necessary, and following safe distance practice.

Richard Shipley as the usual contractor for caretaking services will be asked to maintain a watching eye on the Hall; he could be asked to establish a regime to dust the Hall floor on a regular basis, and to clean the toilets, fridge and other areas that tend to need more thorough cleaning.

The Hall will be deep cleaned by a professional company once it is ready and able to be reopened, to reassure the hiring public that every effort has been made to prevent any cross-infection from the period prior to lockdown.

Rebecca Mann, as contracted gardener, is asked to keep the monthly maintenance schedule agreed with John Hogg, including checking on newly planted wildlife areas and plants. She will be paid at the existing hourly rate for this, on receipt of a claim as usual, the hours needed negotiated with John Hogg. No new development work done on the Wildlife Garden, as no funds are set/agreed.

### **Mitigation**

The Risk Assessment will be updated in time for a Committee meeting in the week beg 11 May, to which all committee members will be invited, preferably by Zoom, to discuss & ratify this Strategy. Update: This has been done, see minutes of Zoom meeting from 15 May 2020.

### **ASSUMPTIONS and RISKS**

- Where requested, full refunds are to be made for lettings that have been cancelled by 30 March 2020.
- Where requested, income is to be carried over for lettings that have been postponed and re-dated within the financial year. If rebooking is not made, negotiation regarding part-refund, excluding admin fee.
- By continuing to be contracted to maintain the Hall, contractors are supported and more likely to be able to continue the work for us, and/or to resume once conditions allow, if they have had to stop for medical or legal reasons.
- Reserves are such that, if not spent on repair and maintenance of the Hall when not in use, the Charity would remain solvent for at least two years following on from 2021, if it did not reopen.
  
- The Risk is accepted that the Hall might not be opened again for the remainder of the financial year, subject to Government legal restrictions, and that income will not be forthcoming.
- The Risk is accepted that the Reserves will be used to fund the maintenance of the Hall ongoing, until it is able to reopen. Charity Commission advice is that this is preferable, and the proper use of Reserves.
- The Risk is accepted that hirers might choose not to start back quickly after the end of the Govt restrictions, especially if they are groups/charities who have also been subject to restrictions, such as age-group advice, etc. (U3A and WI tending to be of the older age range) or if the private businesses have suffered loss and closure.
- The Risk is accepted that the situation imposed by COVID-19 might affect the Charity's operation and finances for some time to come in 2021 and beyond, and that this might have a detrimental effect on the longterm future of the Charity.