

## LETCWORTH SETTLEMENT AGM 27 NOVEMBER 2018

### CHAIR'S REPORT

I am sure you will all be happy and relieved to know that my report this year is relatively brief compared to those of previous years! That is not because there has been little going on, but simply because it has, in many ways, been a year of consolidation, of building on the successes and improvements of previous years.

As Sonia has described, all the numbers that impact the income side of things are up. This is due entirely to the hard work of the Programme Committee – Peter Chapman, Elizabeth Barber and Sonia Weston, to the on-going hard work of all the staff and of course to our tutors who keep students engaged and happy on all their many chosen courses.

On the expenditure side of things we have also spent more this year on planned maintenance works, updating of our main a/v facilities in the hall and replacement of various items of equipment. This expenditure was planned and the year-end deficit of some £5000 was expected. We set aside funds every year in our Designated Funds account for just these purposes.

The development of new courses and workshops has led to the Settlement building being occupied for a lot more of the time. This has created pressure on car parking at the busiest of times that in turn has created unnecessary stress and distraction for the staff and for our students. We have therefore had to rethink the usage of the building and, as you would expect, the Trustees have felt obliged, bluntly, where there is conflict, to give priority to those who bring in the most money. As a wholly independent charity with no funding from any source, other than that which 'walks through the door', you will understand our thinking needs to be pragmatic. I am very pleased to note that the group most affected by this decision has found alternative premises which will provide them with much more car parking space than we could here.

I am now coming to the end of my fourth year as Chair and it is amazing how much has changed in that time. One thing which remains the same, however, is the lack of a successor for my position and for the other officer posts and indeed for members of the Management Committee in general. This year we are very pleased to welcome three new members of the Committee and it is my fond hope that at least one of them will 'assume the mantle' as it were, when I and others who have been here for some time decide we should depart. (No pressure then!)

Sonia mentioned our volunteers and Management Committee members and I too would like to pay tribute to them all – the Settlement would not survive without them and that is not a glib statement, but the truth. This year we say farewell to our Vice Chair, Nigel Carrick. In a relatively short period of time, Nigel has given

enormous amounts of time to matters related to our property, to improving our facilities, meeting with suppliers, drawing up works and monitoring progress. His professional skills and experience have been put to fantastic use here and we are incredibly grateful to him for all that he has done.

The Management Committee agreed, without reservation, that Nigel should be given the Honorary Fellowship award. As you will recall we established this last year to pay tribute to those who had 'given above and beyond' to the organisation and no-one has given us more time, thought and energy over the past few years than Nigel, so this is well deserved. We also have another small token of our gratitude – this is in a more liquid form and we hope will be enjoyed by Nigel and Sarah.

May I close by thanking every member of the Settlement for his or her continued support and perhaps give a gentle reminder that 2020 will be our centenary year. We began planning for this some months ago but we shall need support from volunteers and, of course, additional funding to help defray additional costs – more details of this in the months to come. If you are able to help in any of these ways, please do contact Sonia or Sally in the office.