

Richard Watts and the City of Rochester Almshouse Charities

2013- REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

2013 began with 16 Trustees in post, though Mr John Bradley retired 18 April 2013 after 42 years of service and Mrs E Tiber retired on the 21 November after 30 years of service. Mrs E Janz was appointed as a Trustee in July. In addition to the Chairman, Mr Anthony Clayton and Vice Chairman, Mrs Hilary Moore, a number of Trustees held key positions during the year:-

Estates - Chairman - Mr Donald Troup Vice Chairman - Mr Brian Cox
Remuneration & Staffing - Chairman - Mr Terry Burton
Finance & Investment - Chairman - Mr Roger Hill
Internal Auditors - Mr Martin Cook and Mr Peter Smith
Health & Safety Group - Mr Michael Bailey, Mrs Hilary Moore and Ms Alex Booth

During the year, the Charities continued to provide almshouse accommodation and associated support to needy people in Rochester and Urban Strood and working in pairs, Trustees undertook visits to interview applicants requesting almshouse accommodation. Two new residents were accepted into the almshouses. Through the work of the House & Grants Committee together with the support of the staff there was an occupancy rate of 98.5% of the accommodation during the year. A survey completed by residents indicated that satisfaction levels were running high in respect to the accommodation and services provided. A Pet Policy was agreed with particular emphasis on small dogs. One resident now owns a small dog.

In the year, support grants were made amounting to £38,225 (2012: £25,510) to 11 individuals for training and general support, 5 local organisations and 5 schools, 11 awards for school uniform, 133 university grants to A level students and 9 awards for domestic items for families,. In most cases, a Trustee together with the Senior Administrator (House & Grants) visited applicants to assess the level of need to ensure that grant aid was given to those in greatest need. During 2013 only 79% of the budget set aside for this work was allocated to those in need despite increased efforts to publicise the work of the Charities.

For older members of the community, the Charities provided outpension support to 78 individuals (2012: 85) with three new Outpensioners being added during 2013; provided a gardening service to support two people living at home and paid for the Medway Helpline for 10 people. A subsidised Home Help service was provided for 40 people, eight of whom have the service provided free of charge. A survey completed by Home Help clients indicated that satisfaction levels were running high in respect to the services they received.

The financial statements for 2013 continue to reflect the effectiveness of the decision some years ago to introduce the Weekly Maintenance Charge (WMC) and the management and administration of the Charities that is supported by a strong and proactive Board of Trustees through the work of its five Committees.

Rental income continued to provide the majority of the Charities' income. Rents receivable increased by 5% to £753,239 and overall the arrears level has been kept low with over 99% of 2013 rents paid. Occupancy levels were good too with commercial properties achieving 99.5% occupancy and residential 96%. The Charities' properties were revalued for insurance purposes by the Surveyor during the year at £31,312,000 (2012 -

Richard Watts and the City of Rochester Almshouse Charities

£34,412,000). Investment properties alone were valued at £15,395,000. The Insurance Broker Willis changed its business strategy and moved many of its smaller clients to its partner brokers. Richard Watts Charities was one such client that was moved to Chesham Insurance Brokers in October. The major refurbishment work was completed at 87-89 High Street and 13 Gordon Terrace. This year focused on Health & Safety with the creation of a Health & Safety Group comprising of Trustees together with the Site Manager. Both Fire Risk and Legionella Risk Assessments were carried out across all almshouses by professionals. From an energy efficiency point of view, the majority of almshouses now have loft insulation with some further work planned. The Surveyor and Professional Advisor, Mr Paddy Miller gave notice of his retirement at the end of March 2014 and the process was undertaken to successfully recruit his replacement, Richard Tucker of J A Warner Ltd.

During the year two new members of staff joined the Charities, a Head Gardener and a Senior Administrator responsible for Communications and External Projects. They both filled vacancies created by staff who had left. By the end of 2013 all staff were in work and no long term health issues affected attendance at work. It was a record year for staff training being completed and the kitchen, courtesy of its excellent staff received the top score from Medway Environmental Health.

During 2013 increased efforts were made to promote the services offered by the Charities and to become more involved and known in the wider community. In September the Charities took part in the National Heritage Open Days by opening the Boardroom and putting on view material from the archives; approximately 200 people attended. An Art competition with a focus on Chatham Intra and Lesser Known Chatham was launched in October with the entries being judged in 2014.

In addition at the beginning of the year, a van that was branded with the Charities' emblem was purchased to be used by the Site Manager when going about his duties in Rochester and Chatham.

Overview

The results for the year show a surplus on unrestricted funds before transfers of £204,236 (2012: £228,598).

Incoming resources moved from £1,150,907 in 2012 to £1,149,725 in 2013. Interest and dividends receivable increased by 2% to £273,197.

Total resources expended increased by 3%, from £922,309 in 2012 to £945,489 in 2013.

At year end the charities' investment portfolio stood at £7,040,140, and showed unrealised gains of £429,944.

The above investment movements together with the surplus for the year give a positive net movement in funds of £643,594 to be added to total funds brought forward, meaning that total assets at 31 December 2013 were £20,493,039.