**Letter to hall managers Update 4 23 04 2020**

Masonic halls across the province are facing challenging times. Usual income streams have been decimated and the constraints on masonic and social activities are taking their toll. The Halls Support Group is there to help those who manage our masonic halls in facing these unprecedented times. We have issued several advice and information notes, and these documents and any further updates can be found on our recently revamped Halls Support webpage, located in the Corona Virus Toolbox.

Two recent items are of particular relevance.

**The UK Government** has set out a package of targeted measures to support businesses through this period of disruption. Local councils are already releasing cash grants under the Small Business Rates Relief scheme and a similar scheme for the retail, leisure and hospitality sector.

The small business grant scheme is simple to apply for, as any business that qualified for small business rate relief in 2019/20 is eligible for a grant of £10,000. Many businesses will already have received a letter from the local council detailing what grants are available. In the retail, hospitality and leisure business sector, this grant is replaced with a grant of up to £25,000 based on the rateable value of the business.  For businesses with a rateable value of £15,000 or less there is a similar cash grant of £10,000. The process is straightforward if the hall has a rates profile with the local authority.

**The Chancellor has Extended Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS)**

The Government has extended the CBILS so that all viable small businesses affected by COVID-19, and not just those unable to secure regular commercial financing, will now be eligible should they need finance to keep operating during this difficult time. The government is also stopping lenders from requesting personal guarantees for loans under £250,000 and making operational changes to speed up lending approvals. The government will continue to cover the first twelve months of interest and fees.

The Grand Superintendent of Works has contacted the Provinces with an interesting initiative driven by the Masonic Halls Advisory Group. The specific focus is “NHS CAR Paring Support” organised by a network of contacts working for CBRE, an Estates Services company. There are some practical difficulties with this, but it is certainly worth considering. We are all aware of how important freemasonry can be to the lives and experiences of local people. Indeed, some masonic halls are  already providing a service to the community and have been doing so for a long time, or are considering doing so in response to the current pandemic  **Please let us know about your current provision or proposals and we can promote them on our website.**

We know that our masonic halls are led and managed by hard working, passionate and committed individuals. We wish you every success in guiding your hall through these very troubling times. The Halls Support Group is there to offer advice, guidance and practical support. **If we can be of assistance, please get in touch**. Our website contains lots of support materials to help with hall management. If you have ideas on how we can improve the site or better engage with halls, please let us know. Finally, if you have ideas and practices that could be of assistance to others, please don’t hesitate to get in touch.

We wish you well in your endeavours. Stay safe and healthy.

**Chris Maloney PrGSuptWks     Barry Jameson PAGDC**

**Halls Support Group               Halls Support Group**