

Ipswich Hindu Samaj Annual General Meeting 16 March 2011

Report from Secretary, Lila Patel.

In the past year for the first part we concentrated on the calendar activities of festivals and bhajans. All the main festivals were commemorated and we had a successful stall at the Mela. The other main part of our activities focused on the leasehold negotiations on 5 Thoroughfare which were long drawn and putting on the yoga classes and luncheons for seniors funded by the Big Lottery.

On behalf of the EC I give thanks to Martin Spettigue for his help, advise and time given regarding the conveyance and survey of the property, all done pro bono. I also thank Martin for his cheerfulness and generosity for the work and items he has donated for the I HS Centre.

Dr Soni has supported and helped out at all the activities and special thanks be given for managing the yoga and luncheons, and leading the bhajans and arti. The last mentioned are very important because the bhajans and arti remain the key activities at the Centre.

Special thanks to Vinay and Vinaya for the communication work and time without which the Centre would not have been as successful as it has been during the opening months.

Also thanks to Mayuri and Chandresh for the accounting help and auditing, vital for good management.

Acquiring premises for our activities has been a big step forward for the organization and it means that we have met a central objective of our constitutional purpose. The premises are lovely and in a good location. However we have new responsibilities and commitments to our budgets which we are struggling to meet and maintain.

On the completion of the lease on November 2nd, the responsibility of managing the Centre has been mine. The I HS for most of the year has not had paid staff, and the shortage of volunteers has been a major impediment on developing the Centre and maintaining it. Also the very tight and rigid control on the budget by the President has meant that the purchases necessary for the Centre have still not been met.

The heaters in the temple room are not functioning and this was a major problem during the sub zero temperatures, but I think I fulfilled my responsibilities in keeping the Centre open at weekends and during the

other activities and managing the pujari functions.

The premises were unfurnished, with only curtains remaining, so everything necessary had to be purchased. Many people donated many items, most notably the lovely Radha and Krishna deities, a hi-fi system, an outdoor notice board and Ram Parivar Deities. We have also been promised a Ganesh deity from a generous supporter.

Vinod Masani has given us his valuable free labour in constructing three altars for the deities and in undertaking minor repairs to the building.

As the summer months approach, more decorations of the premises will be undertaken. Also volunteers are coming forward to put on cultural activities at the Centre such as yoga for all, alternative therapies. We still need to encourage more social enterprise projects. And more members of the community should use the Centre for their functions.

In the week of Mahashivratri no less than 10 activities took place at the Centre, including two Mahashivratri pujas and bhajans.

One of our biggest failings has been not attracting enough young adults who are the most part of our support group, into management functions. I know that we have abundant talent and skills in our community. And I hope this next year the EC and Trustees will further this key objective.

I am very disappointed that I have been the sole woman EC member. This has been very hard for me personally. I want to reiterate that without substantial support from the women in our community, the development of the project will be held back.

It has been a great disappointment that many of our funding applications have been refused. Especially as the IHS wants to be key to the community development of the Indian community. We thank the generosity of those that have funded us including Ipswich Borough Council, SIFRE, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Foundation.

Our community is growing and changing. This is welcome. However community development is a new challenge for us and for the management it is a learning experience. Some of the management views the project as a profit and loss account item, and not being able to see the goodwill we receive as equally valuable if not essential.

I thank all our supporters and volunteers and worshippers, without whom we cannot succeed or continue. I look forward to the coming year with optimism and confidence that our community Centre and supporters will

grow and flourish in spite of the inevitable difficulties and problems.