

# Tysoe Village Hall

## Parish Assembly update - June 2024

This report covers the prior twelve month period since the last Parish Assembly, but pays particular attention to the period following the Village Hall Annual General Meeting held in March 2024. At the AGM, the village thanked Percy Sewell and other long-standing committee members for their dedication and many years of service to the hall and the community it serves. Of particular note were the periods of time when COVID and major water leakage created significant additional work for the committee to successfully navigate.

### **The Village Hall Management Committee**

The newly formed committee comprises sixteen local members, drawn from the hall's constitutional right to have representation from specific local groups and clubs, as well as volunteers from the community. Our committee has a diverse mix of members, providing input and ideas from retirees, those still working as well as parents of toddler, primary and senior school children. This pool of experience, ideas and energy, even in the short period of time working as a group, is most encouraging. We hope the initiatives and events being marketed by the hall over recent weeks demonstrate to the village the hard work taking place behind the scenes.

### **The past**

The hall will celebrate its centenary in late 2029. The committee has an eye on this important date and are working towards ensuring the very positive impact of our rural hall lives on in a commercially and environmentally sustainable way for the years and decades ahead. Village hall usage, both post COVID but also through cost of living and generational change, is evolving. This is the case not only in Tysoe, but across the country. Many halls are now experiencing financial issues and face closure. It is our role and duty, as current custodians of the hall, to address these changes in a mature and considered manner to ensure our long-term viability.

In November 2023 the committee, through a survey, "asked the village" to gather views about the hall, what activities people might wish to partake in, as well as more general feedback. The results, whilst not overly negative on any one area or topic, did guide to improvements that could be made to the building and what it provides to make it more attractive to a wider set of age groups. The younger age groups are the users and potential future committee members.

### **Financial position**

The prior years, whilst of course of great burden to the committee and to hall users, actually provided a positive financial impact. COVID grants to the hall were not required to be repaid and our insurance covered loss of hiring revenue. In parallel our operating costs were reduced as the hall remained closed. This somewhat masked the underlying trading position, which was evidenced by a financial loss in 2023, a period that was as near "back to normal" as might be expected. Whilst funds are currently healthy, committed renovation and repair projects will, combined with spiralling energy supply costs and insurance premiums, reduce our cash position by the end of 2024. We feel strongly that the "easy win" of increasing our hiring rates is not the right path to take, but instead and to address the situation the committee is working on a number of projects focussed on both our income and expenditure.

## The future

The hall is currently utilised (hired or otherwise occupied) for 40% of the week. Peer review indicates we are significantly lower than other similar halls.

Workstreams to address this include:

- **Marketing** - the hall was late to join the digital age, with our website and Facebook pages launching in late 2023. Good progress has been made to establish brand identity and engagement, for example our monthly Film Club choice being chosen by the village through email and Facebook polls. Our email marketing list (fully GDPR compliant, naturally!) continues to grow and addresses those who are connected, but don't prefer social media. We continue to post paper notices on notice boards and are indebted to our friends at The Record for affording the hall a page each issue. We feel it important to share our work and our plans with the village, to drive engagement and invite shared ownership of a critical rural resource.
- **Events and activities** - the survey results voiced desire for music, films, food and more for the younger generation. We listened and recently launched our September ABBA night, with 25 tickets selling within the first few days, we have a Zumba group launching later in June and our Film Club continues to grow. We have run, but don't overly publicise for Safeguarding reasons, free discos for our school children and have hosted the Dementia Cafe for a special matinee film performance. We continue to ask ourselves - is the hall serving the WHOLE community? Food is very much under discussion, with the committee undertaking a critical review of our facilities, creating two sub-projects, covered below.
- **Facilities** - the hall kitchen is used by many groups, from the WI, Dementia Cafe, the monthly Lunch Club and also commercial caterers. The committee is working with these hirers to ensure that the facilities we provide are safe, appropriate and efficient. The McNulty Room is somewhat overlooked as a hiring space. The committee is currently working to imagine what it could become, perhaps with only minor changes to colour and wall decoration, perhaps echoing the Edwardian heritage. Returning back to the food theme and knowing that outside of a Chinese or Fish and Chips, the village is not blessed with food options. This may provide a mutual win for the hall and the village.
- **Finances** - we have introduced refinements to our financial controls and reporting, allowing us to better understand, predict and make effective financial decisions. We will focus during 2024 on available grants to improve the building, widen the services it could provide and reduce our environmental impact.

## Summary

As Chair I am wonderfully supported by an energetic team of Trustees and Volunteers. We are vocal, questioning and demanding of each other during our meetings. We share a mutual passion for the hall, the basis upon which it was founded and our duty to steer its purpose and sustainability into the future.

*Ben Violett*

Chair, Tysoe Village Hall Trust