

**Drinkstone War Memorial Institute**  
**Report to the PC AGM**  
**June 2024**

This year has seen a welcome return to 'normality' after the covid years. At last year's AGM, 3 new Committee members were nominated and elected to the board of Trustees. Consequently, the VHC now has a full complement of 11 voting Trustees + two other non-voting Committee members who are representatives of the PC and the PCC.

Long-standing regular bookings and events have resumed and thankfully are being well supported, and we continue to receive enquiries and bookings for new one-off events, parties and weddings. Sadly, for the time being at least, the Youth Club has been stood down, but, with Cathy's permission, their equipment has been sorted out and many of the items will be retained and made available for use at future village children's events. The bookings 'bursary' continues to assist bookings for small groups by providing a grant towards hall fees which otherwise might not be a financially viable proposition, and has been very much appreciated by the groups concerned.

With the worrying fallout from the financial crisis in the forefront of our minds, we undertook an extensive exercise last year to inform us of the future projected costs of running the hall during the next couple of decades. Though the building is currently only 11 years old, this will become especially important as it is likely to need increased maintenance as the years go by.. Technical systems such as the Ground Source Heat Pump which serves the under-floor heating, or large-scale projects such as the drainage and re-surfacing of the car park, could prove to be enormously costly should they ever need to be repaired or replaced. We have been made increasingly aware, therefore, of the need for ongoing sound financial planning in order to be prepared for rising costs to hopefully ensure that, in future years, we are able to maintain our public building to the standard that the village deserves.

The costs of every-day running and maintenance, in addition to the costs of all the specialist services that we are required to employ in order to satisfy the Health and Safety requirements for a public building, have already increased considerably. As Trustees, we are fully committed to maintaining the hall to the highest possible standard to satisfy our users, and to continue to provide a modern, warm, comfortable facility, which adheres to Government Health and Safety Guidelines.

With our raised awareness of the Village Hall's short and long-term financial situation, as one of the major contributors to VH funds, Hire fees were our main port of call for major review.

At the start of every year, the Village Hall hire fees to be charged from April onwards, are discussed at length. The Village Hall Management Committee has always tried to keep hire fees as low as it possibly could, to ensure that the Hall has been accessible to all, for the benefit of our community. As a result, at our annual review of hire fees in January, all cases were given a good deal of consideration - in fact the hire fee for residents had not been increased for more than 10 years, ever since the new Hall was opened in 2013. Only after extensive comparisons of the fees being charged in other local halls with facilities comparable to ours, was it agreed that, whilst fees for resident bookings should remain at £10 per hour, hire fees for **all** non-resident hirers should be increased to £18 per hour. We felt that this increase should apply across the board in order to put all non-resident hire fees onto an equal and fair footing, and not set any precedents which could be difficult to untangle in the future.

All aspects of maintaining the Hall and grounds have been made much more difficult since the devastating loss of our long-standing caretaker Robert, as we have been working without an appointed Caretaker, which inevitably has significantly increased the workload of the Trustees.

Despite the caretaker role being widely advertised, though we have had interest from several individuals, we have been unable to make a positive appointment for a variety of reasons. We have been very fortunate that Bill Goreham has been very willing to take on limited tasks and will continue to do so while our search continues.

Pub nights continue to be very popular, and for the June event we will trial opening earlier in the evening to encourage young families to attend. Other Village Hall events, such as the over-60s lunch, the Christmas Hamper Draw, the Race Night and the Sale Trail continue to be very well supported and enjoyed by all. After a good deal of organisation, Film nights have been established and after the success of the inaugural event it is hoped that they will become a regular feature of the VH calendar. We will also hope to continue to work jointly with the PC and the PCC to encourage the use of the Hall for events to benefit the Community.

Other positive achievements this year include: the purchase of an outdoor garden lighting system for pub nights; the purchase of additional outdoor tables and chairs; internal decoration of all the public areas of the Hall; installation of a new automatic flush system in the gent's toilets; replacement/repair to parts of the GSHP system; replacement of the car park apron. After an approach to Sisk (A14 contractors) they have offered, once the road project comes to an end in July, to donate some nearly-new filing cabinets to the Archiving group and also to address our problems with the potholes in the car park. Both very welcome offers which we could not refuse!

Great progress has been made during the year by the Local History Archiving group, historically part of the DWMI, who meet weekly to carry out the task of sorting and cataloguing the vast amount of local history items which have been housed at the Hall for so many years.

As trustees of the Charity, we are required by Charity law to ensure that we run the Hall in a financially responsible way. We all very aware that we are duty bound, not only to manage the Hall for the present day, but to carefully plan for its' future so that it can continue to serve generations of Drinkstone residents for many years to come.

Once again, my fellow Trustees have done a tremendous job in looking after the Village Hall throughout the year. They are a great team of dedicated people and I would like to propose a vote of thanks them all for their persistence and selfless hard work.

Sue Foulsham

Chairman Drinkstone War Memorial Institute