

Drinkstone War Memorial Institute
(Village Hall)

Report to the Parish Council Annual Meeting 2022

After the trials and tribulations of recent years, I think we can at last say (with fingers very much crossed!) that the Village Hall is back 'in business.' During lockdown we faced what might have been a disastrous loss of revenue from bookings, but thanks to our own ongoing careful budgeting during preceding years, and to the re-start grants from the Government, we have a financially secure base from which to move forward.

After many years of stability, the Management Committee has undergone a good deal of change during the past year or so. Regretfully, Liz Schmitt decided to stand down from her role as Trustee and Hon. Secretary last Spring, but thankfully she offered to continue with the role of Bookings secretary. Her skills enabled her to play an essential part in the planning for the new hall, and were invaluable to the Committee during her years as Hon. Secretary. Merete Bland too was very involved in the setting up of the New Hall and has served us well during her years as Hon. Treasurer. We thank them both for their invaluable service. In the last year or so we have been delighted to welcome four new members to fill the vacancies on the committee: Nick Hill who took over the duties of Hon. Treasurer last year; Valerie Burkett; Lesley Canham as Hon. Secretary earlier this year; and Christine Emery who has joined us as the representative for the PC. They have joined a hard-working team who have served as Trustees for many years and, on behalf of the community. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking them all for their hard work and dedication.

Throughout the whole of the Covid-hit period, the Trustees continued to meet, often by Zoom, for the monthly meetings necessary to ensure the smooth running of the Hall. Somehow, we managed to continue to carry out regular Risk Assessments and weekly safety checks to monitor the general state of the building and to make sure that the hall would be fully operational when the time came to open the doors to the community once again. We have also employed a Drinkstone resident on a permanent basis, to take over the weekly clean of the Hall. With the exception of the Youth Club, all regular bookings for clubs and classes have resumed, and we continue to receive additional enquiries for

bookings for events such as weddings, children's parties and meetings of all kinds. The Government Grant has given us the flexibility to set up a Bursary Fund to encourage bookings from smaller groups within the village, and to help them get started by offering the hire of the Hall at an affordable rate. In our recent review of Hall hire fees, we have also taken care not to raise the Hire rates for Drinkstone residents, and, in fact, they remain the same as they were when we opened in 2013.

Events too, have slowly come back to normal: A successful Sale Trail was held in September 2021 and next year will go back to its usual date in May: Pub Nights run by Nick and Robin have been highly successful and we thank Colin Field for his support in providing us with his Drinkstone Ales; The Mince Pie event and Art Club Exhibition was once again a great success; The Annual Seniors Lunch, due to be held later this month, has now become an event run by the Village Hall; the Jubilee Party was sponsored and organised jointly by the Church, the PC and ourselves; an exhibition to celebrate the Centenary of the Village Hall was well attended. A great deal of work has been undertaken by the Village Hall Archiving group to sort through the huge amount of Drinkstone material that has been amassed over the last few decades, an ongoing task which will eventually result in the collection becoming more easily accessible to all.

Looking to the future, to further our credentials as a 'Green' building, we have recently applied to Suffolk County Council for an Electric Vehicle charging Point to be fitted in the car park. If we are successful in qualifying for funding, we hope that the cost of the ground works and installation will be covered - we will then receive the revenue generated which in turn should pay for the electricity used, and for any other running costs including a monthly maintenance contract.

As we celebrate 100 years of the DWMI, we can count ourselves as very fortunate to have come through the many trials and tribulations of the Covid period, relatively unscathed. The regeneration is well underway – long may it continue!.

Sue Foulsham

Chairman Drinkstone Village Hall

June 2022