

Stour Provost Village Hall AGM 9<sup>th</sup> January 2021

### Chairman's report

Well, what a year it's been! It all started off so well with a lovely drinks party the evening of the AGM. Then in January the hall was full for one of Jack's brilliant quizzes this time with a Chinese New Year theme. The money raised was used to buy a new table tennis table as the old one was difficult to get in and out of the shed, the old one was donated to an appreciative Gillingham Youth Centre. Table tennis Tuesdays were regularly enjoyed by 10 or more people and yoga and Pilates were also on the calendar.

February brought a chance to clear out your cupboards for our jumble sale which raised money for the Stower Vale Pre-school to enable them to buy some new equipment.

Sadly, at the beginning of February Dawn decided that she could no longer continue as treasurer, she had done a sterling job for many years and it was hard to imagine the hall without Dawn at the heart of everything. I would like to thank her again for all she has done for the hall over the years. Fortunately for us Polly agreed to take on the role of treasurer and brings a wealth of experience from her professional life to the role.

In March we welcomed a new member Roz, to our committee. Thank you Roz for joining us.

Then just as Easter coffee morning preparations were in full swing, we were hit by the first lockdown due to the Covid 19 pandemic and all plans were put on hold.

In May we heard that we were eligible for the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant to help organisations that were closed due to the pandemic cover their expenses and make up for lost income. The receipt of this grant for £10,000 gave us pause for thought and caused a review of our finances both in the short and long term. A huge thank you to Andy Balchin who helped us with the review by casting his experienced accountant's eye over our income and expenditure and outlines a long-term estimate for the maintenance and updating of the hall. We now have a much clearer idea of how much we need to raise through events and applying for additional funding to make sure that we meet our obligations as trustees and ensure that the hall is around for many years to come. We are faced with a considerable challenge to achieve this and hope we can call on the support and input of villagers to help and will be carrying out a community consultation in the near future.

The electrical system has had its 5-year periodic test and unfortunately initially failed the inspection but with some remedial work and new consumer units we passed.

The hall notice board and steps have both been rejuvenated by Jon and Su Swallow who have also kept the front of the hall looking neat and tidy and Jon gave the new shed a second coat of paint, thank you to both of you.

We briefly reopened twice in May and August to collect for the Trussell Trust food bank and received very generous donations, thank you to everyone.

Su has worked tirelessly on our new hiring agreement and terms and conditions which is now in place with its additional covid 19 clauses, thank you Su I know it caused some sleepless nights.

To ensure that the hall could reopen at some point we had to maximise the space for social distancing. We sorted out the shed to make space to temporarily store the excess furniture. We bought and installed hand sanitisers, paper towel dispensers and a new perspex notice board, - thank you Eric for installing them for us. Chris Claydon sewed clear plastic hand grabs onto the hall curtains so they could be sanitised – thank you Chris. We put up signage, bought cleaning products and hired a cleaner to come in once a week to deep clean. We also completed risk assessments for fire (carried out by a local company free of charge), general risks and Covid 19. We have also written and adopted safeguarding and equal opportunity policies. Thank you Polly for all you help with this

Having made the decision that we needed to cover the rear patio we decided to apply to the Dorset Community Impact Fund for the money to build the cover, light and heat the space and buy some outdoor furniture. The rationale for this was that it would increase the available space in the hall and enable us to have more people at events whilst still maintaining social distancing and ensuring the hall remained a COVID-19 secure environment for anyone using the hall. We were successful in our bid and many thanks go to Eric for building the wooden and polycarbonate cover for us and to Su and Veronica who helped complete the rather complicated and lengthy application form. The installation of the lighting and heating and purchase of the outdoor furniture will be completed in the next couple of months.

We applied to the Fat Beehive Foundation for funding to create a dedicated Village Hall website but our application was unsuccessful. We are still looking to have an online presence and have been offered space on the Stours Parish Council website – thank you James.

We reopened the hall in October with Polly doing her Pilates classes a few rentals taking place and it was fantastic to see the hall being used again albeit with all the Covid restrictions.

We have been lucky to be supported by our community with donations, both of time and money but in the coming years we will need to raise more money to secure the hall's future and that is where we need your help in suggesting other revenue streams.

Finally, I need to say an enormous thank you to the committee, we have worked hard this year and perhaps you can't see the fruits of our labour but we hope that we can soon reopen the hall and welcome everyone back.

Jo Hartgill 9/1/21