

Elford Village Hall

Report to the Parish Meeting: May 2021 to May 2022.

1) Introduction

This is obviously the first *parish meeting* since 2019 but I would confirm that Elford Village Hall has prepared annual reports in both May 2020 and May 2021 and therefore this report literally covers the last 12 months.

There is a slightly complicated reporting system for *the Village Hall* as an annual report is prepared in November for the AGM and then again 6 months later for the parish meeting thus involving two reports a year.

2) Covid restrictions

So unlike the previous report this period is only partially affected by the Covid crisis.

EVH belongs to ACRE (*action with communities in rural England*) who have during the pandemic provided very comprehensive and useful information and guidelines for Village Hall's. Consequently at each stage we've known exactly what we could/couldn't do and actions that need to be taken. Needless to say this limited the use of the Hall not only due to Covid lockdowns but later with a lack of confidence and therefore demand. Nevertheless there have been times during this period when we have almost got back to normal.

3) Administration

Nevertheless through the whole of this period there has been a need to continue with the management, maintenance and financial aspects of the hall. Since the beginning of the year meetings have been back on the traditional monthly basis however much of the management during the second half of 2021 was still being done online although we did manage to have 3 face-to-face meetings.

The *biennial general meeting* was an open meeting held in November 2021 in the village hall and this was followed by the annual review meeting.

We are indebted to Richard Embury who has managed to introduce an "online calendar" for the use of committee members which has proved invaluable during these strange times.

Minutes of each meeting are available from the secretary

4) Maintenance

Sadly maintenance has not stopped for Covid. Routine repairs and checks have continued to include the 5 yearly electrical certificate, PAT testing, servicing of the alarm, lift and ongoing seasonal gardening.

Cyclical items have included the cleaning of the carpets and external decoration.

The Wi-Fi has been repaired and a timer installed for the constantly flowing urinals (it's a glamorous life).

We've had an external monitoring system installed for the burglar alarm which now alerts members of the committee on the odd occasion the alarm sounds. This in the past has led to some unpleasantness when there was a lack of comprehension that not one member of the committee was in earshot of the alarm and there was a misconception that we were able to deal with it with ESP.

Repairs include the relaying of the dangerous path to the post office door and replacement of a large number of fence panels. The latter has become of some concern as some of the damage is not of natural causes and future monitoring will be needed to ascertain any future culprits especially as the maintenance of the boundary fencing is not strictly speaking the responsibility of the Village Hall committee.

However of great concern that has occupied the time of the committee has been the gradual deterioration of the existing heating system. The ground source heat pump was installed 14 years ago and in fairness has served us well as cutting edge technology. This serves a system of underfloor pipes.

Unfortunately one of the pumps is now-defunct and the other one is on its last legs neither of which are repairable. In the meantime we have returned to the original Electric heaters as back up heating but these are by no means inexpensive and of course will get more costly. In considering the replacement pumps we have been made aware of the fragility of both the underground system in the car park and the underfloor system suggesting that we should not rely on either in considering replacements.

The committee as a result are involved in a lot of research and decision-making but whichever choice is made there is still a likely cost in the region of £30-£40,000. The committee have made some provisions aware that this day would come but there will still need to be a level of fundraising, grant application and we have also approached the parish council for a contribution from the CIL money.

5) Events

Back in March 2020 there was a full plan of events all of which naturally had to be cancelled.

However we managed to resurrect an earlier planned *skittle night* which was eventually held on Saturday The 26th of March of this year and a good night was had by all after two year hiatus. It was an active bar, fish and chip supper and winning team. Many thanks to the committee but especially to Ben and Alex for their MC work.

A similar preplanned "*murder mystery*" evening is still scheduled for the autumn.

As a partial custodian of the scarecrow festival we are conscious with the cancellation of the 2021 event the next scarecrow weekend is scheduled for 2023 if there is a desire for this event to be held.

6) Finances

Again we are deeply indebted to our treasurer Adrian Viles who keeps a very comprehensive set of management accounts, cash flow and P&L figures. These are produced on a monthly basis with annual accounts in April.

I would confirm that these are presently up-to-date and have all been submitted to the charities commission. This April figures have been completed and are presently being audited.

Due to prudent management and some Covid grants the hall has remained solvent during these last difficult periods.

7) Committee

The committee comprises a group of hard-working villagers who come together to manage, maintain, police, market and fund raise for the Village Hall.

Furthermore there are groups of *representatives* from various bodies in the village who act as a two-way conduit for information.

The main committee is a diverse group of parishioners ranging in geographical location in the village, age spread over 35 years with new and long-standing members with a range of different skills.

We have this year said goodbye to Phil Turley as a parish council representative but welcomed Nick Biden as his replacement. We have also recruited Lindsey Embury as a semi co-opted part time member responsible for grant research.

However with the ever increasing workload it has been difficult for one person to deal with all aspects of booking which includes dealing with initial enquiries, Show rounds, and an enormous amount of paperwork, chasing up and then the apparent responsibility of opening and closing the hall: As such this has turned into a part-time "caretakers" job and the recruitment of someone to help (and not necessarily be a full member of the committee) has now become a priority before the system breaks.

8) Thank you

As usual but with no less important I'd like to take this opportunity in this report to thank the many people who have supported the Village Hall and indeed myself as chairman of this committee over the last year.

To all the members of the committee for their continued hard work and commitment and their respective wives and husbands for their part in helping us to run events. With this in mind I particularly mention Sarah Embury's support to the committee. Allied members such as Philip Jeynes on the website and Roger Kent on the fire alarm together with all our representatives of village bodies who liaise with this committee over the last year.

This is a great facility well equipped and I would like to think well-managed in the centre of our village: some 14 years after the total rebuild we must be careful not to just take it for granted.

Gregory J Watkins

Chairman: Elford Village Hall management committee (2001 to 2022)