

Westhorpe Village Hall Committee
Report to the Annual Parish Meeting August 27th 2020

The use and popularity of the Village Hall continued to grow following the last Annual Parish meeting.

Regular bookings for Yoga, Art Club, Line Dancing, Carpet Bowls, Craft Club, Pilates, Childrens' Dance, Games Night, Gardening Club and Film Night continued. The Tai Chi classes which had just commenced at the time of the last report continued twice each week. Regular Singing for Pleasure sessions commenced in September. Weekly Zumba classes started in January 2020. Weekly Sound Bath sessions, which help to induce a more relaxed state of mind, started in February. Most of these activities were well attended and many had increasing numbers. The Rural Coffee Caravan continued to host coffee, tea and chat meet-ups at the village hall where a wide range of information about various support systems is always available.

The number of one-off events continued to grow. There were several Friends and Neighbours events, some with added attractions such as a Book Swap, a fund raiser for Macmillan and a birthday celebration. A Big Lunch was held in the summer. There were bookings for private celebrations, a concert by Phoenix music group, a reflexologists' conference, individual dance practice, curling sessions, a history meeting and a tea following a confirmation service at the Church presided over by the Bishop of Ipswich and St Edmundsbury. November was a busy month with a popular Open Mic night, a successful Art and Craft Club exhibition plus sale and an excellent pop up breakfast. In December there was a children's Christmas party and one woman theatre production about a Country midwife where we served mulled wine and mince pies.

We have maintained our link with the Friends of Finningham Committee although we have had two disappointments on that front. We had a stand at their summer fete which had a seaside theme. In keeping with many British seaside experiences it rained - a lot - and so was very poorly attended. Then in September, the planned joint disco with fish and chip supper had to be cancelled due to poor support.

The hall provides an important venue for more formal purposes such as elections, Parish Council meetings and Village Hall Committee meetings. This year it was also used for a consultation on a planning application for a piece of building land in the village.

We have continued to offer help and advice to several other village hall committees wanting to refurbish or replace their halls. The Big Lottery finally requested a report on the success of our project which we were delighted to submit. The construction of the Village Hall, its maintenance and smooth running are due to the fantastic teamwork and reliability of many volunteers, not only committee members but other members of the community too.

We ended the financial year on March 31st 2020 in a sound financial position. The Village Hall lottery has continued to be very successful and provides approximately enough income to cover our annual insurance premium. Income from hiring and various events exceeded expenditure and has enabled us to increase our contingency fund. In addition we were very fortunate to receive a Locality Award from our District Councillor, Andy Mellen, for the replacement of some essential equipment.

Sadly we had to close the hall on March 16th due to the risks of Coronavirus infection. We were allowed to open again in July. After many hours spent poring through official guidance on opening safely and writing documents relevant to our hall we welcomed Art Club back on July 13th. We had been closed for 119 days. We have received a very generous Government grant through Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Council; such grants are to help small businesses whose income is drastically reduced or stopped due to the current emergency. The grant will help enormously in a difficult year.

We are making the first tentative steps towards making the hall a safe but vital and vibrant part of our community again.

Sue Hull. Chairman