

2020 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome to the 2020 AGM - the year has been a baptism of fire for us all, Users, Trustees, the Village as a whole and beyond; no-one has escaped the turmoil of 2020.

However, life, as they say, does go on. And as time progresses, so opportunities arise, and the Management Committee's job has been to remain alert and take advantage of such options that do appear and to get on with it.

'It' has sometimes been hard to define, but we began the year in November 2019 full of ideas and plans - a new Building Task Group, co-ordinated by John Dowsett, was quickly formed to oversee the management of the Improvement of the Village Hall plan - as agreed at a rather well attended EGM in February. A change of building focus had become possible following one particularly significant new donation, which in turn seemed to encourage other generous donations.

And, as we knew more funding would inevitably be required as we proceeded, so a Community Fundraising Task Group was set up under the leadership of Chris Drake & Mella Worley.

Finally, it was determined that the plan to get a grip on our Governance (as promised last AGM) should be paramount so that we could increase User Organisation engagement and put the records straight for the future. We, and when I say 'we' I really mean largely Ian Pentland, have updated our Deed, had the changes approved by the Charity Commission, the result of which is now available to read online at: www.marnhullvillagehall.org.uk/activities

And then, Covid-19 struck us all hard and fast in March. No active Users, little income (except for the generosity of a few and a later Government Covid Grant specifically for Village Halls), a closed building allowing virtually no opportunities to fundraise and no ability to activate our building project. Then, the sun shone and shone - good for all us lucky people with a garden to maintain and enjoy; not so much fun if you lived in a flat with no balcony.

Undeterred, the trustees - now increasing in number - reached the only obvious conclusion, with the support of the current Users to keep the Hall closed in the longer-term and allow the chosen Contractor to begin work as soon as Government Guidance allowed. Of course, the other ingredient has been the supply of building materials, which Calcott's have managed well, although this, at times, must have been 'difficult' - to put it mildly. And then there was the moving of the dreaded gas pipe.

Building Project Group - you will hear more from John very shortly as this meeting develops. But John will be the first to say, but I want to get in first, a huge

'thank you' to his team of Peter McErlain, Andy Webb and Julie Reeves. I attend most of these meetings as liaison with the Committee and can inform you their work ethic is astonishing.

Community Fundraising Group - resourceful people make up this extraordinary team (Chris, Mella, Ann & Jean) and a fantastic following of choristers and other villagers. Without a building to work in, this team arranged not one but two takeaway/Drive-in Picnics. One wet, one dry. More slabs than will ever be laid on the Terrace were 'sold' raising lots of money for the fund, the vendors too played their part donating a generous 10% of takings and then there was the ever-welcome outdoor Bar.

The Garden Café, lead and organised by Helen Butler, was another inspired idea that served two purposes 1) it encouraged us all to begin to mix again (all, socially distanced, carefully choreographed and proper) and 2) raised yet more for the Fund.

The year has not been as quiet as it may appear - lots going on behind the scenes. Just a quick overview: the start of a set of Village Hall policies (Alan Loukes), Revised Risk Assessments/Health & Safety/Fire Officer for the building (Steve Finch), Covid-19 Risk Assessment (Chris Gassmann), we have a new Facilities Officer to oversee the fabric of the building (Peter McErlain), we have a new website Administrator (Rob Norton - in addition to his work as Treasurer), new Bookings Secretary with new Terms & Conditions (Esther Finch). Tina has, of course, continued to look after the building and has done so on a somewhat limited basis throughout the pandemic (soon to change) and we thank her for her unswerving dedication.

The completion of the building work approaches and, as I write this, we hope to be in the Hall & Pavilion at some point in mid/late December for a Covid deep clean, readying the facilities for use once more - albeit in a limited way to start with. By the time of the AGM, more news should be available and the work on the Terrace should have begun in earnest.

It remains to say a huge thank you to all User Organisations and would-be Users and their members for their patience over the past months. I also want to thank Stephen Boyce for his unswerving support in advising and dealing with several vital 'corporate' Grants and especially, in more recent times, the Village Hall Improvement Grant (HMRC). Thanks also to Lesley for so ably representing the Parish Council at our Management Committee meetings and my fellow Trustees for all their hard work and support over the past year, namely: Rob, Jean, Peter, John, Steve, Chris, Dave and Alan.