

CHAIRMAN'S AGM REPORT 2025

As Judith said last year, it has been an interesting year, and I have found my first year as Chair somewhat challenging. I would like to record my thanks to Judith for her many years input into the village hall, and am grateful to her for agreeing to continue as vice chair, so that I can tap into her wealth of experience.

The village hall was built in 1999, and is starting to show signs of age. A lot of time has been spent in assessing what we can do to update the hall, and to make it an inviting and safe place in future years.

Our major expenditure this year was the installation of solar panels. They sit on the reverse south facing slope of the roof, and are barely visible to adjoining households. Whilst it is early days, analysis of costs suggests our electricity costs have reduced though we do not think it cost effective to acquire batteries for storage.

Our second major acquisition was a dishwasher. The reports on its usage are mixed. It certainly appears to wash glasses and cutlery well, but there are mixed reports on crockery and plates. We will continue to monitor its usage and operation.

Early in the year, we resolved to erect post and rail fencing along the boundary with the Spitfire Homes Development. Spitfire's groundworks contractor Shannonside had removed the hedge, and should have replaced it. We contacted Shannonside, who referred us to Spitfire Homes. Despite numerous letters and emails, Spitfire failed to reply to any communication. The costs of bringing a claim in the end could not be justified. Shannonside also filled in part of the boundary ditch, apparently without any culverting and we continue to monitor water levels in the ditch.

The front door required attention early in the year; a handrail was fitted to the wall adjoining the stage, uneven paving slabs were relaid; defibrillator ads were acquired; and the foyer and corridor were repainted. A number of other routine maintenance items were undertaken.

A health and safety review of the premises was carried out and this highlighted a number of items that required attention, and some that would benefit action. Additional external lighting was installed, the main hall sidelights were replaced with more energy efficient downlighters, a new chandelier in the foyer was installed, and various spotlights were replaced. The replacement of uneven paving to the front and rear is under consideration as is the surfacing of the gravelled area of car park, and the removal of trip hazards in the car park.

The hall was used as an emergency centre in November when houses in the village were likely to be potentially flooded. It is an integral part of the village disaster plan.

During the year, we have renewed our contract with Gigaclear for internet, albeit at an increased price, we have cancelled the contract with Cathedral Hygiene, and we have negotiated new electricity contracts, at a favourable rate.

Much of the cost associated with the above works have been funded from s 106 moneys which West Northamptonshire Council finally got round to dealing with after some 9 months delay.

The grounds have been kept neat and tidy under a contract by Mel Payne, and we thank him for his work.

We have managed to keep within budget over the year, but to meet projected costs. In the coming year, we have had to increase booking fees from January 2025 to non village organisations.

Our bookings continue to go well, subject to the usual monthly variations. I would like to thank our hall manager Chrissie Key for all her efforts in keeping the hall running smoothly, despite all the trials and tribulations she has to face. We did agree a job description, which highlighted the hours that Chrissie puts in, and we have during the year agreed a greater number of hours remuneration.

My thanks go to David for his hard work in keeping us on the straight and narrow, and in particular for managing to finally close our account with Santander, after us trying for over 4 years! We also closed our small account with Scottish Widows, with much greater ease, and to change the Barclays mandate.

I would also like to thank Phil Beeston for the work he has put in, in a number of areas, but particularly dealing with health and safety issue and energy comparisons.

During the year, sadly our secretary Catherine Billingham stood down. We thank her for her efforts over the past year. After a small hiatus, we are pleased to have Nicky Pacito as our new secretary, and thank her for stepping into the breach.

I have also been advised that Jenny Massingham will not be seeking to continue, and I would like to thank her for her input into then committee over many years.

I have also been advised that Doreen Hartwell will also be standing down at the AGM. Even Doreen cannot recall exactly when she joined the committee, but she has many years of service under her belt, and of course, besides being a committee member she was secretary for very many years. Her wisdom and expertise will be sorely missed, and I thank her for all she has done for the hall.