

AYLMERTON VILLAGE HALL

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

12 April 2016

It's pleasing to report that the Village Hall Committee has had another successful year. Importantly, all the targets we set ourselves have been achieved, but we did encounter some significant problems along the way.

At last year's Annual Parish Meeting I mentioned that Worthingham Plant Hire had just arrived on site to commence levelling the playing field, which was funded in part by a grant of £1,000 from Norfolk Playing Fields Association, a donation of £800 from the Parish Council Youth Fund and a grant from NNDC Big Society of £3,500. However, work came to an abrupt halt when Worthingham struck the protective covering to high and low voltage cables less than 18 inches below the surface. Urgent site meetings with UK Power Networks revealed that the cables supplying the sewerage pumping station in Church Road had not been installed either in the agreed location or at a safe depth. The cable trench had to be partially re-sited and the supply isolated to the lower part of the village before the cables could be re-connected. Statutory notices had to be issued to residents for disconnection of the electricity supply, resulting in Worthingham Plant being off site for over three weeks. This delay subsequently affected the germination of the newly sown grass seed.

The disturbance to soil levels required to overcome the six feet slope also meant that the grass has taken much longer to become established. The playing field had to be out of bounds for the horticultural show and was only just about ready in time for the Fete in August. Add to that the effect of an extremely wet winter and the playing field is only now approaching a point where it can be put back to its full use.

Whist Worthingham were on site we took the opportunity to get them to fill in the redundant septic tanks in playing field and thus do away with three manhole inspection covers that had always posed something of a safety hazard. The soakaways to the rainwater down pipes were also re-constructed to make them more efficient.

We obtained a grant of £10,000 from Awards For All, National Lottery to re-roof flat roofs to the kitchen and the Jubilee Room, the latter clearly being on the point of failure. We took the opportunity of installing insulation between the roof joists to both rooms, not only to save on energy bills but to make the rooms warmer in winter and cooler in summer.

We were aware that significant quantities of rainwater had been ponding on the flat roof of the Jubilee Room and, to avoid this situation in the future, a slight slope has been introduced to shed the water.

The plasterboard ceiling to the Jubilee room has since been skimmed by Kevin Massingham in the village in order to improve its appearance and the ceiling has been redecorated.

The energy saving improvements that have been carried out in recent years now means that the income generated from our solar roof panels is sufficient to meet the entire cost of lighting and heating the Hall for a year and still give us a financial surplus of about £160. This has enabled us to hold our hire rates for the past few years to £7 per hour, which is of considerable benefit to the clubs, societies, businesses and individuals who hire the Hall.

The chain link fence fronting the children's play area has recently been removed by volunteers following complaints from residents that it was unsightly and detracted from the views of the village sign. A new picket fence was erected, again by volunteers, which has improved the street

scene considerably. All that remains is to secure the play area by installing a gate to match the railings around the village sign and to erect a seat beside it. NNDC have confirmed that this work can be funded by monies left over from the grant for the Parish Plan which became redundant several years ago.

The Committee acquired a second hand projector and screen to test whether there was sufficient support in the village for a film club. This has proved to be a popular event and we have since upgraded our equipment with a Blu-ray DVD player and projector, complete with a cinema-experience sound system. The improvement in the quality of the sound and picture has been very well received by the Members of the Film Club. To avoid paying copyright fees, the Club operates on a non-profit making basis. The current annual subscription for the 20 members stands at only £2.50 a year, and with complimentary tea or coffee, it has to be just about the best value cinema experience in the county. If you haven't tried it do come along. Films are held on the last Friday of each month at 7pm.

Lettings at the Hall continue to steadily increase year on year and now exceed £2,000 a year.

Fund raising events are still immensely important, particularly the Fete and Horticultural Show, although both are very much weather dependant. Quizzes, Race Nights and the Easter Hot Cross Bun Event are well supported and bring in a valuable contribution.

There remains an urgent and increasing need for a car park for the Village Hall. The monthly meetings of the North East Norfolk Bird Club attract upwards of 60 people, most of whom arrive by car with nowhere to park. The venue is ideal for them in all respects apart from a the lack of somewhere safe to park.

Steps are in hand to install a secure steel storage container behind the shed, as we are short of storage space. This will also house a ride-on mower which hopefully will be acquired jointly by the Parish Council, St John's and the Village Hall, to enable grass to be cut much more efficiently at the playing field, the area at the back of the pond and the churchyard, all of which fall under the remit of the Parish Council.

Meanwhile a thank you to the Parish Council for their contribution this year towards the upkeep of the playing field. It's much appreciated.

I would like to conclude by saying a big thank you to the dedicated members of the Village Hall Committee, as well as a number of volunteers, who regularly turn their hand to a variety of tasks to help improve the Village Hall. Without your help we simply couldn't continue to carry out the improvements to the Hall which we are all able to enjoy.

I believe I speak on behalf of the Committee when I say that the ever closer co-operation between organisations in the village is proving to be of increasing benefit to our rural community. Long may it continue.

Thank you for listening to me.

John Rampling
Chairman, of Trustees of Aylmerton Village Hall