

## **Report from the Chairperson of Frithelstock Village Hall Management Committee to the Annual Parish Meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

As is our normal practice we will be having the very brief formal statutory AGM of the Village Hall at the end of this Parish meeting so my report now concerns what has been happening at the Hall and how our finances have fared in the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. Copies of the financial statements for the Hall for the year just ended have been made available to all.

Firstly, as Gill has mentioned, we have to note the sad loss of Jean Short before Xmas. Jean was the Bookings Secretary for the Hall, and represented the Parish Church on the Hall Management Committee, for several decades and made a big contribution to parish life. We are very grateful to Michael for continuing to take Hall bookings and agreeing to take over formally as the Bookings Secretary.

It has been an uneventful year at the Hall with usage still not up to pre-Covid levels. An attempt was made to revive the Rowing Club but that didn't last for very long. Nothing has replaced the WI meetings but a local resident, Fiona Squire, did institute monthly indoor markets at the Hall. These stopped just before Xmas but they are starting up again. Elaine has put on an additional Pilates class and the Monkleigh skittles teams made the decision to use our Skittle alley to hold their home games. We allow one of their organisers to run the Bar in the same way that we do for our Parish teams.

Rental income has continued to recover slowly, up about 14% on last year, but still some way below pre-pandemic averages.

We held a very successful Scrumpy Stroll last May which was attended by over one hundred and twenty people and we also held a Xmas Fun Night and hosted several charity events including a Big Breakfast and a Family Quiz Night for the Playing Field which I am sure Lizzy will tell you about.

Despite inflationary pressures we have held bar prices steady after the modest rise in the autumn of 2022. Bar profits and events income have therefore remained reasonably stable.

Some of the other income figures are affected solely by timing factors. For example, we received two years' worth of donations from the 50 Club in this financial year.

We have had one exceptional amount of income of £2,141. We had been battling for years to get South West Water to close the road and move our water meter onto the Hall property so as to be able to prove that the antiquated meter was faulty and our billed consumption figures totally unrealistic. We eventually achieved this in August last year and with a new meter installed we were able to prove that our consumption was nearer 16 cubic meters a year rather than the exorbitant amounts we were being billed for. We therefore argued for a refund of water charges over the last six years. So far we have received £2,141 and that figure has been put under donations to signify that the claim is not yet settled to our full satisfaction.

Michael Short will report on the 50 club for the year just ended but I take this opportunity to thank Michael for all his efforts in running the Club over very many years, especially as both he and Sylvia have decided to step down from running the Club. Maureen Poole and Colette Henerty have volunteered to take over. We hope to institute a card payment system so as to more easily extract the money from participants in our increasingly cashless society.

On the expenditure side, again there are some anomalies caused simply by timing differences. I mentioned last year the exceptional item of our electricity costs which, being on a business tariff, were uncapped. At the year-end we remained in credit by about £700 but as our fixed term contract was ending we switched from EDF to Eon. Under EDF our costs were predicted to fall to £2,500 but under EON that should be nearer £1,800 which is a substantial saving from the last two years. Our water bill should also fall to under £100.

We have kept general maintenance and capital expenditure to a relatively modest level with no major items except for the new heaters in the Skittle Alley. The issue we have for the near future is still the penetrating damp in the external walls of the Skittle Alley and the Kitchen. We thought this might be cured by renewing the external rendering and we obtained several quotes for this but Stuart, who does our maintenance, has now opened up a hole to reveal that there is no insulation in the cavity wall and so we will now be getting advice and quotes to see if there could be another solution. Once the damp is cured the much needed re-decorating, particularly in the kitchen, can take place.

As a result of all this we have turned a deficit last year of £3,100 into a surplus this year of £1,580. At the year-end we had healthy bank balances of almost £46,000 and we are now benefiting from higher interest rates having placed some funds on fixed deposits.

Our budget for the financial year just started is to have a revenue surplus of approximately £2,000 but the overall result will be dependent on any unforeseen capital expenditure and the cost of fixing the damp issues.

We are so far planning one social event – a Scrumpy Stroll on the Sunday before the Spring Bank Holiday, so it will be the 26th May. More events may be planned for later in the year.

We have heard nothing further about the proposal for two houses to be built just up the road which might have had a positive impact on visibility when exiting the Hall car park.

The change jar on the Bar was cashed up and we have £30 to donate to the Poor's Land Charity and £30 to donate to Parkinson's UK.

Finally, I would like to thank all the members of the Management Committee and the officers for their help over the last year and thanks also to Penny and Stuart for all the cleaning and caretaking at the Hall.

Adrian Green

Chairperson