

Bucklesham and Foxhall Village Hall

Annual Report for year ending 31st Dec 2020

I can report that the Village Hall Committee did not let a little thing like a global pandemic get in the way of protecting the hall again this year and despite the difficulties of losing nearly a whole years bookings, the hall not only survived but thrived.

In March 2020 we lost all of our regular bookings as no groups could meet due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. Once these were lifted in the Summer, understandably, none of the regular groups were willing to return yet. We were approached by two external groups, Baby Sensory and Evolution Karate Academy, who had lost their usual venues and we were therefore able to offer them temporary places while our village groups were on hold.

We spent a lot of time and considerable effort ensuring we were COVID Secure and could reopen to those groups that wanted to – and were allowed – to meet once restrictions were lifted. We undertook a thorough deep clean of the hall and employed a professional company to ‘fog’ the entire area. We attended weekly meetings with Community Action Suffolk via Zoom Conferencing to ensure we were completely up-to-date with all current rules and regulations, and gained knowledge and advice on how to reopen successfully. We completed a thorough Risk Assessment and provided copies to all users. We ensured signage was clear within the hall instructing users how to be COVID Secure. We installed hand sanitising stations at the entrance as well as throughout the hall, and at a separate exit providing a ‘one way’ system. We purchased paper towels for hand drying and disabled the electric hand dryers, replaced all bins with foot-operated pedal bins, and ensured all users of the hall adhered to strict new COVID Secure Hire Agreements. Among several conditions, this special Hire Agreement states that all users thoroughly clean all ‘touch points’ before and after they use the hall. Our fantastic member of staff, Bridget, took on far more than ever before and committed to thoroughly clean the hall before and after each booking.

Both guest groups were so pleased with the facilities at the hall, particularly the efforts made to be COVID Secure, that they asked if they could have a permanent place as regular bookings. We owe a huge thank you to the Church Lunch and the Knit and Natter Group for very kindly agreeing to swap their own meeting days to accommodate this. This generous act, which we know did

inconvenience some, will allow us to rearrange the bookings timetable and make best use of the available slots. The Village Hall is not financially viable without the bookings from outside groups. The understanding shown by the Lunch Club and Knit and Natter has meant that we can now permanently offer Baby Sensory and Evolution Karate Academy their previously temporary slots. These two groups generate an income for the hall of £7,200 per year. These bookings will allow us to keep the cost of hiring the hall so low for villagers.

With support from the Grants Officers at Suffolk Community Foundation we successfully received 14 Grants to help with loss of income, for projects to ensure we were COVID Secure, and to continue with our renovation projects. Some Grants paid for the hall hire for a year in advance for specific groups. We are particularly grateful to the Bucklesham Parish Council, Bucklesham's District Councillors Richard Kerry and Mellissa Allen, Foxhall's District Councillors Ed Thompson and Chris Blundell, and our County Councillor Patricia O'Brien, not only for their generous grants but also for their support.

Our Expenditure this year was £16,533.46, however this was covered by income from the Grants which was £18,668, and from the two new groups hiring the hall. We moved the considerable East Suffolk Council Business Support Grants into our Saving Account to keep as a reserve should the loss of income prove to be unsustainable. We had many significant outgoings on maintenance, all paid for with the various grants, including further refurbishment of the kitchen, a newly built cleaning cupboard and renovation of the old space for the Toddler Group, and a considerable project of the renovation of the Committee Room. We also replaced the old, leaking oil tank with a brand new tank and digital reader for monitoring the level of oil.

A full breakdown of the accounts has been recorded for all to see the continued success of the hall in 2020. The hall had a surplus of income over expenditure of £8,286.89. This is in reserves as an insurance in case of future lockdown restrictions impacting on hall hire.

To sum up: the year 2020 ended with a bank balance of £16,762.38, compared to the balance at the start of year of £8,475.29. This success is due to the dedicated Committee who work together as a great team to protect our fantastic community hub for the whole village, our brilliant member of staff, Bridget, and the 14 grants we were successfully able to secure from various funds.

Evelyn Bloomfield, Chairman ~ February 2021