

Leavenheath Village Hall Management Committee report for APCM

Wednesday 7th May 2025

It has been a challenging year for the village hall having to find ways to replace both Paul Mortlock and Ladybirds.

While not being able to find replacement activities to fill all the time slots that we now have available, we have secured some interesting sessions that are helping our finances, while providing some alternatives for the community. These include Tai Chi, Yoga and chair based 'exercise' sessions.

Unfortunately we haven't been able to find a means to re-start the cinema, but we will endeavour to do so. The declining patron numbers, plus the high licence fees per film-showing meant that it became uneconomic. In addition, we have an ageing and unreliable sound system, plus a projector that falls short of modern standards.

We have now also lost the carpet bowls club, but in winding it up, their constitution meant that any outstanding balance would have to be paid into the Village Hall Account. This does have the proviso that it should be put to an improved sound system, which we are looking into.

The committee has looked into the feasibility of becoming a parcel collection/drop off facility in the form of InPost Lockers. They sent a surveyor to look at our site – he thought the Village Hall was an ideal location. We are currently seeking legal advice, but if we go ahead with this scheme, it would generate a guaranteed income for the Village Hall with no cost to us. This is a project that was identified by one of our new committee members, and demonstrates the benefit of fresh thinking.

Indeed, we are very fortunate to have gained four new committee members during the course of the year. However, Sally Whitelaw is stepping back from some of her routine work but will, thankfully, continue to see through the ongoing negotiations we are enmeshed in, for which we are very grateful!

Two of our new committee members are disabled, and this has focussed minds on the poor disabled access into the hall. We have applied for, and been successful, in getting some funding toward this project, and hope to begin the improvement work over the summer. The initial works won't resolve all of the issues we have identified, but we hope that other funding can be sourced in the future to complete the necessary works.

The committee are also looking into the process of finding grant funding for a solar panel array. Our Hall has the perfect roof for this, and while there will be a large initial outlay, the payback time is estimated to be less than 10 years, so a viable project, but reliant on grant money.

So, although we have faced some challenges over the last year, the committee does have a number of ideas moving forward, and are working on a 'business plan' so that there is less risk of a piecemeal approach to Hall requirements for the future.