

St Mary Bourne Village Centre

(Registered Charity No. 301936)

Chairman's Report for the Annual General Meeting to be held on 1st March 2023

The Village Centre is a registered charity that was established by a trust deed in 1952 with the object of providing and maintaining a village hall for the use and enjoyment of people living in the parish of St Mary Bourne and surrounding area. Our aim is to provide local people with facilities that they want to use, so feedback from our users and new ideas for using the facilities are always welcome.

Our AGM is an appropriate time, for me personally and on behalf of the local community, to publicly thank the people involved in the running of the Village Centre and those who run activities in it on our behalf. These people are the mainstay of the Village Centre, and their efforts are very much appreciated.

The Village Centre is run by a management committee of six volunteers, four of which are the charity's trustees (myself, Mel Cavell-Wells, Mike Case and Oli Madge). The other committee members are Michael Widén (who manages our invoicing) and Angela Cook (who manages our bookings and enquiries). Mel is our treasurer and manages our finances, Mike is our secretary and Oli is our health and safety officer. Thank you all for everything that you do.

In October we presented Ray Randall with a garden chair to thank him for many decades of excellent service to the Village Centre as caretaker and committee member. His knowledge of how everything works and what needs doing and when has been a great asset and he is sorely missed. He has more than earned his retirement and we hope that he is able to spend lots of time relaxing in his chair and enjoying his garden. I was very pleased that Ray agreed to be our guest of honour to reveal the magnolia tree planted to celebrate the late Queen's platinum jubilee; as a strong royal supporter he was just the right person for this.

The Village Centre trustees are elected for a period of 5 years and are ultimately responsible for the running of the charity, however most decisions are made by the management committee. All trustees have first been members of the committee to find out what we do before taking on the extra responsibilities of a trustee. The management committee meets quarterly, and the trustees usually have a couple of additional meetings, so there is not a large time commitment and joining the committee is a good opportunity to give something back to your community. The current members have been on the committee for many years and some of us feel it is time to hand on responsibility for this community asset. I know it's time to go when I've lost count of how many of these reports I've written! I said this last year, but it really is vital now that the next generation step up and get involved so that we have new candidates to become trustees before any of us is next up for re-election in 2025.

A big thank you to Lorna Hancock for another year of running the Community Library which is open in the Club Room each Saturday morning. Lorna does a great job of rotating the books on offer so there is always a good selection to choose from.

The Film is increasing in popularity, maybe in part because people have now become re-accustomed to going out after the pandemic, and it has been really encouraging to see bigger audiences. Michael, Angie and Jo Oram have been a great help with keeping these screenings of current and popular films going and it wouldn't happen without them. If there is anyone out there who would be interested in taking on running the film evenings and would like to find out what it entails, we would love to hear from you.

In June the Watermill Theatre returned to the Recreation Ground with their outdoor touring production of Camp Albion and a good crowd enjoyed the excellent performance. We are pleased to have them coming for a third time on Tuesday 20th June with their production of Mansfield Park. Full details will appear in Hill & Valley soon. Thanks to Michael for managing the box office and front of house for these productions and to the Parish Council for allowing the use of the Recreation Ground and the Pavilion.

We continued the pantomime tradition by hosting a well-attended Bumblefly touring production of The Snow Queen in December and a good time was had by all. We hope to have a pantomime this Christmas season too.

From 2nd to 5th June 2022 we celebrated an historic royal first with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and many of the celebratory events were held in or organised by the Village Centre, starting with the lighting of a jubilee beacon and ending with a big lunch and commemorative drone "70" photo on the Rec. Basingstoke and Deane provided a £500 grant for this with the balance being funded by the Village Centre plus a donation from the Community Hub.

2022 was more of a return to normal after two years that were significantly disrupted by the pandemic. We are grateful to all of our regular hirers and appreciate their continued support. Hiring for one off events and celebrations have continued to return to usual levels too. The Parish Council's hiring of the Club Room for their parish office reduced after March as the Club Room became a temporary home for Ninny's House at Home nursery, followed by it being a temporary home for the Village Shop whilst their building was extended and upgraded to accommodate a café and more selling space. We have been grateful for the income from these hirings to help us get back on an even keel following the big cut in our income caused by the pandemic. It is also good that we have been able to support these local amenities which serve our community, without significantly affecting the availability of our facilities for others.

We budget to make a small surplus each year as we are a charity and not running a profit-making business. Any surplus we make is invested in maintaining and improving the facilities. Our budget for 2022 was conservative following the uncertainties brought about by Covid and , due to the difficulty in getting planned work done during the pandemic , we knew there would be a significant spend in 2022. We ended the year with a deficit against budget of £11,500, which we are comfortable with as this is more than matched by surpluses in recent years and in line with what we expected.

We do our best to manage things to keep our hire rates as reasonable as we can and, following a review of our charges and unavoidable expenses in the Autumn, we decided that we had to increase our hire rates effective 1st April to try to keep pace with our ever-increasing costs. It was decided before we knew what the true impact of the energy price increase would be and, having now had electricity bills covering recent months, it is worrying to see how massively our unavoidable costs have increased.

After years of research and waiting for better technology, we finally managed to replace the main hall lighting system at the beginning of January, Thanks to Mike Case for seeing this through, it was not all plain sailing and required a degree of patience! This was a major outlay for us but as it had been budgeted for in our Reserves Policy, we had the funds to meet it. We have replaced both large commercial fridges in the kitchen and spent a fair amount on routine maintenance, including trying to get to the bottom of the issues with the heating system, particularly in the main hall, which (dare I say it!) finally seem to be resolved.

Even after that spending, we continue to hold a prudent level of capital as we know that there are more projects that we will need this for in the relatively short term. We have identified that a large part of that capital will be needed to fund planned/expected expenditure on the fabric of the building and replacement equipment in the next few years and so it is to be regarded as expected expenditure and not free reserves. Stripping, re-rendering and painting the exterior of the Club Room and external woodwork generally will be a major expense. We are also looking to replace the main hall curtains, replace the round window in the main hall and buy more chairs. These items will involve considerable expenditure and we are lucky to have the funds to finance them.

This is your community facility and could be the perfect venue if you are planning a party or other celebration, a meeting, a theatrical event, a sporting or recreational activity, an exhibition or any other event that the Village Centre could accommodate. Our website (www.stmarybourne.co.uk) shows the facilities we have on offer and what they cost to hire, lists clubs currently using the Centre and has all necessary contact details. We often have a piece in Hill and Valley and also publicise events on the Bourne Valley signposts on Facebook.

We welcome feedback or other comments or suggestions about the Village Centre so if you have any please let me or another member of the management committee know.

Karen Crofts
Chairman