

Chairperson's Report AGM 2021

It is with a heavy heart that I have to begin this report with the news that Suzanne Barker has resigned from her post as our Halls Manager due to health problems.

Suzanne has asked me to read out a letter on her behalf at this meeting and I shall do that now before I continue with my report.

Suzanne has been our mainstay throughout the past year and in the times before, ensuring that bookings have been organised and the spaces in our halls have been rendered safe for our groups. I cannot stress too much the debt of gratitude we all owe to Suzanne for all she has done for us over the past few years. She will be an extremely hard act to follow.

The exemplary manner in which she has carried out her duties has been just fantastic and so many people have reason to be grateful for all that she has done for them personally and for the Trust in general.

I too am so grateful for the support she has given me this year. Her cheerful, bright presence in the Parish Hall has been a real tonic whenever I have gone to see her and I have truly valued her opinion and advice.

Latterly, her duties have been undertaken by Judy Wilthew and Val Thompson, to whom we are indebted for their work in fulfilling Suzanne's place in village life.

This year's lockdown has been extremely frustrating for everyone connected with the Village Hall Trust.

Early in the year we could not promote activities in either hall but, since May, we have been able to open up cautiously and start providing services and meeting places for the village community.

We have reopened our Café in the Village Hall which is now held in the Supper Room. The number of people attending has slowly begun to increase since September and it provides a focal point for members of the community to come in on either a Monday or Friday and have a chinwag with friends for a couple of hours in a safe environment. I must express my grateful thanks to Eileen Carew and Pam Bridges, and their cast of volunteers, for taking on the responsibility for ensuring its smooth running every week.

Other groups have gradually begun to meet again. The Film Club, the Tuesday 'Drop In', Badminton, Bridge and Mortal Fools Youth Theatre, to mention but a few, are now back in full swing and I look forward to the proposed resurgence of the Choral Society and the Drama Club in the coming months. Linda Shepherd's Exercise Classes resumed in May and the Art Club held an exhibition in September. There are also new ventures to mention, notably the 'Sound Baths' held in October and, perhaps, to be repeated.

In other news, we have signed up to the 2021 Village Halls Domesday Book and, thanks to Colin Craig-Gilby who keeps our website constantly updated, our halls are now on the Northumberland Village Halls Portal website, allowing the general public to access information about our halls and their facilities online.

At the Parish Hall, essential tree felling and a general tidy up at the site were completed and, during lockdown, the Supper Room and the stage front in the hall were 'spruced up'.

The electrical and fire checks in both halls were carried out in accordance with insurance requirements and outside, the Garden Invaders continued to maintain the environs of the Halls and we are extremely grateful for their efforts.

Sadly, the lovely oak tree behind the Millennium Hall was the subject of an independent safety report in March this year. The conclusion of the report was that, erring on the side of caution, the tree should be 'removed forthwith'. This confirmed the professional advice the Trust had twice received in April and August 2020.

The work to the tree was arranged for April but, as a result of an objection to this essential work to safeguard life and buildings, we had to postpone the operation. After prolonged and lengthy consultations involving lawyers and Insurance Loss Adjusters, the Trust has been given the go-ahead by the Insurers to remove the tree and this work will be carried out as soon as is practicable.

As far as the buildings are concerned, the Maintenance Group has undertaken a survey of both halls looking at ways to improve ventilation on the sites and its recommendations have been discussed and approved by the Trustees. The work will be undertaken in the near future. I would like to thank Graham Walmsley, Bill Law and Colin Craig-Gilby for their time and support on this project.

With regard to fundraising, Linda Shepherd organised the Jumble Sale in October and the Craft Fair in November, both of which brought in substantial amounts. Thank you, Linda.

We have been the recipients of several financial grants from the County Council and the Parish Council which have been vital in keeping the halls viable during this difficult time. We are sincerely grateful for this support.

We have also just been awarded National Lottery Community Fund to upgrade our audio-visual facilities.

Going forward, Graham Walmsley has proposed that we conduct a viability study and this will be a project for the coming year.

Other issues for the new Board of Trustees to consider should, in my opinion, include:

The employment of a new Halls Manager

The appointment of a new Treasurer

The extension of the lease for the Parish Hall

A review of the letting of the Parish Hall flat

It is impossible to thank every individual for their help, advice and support since the last AGM, such is the commitment of members of our community to offer their services to ensure the smooth running of the Trust. I would, however, give special mention to Suzanne and Ian Barker, Judy Wilthew, Philip Latham, David McKenzie and Colin Craig-Gilby for their ideas, enthusiasm and tireless work.

Finally, we should soon fully transfer to CIO status with a smaller number of Trustees, which should make the running of the Trust even smoother. In short, the Trust is in good health and should be looking to the future with great confidence.

**Report of Treasurer on accounts for year ending 31st August 2021
presented at AGM held on 24th November 2020 at 7.00pm**

The Balance Sheet that has signed as examined against the financial records by a chartered accountant is presented to the Trustees.

1. Overall Funds

The accounts indicate that the net funds held in the RMVHT bank account have been increased in the year to 31st August by £19, 929 to £62,188.

2. Impact of one-off income

However, the main contribution to this increase has been funds in the Grants and Donations category which has offset the significant loss of normal trading income caused by the COVID 19 opening restrictions.

2.1 The Grants & Donations received are set out on the Balance sheet and total £25,497.92

2.2 We should be particularly grateful for these Grants and Donations because they mitigate the significant drop in normal trading income.

However, my view is that:

- i. it would be a mistake to rely on similar funds being available in years to come and
- ii. RMVHT should seek to preserve a prudent proportion of these funds against potential future crises and/or liabilities.

Concern was raised at the recent trustees meeting as to the future financial viability of the RMVHT.

I agree that that is a concern unless trading income and fund raising can be improved.

3. Principal reductions in income in 2020/2021:

3.1-£5,891.14 - Income for the hire of the 2 halls (reduced to £5,914 from £11,805.14)

3.2-£2,550.24 - Café/Shop Income (reduced to £5,545.50 from £8,095.74)

3.3- £4,480.42 - Special Events Income (reduced to £160 from £4,640.42)

Against that backdrop (and the loss of £360 for affiliation fees) the expenditure for the year summarised below mean that overall total net receipts for the year decreased from £24,961.06 to £19,204.98.

That is despite a reduction in expenditure over the year of £9,140.13.

4. Expenditure

By far the main item of expenditure is running costs for the 2 halls. This has reduced by £7,651.12 for 2 Halls (from £24,916.21 to £17,265.09)

My view is that this reduction is attributable to the closure of the Halls for part of the year and that those costs will return to previous levels or greater in future.

5. Observations

5.1I suggest RMVHT would be prudent to make the following (principal) assumptions:

5.1.1 Income from Grants and Donations is likely to fall significantly and cannot be relied on year to year

5.1.2 Energy costs will rise

5.1.3 Income from Hall hire may not return to previous level

5.2 If those assumptions are hold true RMVHT should undertake a viability study (as has been proposed) and from a strategy to:

5.2.1 safeguard existing reliable income

5.2.2 seek to increase existing reliable income insofar as possible without jeopardising the reliability of that income and

5.2.3 explore/revive new/alternative sources of income

6. Initial Recommendations

6.1 Allocate a portion of the funds held to a savings account with a suitable Bank as a reserve and provision against major future maintenance liabilities

6.2 Undertake a broad search for the best possible energy supplier when the current contract expires in June 2022

6.3 limit discretionary expenditure

6.4 explore an increase in the rent for the flat above the parish hall

6.5 reintroduce Affiliation Fees

7. Closing comments

A lot of work has gone into the accounts largely because I am no book keeper/accountant.

Because I am no book keeper/accountant I have taken note of the constructive criticism offered to me by the accountant that has signed of the balance sheet following his examination of the records.

1. Annual handovers would be assisted by having the financial year end occur at the same time as the incoming treasurer is appointed (rather than some 3 months later)

2. We should probably aspire to adopt a "Receipts and payments" format for the formal accounts (although there is a suitable form of accounts spreadsheet used by the community of village hall trusts that use the appropriate terminology - I can obtain and provide that without charge

Balance Sheet

Riding Mill Village Trust
Balance Sheet as at 31 August 2021

Current Assets	31/08/2021	31/08/2020
	£	£
Debtors	1,081	1,183
Cash In Bank	61,107	43,089
	<u>62,188</u>	<u>44,272</u>
Outstanding liabilities	0	2,013
Net assets	<u>62,188</u>	<u>42,259</u>
Reconciliation of Retained Surplus:	£	£
Retained surplus B/F per last year's accounts	42,259	17,298
Prior year adjustment	724	
Add current year surplus	19,205	24,961
Retained surplus C/F at end of year	<u>62,188</u>	<u>42,259</u>

Grants and Donations income includes the following:-

Broomhaugh	500.00
Broomhaugh Parish Council	3,000.00
NCC Payment 4272057	6,239.21
NCC Payment	1,334.00
NCC Payment	1,334.00
NCC Payment	1,634.50
NCC Payment	934.00
NCC Payment 4571981	6,239.21
NCC Payment 4593300	2,096.00
NCC Payment 4593680	2,096.00
Williams	91.00
Total Grants and Donations	<u>25,497.92</u>
	<u>0</u>

I have examined the records of Riding Mill Village Hall Trust and can confirm that the above accounts are derived therefrom.

S.G. Lightley.

STEPHEN LIGHTLEY

Chartered Accountant.

22 November 2021