

2022.5.9 **Westbury Village Hall Chairman's Report for April 2021 to March 2022.**

The past year has been one of returns. In early May the Hall hosted the Police and Crime Commissioner elections – sadly, suitably distanced with its low turnout, which was then followed in June by the Table Tennis group cautiously playing singles; Hop, Skip and Sing had a series of classes; and the Wookey Hole Geology Group began their once-a-month meetings. The Parish Council started in-person meetings in July. September brought Kettlercise, the WI, the Gardening Club, and the Art Group back again. October saw in-person meetings start for the Westbury Society and a very innovative Exhibition organised by the WI in support of the Somerset Wildlife Trust's Team Wilder project. The Friends of Westbury Church Winter warmer lunch used the new facilities of the kitchen almost for the first time since the kitchen redevelopment. The successful Church Christmas Market at the end of November was followed by the Friendly Society Quiz and Raffle in December which was a very successful fund raiser and much appreciated as a 'back to normal' event. January saw a succession of meetings about the planning application for housing development along Roughmoor Lane. All the attendees were sensitive to the Covid protocols that were in place at the time. Thank you.

Later in the new year, as the Government rules became guidance, the organisers of each event were given responsibility for how they approached the Covid risks for their activities. Thank you to all those over the last year who provided me with risk assessments and managed their events in the safest way they could. It is still worth realising that Covid incidence, though not hospitalisations, is as high as, if not higher, than it has ever been so that suitable caution may still be important. The Hall has put on film nights to admittedly small audiences, but they have been appreciated and enjoyed by this dedicated band of buffs. A special thanks to Sue Isherwood for her indefatigable catering for these and other events. Mini quiches are a village favourite. Finally, and most recently we have welcomed back Angel Heart Theatre and their latest Puppet show 'Robin Hood'. Nearly 60 people, young and somewhat older, were enthralled as ever. Thank you, Pippa Mains and Maggie Beebee, for the fairy cakes!

The Hall has benefited from two more grants, £8000 and £2667 from Government via Mendip District Council so that the Hall finances are in good shape. We are in the middle of using some of this money along with a gift to replace the 'red chairs'. We have put in the order for 70 chairs -turquoise upholstery and charcoal turquoise shell, that stack well, and this will represent the end of an era. We are going to have to pay close attention to the utility bills that are set to more than double for gas and electricity. I hope people will keep doors and windows closed and consider sources of heat losses from the hall as carefully as they will in their own homes. The outside doors to kitchen and storeroom have had draught excluders fitted. The kitchen now has a large extractor fan so that steam from the dish washer and the cooking should not give problems because of condensation on the outside walls. It could also be used to help ventilate the Hall as a Covid mitigation. We will need to consider raising the costs for using the Hall to keep the income above expenditure but with the grant reserves we can manage these changes relatively slowly.

Truespeed have finally connected the Hall so that there is ultrafast broadband available for all to use. More useful and important is that there is no cost to the Hall, and I enjoy receiving a monthly invoice of £0.00! Thank you Truespeed and for the others who have taken up their offer in the Village and thereby enabled the Hall to have this free service.

Active woodworm was discovered in the storeroom which has now been treated – that's where the 2p sized holes in the panelling came from.

Rosie Webb has kept the hall clean in spite of the difficulties with Covid so a special thank you is due to her.

The Trustees have supported activities – making cakes for the Puppet show and looking after people doing work in the Hall and even replacing the toilet seats. We have said farewell to Babs Crickett as a representative of Footlights but have been able to welcome Maggie Beebee. This continues a long history of her family's involvement with running the Hall. We have also said farewell to Lyn Dolby representing the Gardening Club. She took on the role of booking clerk whenever I was away. Thank you to her and for the 'finger food' she provided for every so many film nights. We hope that the Garden Club may be able to replace her, in her role as a Hall Trustee. Thank you to all the Trustees but particular thanks to Tony Shepherd who has looked after the finances and to Hilary Little who has done the minutes so meticulously. Before long I hope that you will all be able to sit more comfortably!

Peter Bright Chairman of Village Hall Trustees. 9th April 2022.