

Tivetshall Village Hall Report For The Annual Parish Meeting, May 2014

In the last year the Hall has had a slightly quieter time in terms of major fund raising events and we have, unfortunately lost a couple of our regular hirers, one of which was due to cutbacks in government funding. However we have picked up a few extra one-off bookings and new regular pilates and dance classes, which have helped our income just cover our outgoings for the year. Overall an income of £6,022 last year set against outgoings of £5,740 left a small surplus of £282. This year we have so far taken £4,258 against expenditure of £3,311, a difference on the plus side of £947. It should be noted that this is not an end of year figure but the surplus of £947 is due in no small part to a very mild winter, just one less tank of heating oil per year can mean a difference of over £600, hence the Hall's finances are a very fine balancing act!

Due to personal commitments during this last year Michele (our secretary) and myself as chairman have been unable to involve ourselves as much as we would have liked and are very grateful to the rest of the management team who have kept things ticking along with the management of bookings and the payment of bills, ordering of heating oil, etc. A special mention goes to Tony and Lynn Jollans who have between them managed the bookings and the web site during this time, as well as taking leading rôles in our Parish Council, which in turn has also left them very little time to help organise any other fund raising events at the Hall. I am also eternally grateful to our treasurer, Nicola Barton, for keeping up to date with the paying of fees and the settling of all our many bills. During this time I have continued to print requests in *The Cock Crow* for others in the village to join our small team, so that with a few more people we might be able to organise and push forward with some of the more pressing maintenance projects that need to be carried out. To date we have had no volunteers.

We continue to have a healthy balance in our current account of around £2,700 and a balance of £9,286 in a savings account, which we have set aside for essential maintenance and improvement programs. This money has been raised since January 2007, when the current committee was formed, by organising fund raising events and the regular hiring of the Hall, which has kept our income just above outgoings. We have managed to hold our hire rates for yet another year meaning we have not had an increase in our rates now for nearly 6 years. This has only been possible due to constant monitoring and negotiation of our fixed costs such as insurance and services and an increase in bookings, which serves to spread our fixed costs over more hours of hire therefore allowing us to maintain a very competitive hourly rate during what has been a very tough economic climate. The key to this success has been the bold decisions taken by the management committee, firstly to improve the decoration of the hall and its facilities and secondly to introduce a fair competitive and clear pricing structure and to stand by that structure rather than be tempted to slash prices in the hope of obtaining more bookings. In practice there are only a finite number of popular hiring hours and slashing prices would have led to us having to take more bookings than the number of popular hiring hours available. This course would have resulted in a reduction in income rather than the steady income we have achieved.

In tough financial times we are constantly being asked if we can charge less for some groups or even donate the hall free for good causes. Once again our committee has had to stand firm, as we know what our fixed costs are and will only ever cover these by charging the correct amount. We must also be aware that as trustees of the hall we are obligated to look after the hall's best interests and

as a registered charity we are bound by certain rules that do not allow us to give away the Hall's assets to the detriment of the Hall's own charitable funds. Yes it would be wonderful to donate the hall to every group for free but this would only serve to eventually bring about the closure of this facility, as it could not pay its bills.

Going forward I am hoping this year that we can undertake the refurbishment of the hall's floor, carry out essential maintenance to the oil tank, replace paths around the car park, install a hearing loop and sound system and provide new more modern seating for the hall as part of the plans we agreed last year. This all requires organising, a level of co-operation from our regular hirers and, as we are trying to get some assisted funding, a sizeable amount of paperwork to apply for grants. We are a small friendly committee and the work is not quite as involved as that of the Parish Council so I would ask if anyone would like to contribute to the village but does not feel confident to join the Parish Council and sit in front of the public than you can still do your bit towards village life by joining the Hall's Management committee so that we can make these things happen and keep the hall available for all to use.

David Evans, May 2014.