

# **SHRIVENHAM PARISH ASSEMBLY 2024**

## **Report of Chairman of Viscountess Barrington Trust**

- This year has been when we hope that we might have turned the corner after the disaster that was Covid and the Pandemic. The good news is that our bookings for the hall have held up to extent that they have exceeded the budget for the year and in particular the pavilion bookings have well exceeded our expectations.
- Next year will be the Centenary of opening of the Memorial Hall in 1925. Jointly with the Viscountess Barrington Homes Trust we are planning a number of events to mark this great occasion. Our programme will be announced at the Party in the Park on May 5<sup>th</sup> and we are hoping to have a celebrity to launch the celebrations this time next year.
- In March last year our lovely lady admin officer, Julie Sarsons passed away and we have had to reorganise the staff to take over her duties. Phoebe is now responsible for hall bookings so you can now phone the hall to book and she will confirm promptly by email and feed the finance information directly to Lyn.
- Our Hall Manager, Lewie had not been well earlier in the year but is happily now back and firing on all cylinders. Maria, our cleaner, has turned out to be a real star! She has been an invisible presence who has kept the hall immaculately clean and presentable.
- We continue to suffer from the impact of the energy crisis. Despite Julia's best efforts to find the most cost effective suppliers, our gas and electricity costs for the year with the addition of the pavilion remain nearly £20,000 a year!
- Although the equipment in the playground passed its annual ROSPA inspection the swings were marked as needing urgent attention and we had to close them off for a while. Thankfully due to good offices of Cllr Woodhouse we managed to procure the necessary piece of kit and they are now back up again.
- Nevertheless much of the equipment is a little tired to say the least and we have a planned upgrade of the equipment. As part of this upgrade the new slide and a zigzag twister and a rock and bowl unit were installed last year and we continue to monitor the condition of the remaining equipment.
- Also in the Rec, we successfully applied for the remaining S106 funding for a mini-MUGA adjacent to the new multi-use games area (MUGA) with a penalty shoot out area for younger kids and this was finally completed last month.

- Still on the Rec, we were outraged to find that one of the newly planted trees had been vandalised. This was especially awful as it had been planted as a memorial to Don Allen, a past Parish Councillor and Chairman of the Hall. On a more positive note we have removed a laurel that had become a haven for youngsters causing a nuisance to Manor Lane residents and planted a holly tree there instead.
- Flooding in the carpark is an ongoing issue and in the storms this winter it became so bad that access to the hall was almost impossible. Consequently we have appointed PJE, the contractors for the pavilion to install a much larger drainage channel along the disabled bays and run a pipe directly to the pavilion soakaway in the corner of the carpark. As part of this work PJE will re-gravel the entire carpark. Since this gravel was only laid some three years ago we are reconciled to the fact that it will be an on-going maintenance matter requiring renewing every three to five years. We are assured that the carpark work will be carried out shortly but we are not holding our breath!
- We have had regular meetings with both Cala, the developers of Cross Trees Park and ISG, the contractors for the new school this year. Following a recent meeting on the site with Cala, they promised to do something about the disgraceful mud bath that is the track to Cross Trees Park behind the football pitch and which is one of two key pedestrian access routes to the school. Despite this nothing has been done and the path became so dangerous that three weeks ago we were forced to close it altogether. However the barrier was almost immediately removed and it still remains a potential hazard.
- With the new school opening next week it is now desperately urgent that we ensure that there is a safe and direct walking route to the school from the centre of the village and this has been made abundantly clear to Cala.
- We have also been in discussion with Sustainable Shrevenham with a view to providing a community compost facility. I can report that we will shortly be installing large bins next to the bin store in the carpark containing high grade compost for villagers to come to collect.
- Back at the hall Lewie and Phoebe have continued an ongoing programme of work which we started last year to spruce up and redecorate the internal facilities.
- This year we have worked hard on developing our ideas for the refurbishment of the toilets, the loggia and the kitchen and I'm glad

to say that this is now coming to fruition. In January we heard that we had been successful in applying for a Platinum Jubilee Village Halls grant which together with the S106 money specifically allocated to the Memorial Hall gives us almost £180,000 to develop these projects.

- Following a consultation and a display of our plans which you can again see at the back of the hall, we have now appointed contractors to carry out the work on the toilets and the loggia. The work on the toilets is planned for October/November and the loggia between January and March next year with a planned completion by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 in time for our Centenary celebrations kicking off at the Party in the Park in May next year. Sadly I fear that the kitchen may not be completed to this timescale
- Following the energy audit carried out in March last year by the Energy Information Exchange at Oxford Brookes University we received their report with a number of recommendations as to how we can make specific improvements to our energy performance. These included installing LED lighting and down draft fans in the main hall as well as ensuring proper seals to the windows and doors. This work is now a priority and is budgeted to be carried out this year. This work forms part of a properly phased programme of hall maintenance and improvement which was drawn up last year.
- This year SADS put on Cinderella which turned out to a quite marvellous show and the cast even included three Parish Councillors! In addition we had both the Watermill Theatre and the Rain or Shine Theatre Group back to perform outside in the Rec. We made a not insignificant profit on these shows and the aim is actively promote the use of the hall for such events. We have set up a small working group to examine how we can improve our publicity and promotion.
- The Hall is very much the heart of the village and we are keen that it prospers as the splendid community facility that it is. We look forward to next year with confidence in the knowledge that we have already had bookings for both the Hall and the pavilion which are almost up to our planned targets.
- I am extremely grateful to Julia and Lyn for all their hard work in running the hall and for keeping a tight rein on the finances including preparing the budgets for each year. With Lewie, Phoebe, and Maria we have a great team which will allow us to go forward with confidence into next year.