

Woolaston Memorial Hall - AGM – 23rd October 2025

Chair's Report – Sue Anderson

As most of you know I am moving house very soon to another Shire, so this will be my last Chair's Report.

Overview:

Woolaston Memorial Hall is a very busy and successful village hall.

75% of our bookings are from our Regular Groups which represent a key part of our income, with the balance being made up from one off party bookings, although we do get repeat bookings from happy party customers.

Marketing the hall continue to be an important part of securing ongoing bookings. We do this by advertising the hall and events through our Facebook Page, Website and posters in our internal and external notice boards as well as in the Parish Council's Community Notice Board by the Phone box. We even have "Book the Hall" advertising posters in the loos.

We now have 16 regular groups who book the hall, some more than once a week. We were worried earlier this year as the number of regular groups had depleted, but we came up with an idea!

We felt that Short Mat Bowls would be a great thing to have at the hall. After some enquires we managed to obtain, free of charge, 2nd hand mats and equipment to set up a club, saving us £3000. With the support of Yorkley Short Mat Bowls Club, we advertised a 'Have a Try' date. Twenty-one people turned up! In a short space of time Woolaston established an official Short Mat Bowls Club with a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer with a thriving membership. They have a team who are entering the leagues and have already won some matches.

Following this we have recently secured regular Pilates classes which is so popular the leader now books the hall three times a week!

Also, more good news, Brownies will be returning from mid-November increasing our regular groups to 17.

Next, we really do need to secure a Baby/Toddler weekly Group as the community have asked for this. So, enquiries to secure this will be ongoing.

We frequently receive Reviews following party bookings which are very positive, almost always being a 5-star rating with the odd one being 4 stars. When a 4-star rating is received it's usually because parking has been a challenge due to party bookings clashing with football matches. But a 4-star rating is fine. Also, we now have a system in place to respond to these Reviews = good PR. Every little helps!

An efficient online booking system through our website has also had a positive impact on increasing bookings. However, given the hall is so very busy the role of the Booking Officer can no longer be sustained as a voluntary position. Therefore, the committee has agreed that from 1st November 2025 this will be a paid position.

Car Parking: As mentioned above, car parking is a bit of an issue at times. Hence the need to build a bigger car parking area, which will cost £50K - £60K. We have investigated grant opportunities, but applying for grants is extremely onerous, they are riddled with caveats, and they are competitive. Furthermore, for large sums of money such as needed for a car park, the available grants only provide 20% of the funding and we just don't have the remaining 80%. Raising approximately £40K through fundraising events is just not feasible. So, it's back to the drawing board. Watch this space!

Fund Raising: Fund raising continues to be an important element of income for the hall. The Carnival & Motor Shows plus the Farmers' Markets being the staple fund raisers, and I am delighted that Miriam Corringham has agreed to take on leading these events. However, it is not always about keeping an eye on how much we can raise for the hall, as the committee feel we have a duty to provide events that can be enjoyed and impact positively on the well-being of the community.

Two very enjoyable and successful events were organised by Debs Mackay – Jingle Mingle and Burns Night. She is now organising a Scottish Ceilidh evening next month and another Burns Night in January 2026. These are ticked events, so we stepped into the world of online tickets c/o Ticket Source. This system of selling tickets proved very successful with almost all 50 tickets for Burns Night this year being sold well in advance of the event.

Sponsorship is also an important income for us, and this brings in £1300 per annum. Furthermore, we received £800 donation from Bells Homes this year for the Carnival.

Outdoor Play Equipment: The skate ramp has been robustly rebuilt by Martin Rose and it's great to see children playing on it again. The Committee has agreed to ringfence £5,000 specifically for skate ramps and play equipment. This will allow us to build a number and differently sizes skate ramps on the skate park area, over time. We investigated purchasing ramps, but at a starting price of £9,000 for a small ramp this was out of the question.

We are continuing to maintain the play area in line with ROSPA guidelines.

The children love the slides installed last year, which really enhances the play area.

Next, I would love to see a basket swing in the play area which can be enjoyed by children with disabilities.

Committee: Our small committee continues to work hard to keep the hall running successfully, but as most of you know John and I are moving away from Wonderful Woolaston leaving the committee significantly depleted. A recruitment drive is much needed.

Whilst we're on the subject of the committee, we are a nice bunch of people with a wide skill set, which is very useful. The way it works is that we hold a meeting every three months at the hall, usually with a drink in hand. We get a lot done and between meetings we communicate regularly through our WhatsApp Group to make quick decisions when any issues or opportunities arise.

Thanks:

At this point I'd like to give big thanks to.....

- Nicky Challenger for always keeping the hall so clean and sparkling.
- David Reith for always coming up with carefully considered suggestions and running the Bar.
- John Hayard for always quickly sorting out IT stuff plus running the Bar.
- Martin Rose for always being reliable and sorting out major maintenance and building jobs.
- Gareth Rose for always being there and supportive and smiling.
- Shirley Lightbound for always listening giving good advice.
- Mark Lightbound for always being dependable and for his efficiency.
- Miriam Corringham for always smiling when agreeing to take on organising events with success.

- John Anderson for always doing ongoing DIY jobs and allowing me to bounce ideas off him.
- Deb's Mackay for always coming up with great ticketed events ideas.

Thank you all for your support. You are all amazing and I hope Woolaston Memorial Hall will continue to be a much-loved village hall and a great success.

Sue Anderson - Chair of Woolaston Memorial Hall Committee