ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT

for

ASHWICK & OAKHILL VILLAGE HALL

&

RECREATIONAL GROUND COMMITTEE

Monday 17th May 2021

Ashwick & Oakhill Village Hall and Recreational Ground Committee

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31st March 2021

The trustees presented their annual report and audited financial statements for the year ended

31 March 2021

Reference and Administrative Information

Charity Name: Ashwick and Oakhill Village Hall and Recreation Ground

Charity Registration Number: 249510

Principal Office: The Village Hall, Zion Hill, Oakhill, Radstock BA3 5AN

Board of Trustees:

Andy North (Chair)

Kim hare (Vice-Chair)

Caroline Ambrose (Treasurer)

Jessica Elliott (Secretary)

*None* (Lettings Secretary)

Bryan Wells

David Thorley

Martin Rymes

Tim Ambrose

Auditor: David Hirst

Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31 March 2021

Structure, Governance and Management

Ashwick and Oakhill Village Hall Committee is a charitable trust registered with the Charity

Commission under charity number 249510.

The charity trustees are responsible for the general control and management of the charity. The

trustees give their time freely and receive no remuneration or other financial benefits. The trust

meet as a body every month and are responsible for all decisions in relation to the

running of the Village Hall and community facilities and activities provided by the charity.

Our aims and objectives:

To encourage the use of the Village Hall and Recreational Ground by promoting its facilities to the

local and wider community. To promote opportunity for all, lifelong learning, family wellbeing,

pleasant neighbourhoods by community cohesion and involvement. To regenerate the facilities as

required and improve community spirit by doing so.

**Chairman’s Report** (Andy North)

Well that’s been an interesting 12 months!

Clearly, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic, this has been a very different and challenging year for the Trustees of the Ashwick & Oakhill Village Hall Committee (VHC) and which has impacted all involved, their friends, families, neighbours and of course the community as a whole.

With the closure of such an important community building for most of 2020 through to April 2021 we had much concern about the long-term effects this would have on the Village Hall, its finances, and its viability as an ongoing concern. There was of course the worry about the impact it would have on the clubs, groups and societies that use it and the general impact on community engagement. In addition, could we respond quickly enough if we were needed to open as an emergency facility for the community in a safe and Covid secure way? Could we keep ourselves uptodate of the ever-changing government Covid guidelines - getting sanitiser alone was hard enough for a few weeks! Then there was the concern about our VHC objectives, aspirations and improvements aimed at strengthening community spirit and giving our younger generation somewhere to make memories. Whilst some of these have clearly been impacted, we have also been presented with some good opportunities which we have tried to capitalise on and which will have longer term benefits for all as will become apparent later in this report.

As Chair of the VHC, I feel we have made some really good, strong and positive progress in the last 12 months and thanks to the hard work, commitment and prolonged effort of the Trustees we have a much more welcoming, useable and safe facility. I’d like to particularly mention:

* Kim Hare – As Vice Chair Kim has organised and pulled off 3 majorly successful, Covid-friendly events (Halloween Trail, Christmas Trail and Easter Bunny Chase) which were well attended, thoroughly enjoyed by many and provided much need funds for the maintenance of the playground. Kim has also ensured we have had a substantial monthly update in The Beacon.
* Caroline Ambrose – Our new Treasurer, has completely reviewed, overhauled and strengthened our finance position. She successfully applied for and achieved multiple Covid and leisure and hospitality grants over the last 6-9 months not to mention taking prompt action to significantly reduce utility and insurance bills.
* Martin Rymes – As Facilities Lead he has donated many hours in all weathers to ensure the VH building is maintained, secure, safe, uptodate and has maintained the playground equipment to meet Rospa guidelines plus so much more.
* Jessica Elliot – Secretary – Never an easy job this one, particularly as we are so active and have multiple workstreams on the go at any one time and keeping the Chair and Trustees focused and on point. She has also been instrumental in developing new event and fundraising ideas … watch this space for some exciting new ideas coming soon.
* David Thorley – As Rejuvenation Project Lead, he has worked tirelessly over 2-3 years to seek and collate community feedback and formalise into formal building plans for our new kitchen & Community Café which are now coming to fruition as well as get involved in many urgent maintenance activities and repairs – He is also our key contact on the Parish Council.
* Tim Ambrose – As a new Trustee in the last 9 months Tim has wasted no time getting into the thick of things, strengthened our debates and provided much welcomed advice based on his experiences to ensure we view challenges and opportunities from all angles. He has also raised £100’s for the VHC by selling home-grown plants to the community.

All these efforts have put us in a strong position to further our plans to develop the main all building as will be highlighted in more detail below, it’s recreational facilities and consequently its future growth to become a much more widely used resource for the benefit of the community, run by the community.

Before moving on, I must recognise the loss of some of our Trustees:

* Julie Brooks who was our Treasurer for 8-9 years
* Dawn Davies – Representative member of the East Mendip Gardening Club for many years
* Sally Sargent – Elected member, Founding Member of Oakhill Buzz & very valuable member of Community Council For Somerset (CCS)!
* Abi Powell – Elected member

All have been fantastic, engaged fully and given their time freely to maintain, develop and grow our wonderful facilities for fall. We are sad to see them go but we are grateful they have all agreed to continue as ‘Friends Of AOVH’.

**Last 12 months:**

As hinted at above, the lockdowns over the last 12 months have provided us with some good opportunities - Below is a list of some of the key activities undertaken (in no particular order):

* Redecoration of Main Hall, Foyer and Committee Room
* Full redecoration of washrooms and installation of new sanitaryware and lighting
* Redecoration of back hallway.
* New floor in main hall (removal of old asbestos laced floor tiles)
* New curtain rails, curtains, chairs
* Playground, agility trail and adult swing repairs as per RoSPA guidance – ongoing.
* Installation of Health & Safety Signage for outdoor play equipment and BMX track.
* General communication improvements (use of WhatsApp groups, Facebook, Website, Parish Newsletter etc)
* Monthly VHC meetings continued by Zoom with purchase of our own Zoom account.
* Piano acquired, transported, clean, tuned and sited in main hall – The Oakhill Vocals have been informed!
* Architect Technician engaged to assist with the design of a new kitchen and indoor/outdoor community café. Formal plans drawn up.
* Quotes arranged for rejuvenation/new kitchen/Community Café building works
* Children’s Halloween Trail, Christmas Trail and Easter Trail (Chase the Bunny!)
* £10,000 Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant – COVID-19 Government grant
* Multiple other MDC Covid related grants successfully applied for and received.
* New treasurer found and onboard
* Upgraded banking facility (BACS payments rather than cheques!)
* Refreshed Finance policy and creation of a Reserves policies
* Successful application to gain Gift Aid
* Tree and wildflower planting
* Tree maintenance
* 2 new benches (‘Rainbow Bench’ and VE75 Bench)
* Clothes Bank, AmazonSmile and BoilerJuice charity cashbacks
* Investment and live launch of VH online booking & invoicing system – Hallmaster
* Change of cleaner – now with ARK Solutions.
* Defibrillator
* Trustee Induction Pack
* Monthly updates in the Beacon (minimum half page!)
* Introduction of voluntary Gatekeepers group to keep VH car park secure overnight.
* …and many more.

As you will agree, this is a long list of significant achievements all of which is attributed to Trustees and local volunteers that have given their time freely. Without these people we would not be able to meet our aims and objectives and the hall and field would fall into disrepair.

The trustees of the Committee would like to thank the following individuals/companies who have helped and supported us over the last year:

Parish Council

Amanda (Mandy) Alvis

Wayne Nutt

David Hirst

Gatekeepers:

Rebecca Edwards

Rob Greeves

Tanya Vaughan

Sandra Pennyfather

Martin

Linz

Kirsty Milton

Paul Lewis

And All our “Friends of AOVH”

**The next 12 months**

Our immediate focus following the 2021 AGM and the election of the new committee and the Trustee Roles (Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Bookings) will be to confirm plans for the coming year.

If I am re-elected as Chair, I have a clear vision for the next 12 months.

1. Create a Business Plan & Marketing strategy to support the VH Rejuvenation plan and build awareness and engagement within the community.
2. Achieve Hallmark Accreditation
3. Fundraise!

To explain in more detail, by creating a **Business Plan** which sets our aims and objectives so the committee, the community, third parties and any other interested party can clearly see what we are trying to achieve and how we are going to achieve it. This will include our need to continue focus on the **rejuvenation** **of the building and outdoor facilities** to ensure we are responding to community life after Covid.

The main aim of the VH rejuvenation plan is to create a new, much larger, more modern kitchen where the garage is currently situated so that we can accommodate and/or cater for larger events, wedding receptions as well as a Community Café serving both indoor and outdoor customers. This will increase the footfall at the VH and therefore raise awareness and potential future interest in the VH as a venue. It will also enable multiple activities to occur at the same time without impacting each other as access to the washrooms will also be made possible from every part of the building. This has the potential to generate more income which can be invested in further improvements and community events. A Community Cafe would also provide an opportunity for local volunteers to get involved in the running of their community building and therefore generate additional community spirit.

Other areas of rejuvenation will include improved access to the building (wider path from car park) and a covered area/shelter for those caught in unexpected weather conditions which can be an issue on our large recreational field, particularly up here in the Mendips! This covered area could be incorporated into the external café patio seating area. We are also considering plans to increase and improve outdoor leisure/recreational equipment outside of the existing playground area, maybe around the field perimeter, for example, exercise equipment, improved basketball court, BMX track/pump track… maybe even a tennis court?

This will of course all cost money, and therefore my vision will need the structure and governance of the Committee to be strengthened so that we are better organised and prepared for funding and grant application scrutiny. This can be achieved if we commit to adhere to the expectations set out by the **Hallmark** **accreditation** **scheme** which, if successful, will award us a certification (Level 1 initially) that will be attractive to the larger potential funders – very important!

To engage the community and attract new users and neighbouring parishes, we need to improve our **marketing**, therefore I would like to build a sub-team focused on this such that we increase awareness of our plans across the community via specific events, leaflet drops, village noticeboards, Zoom meetings, Facebook, Parish website and Beacon Newsletter updates. We will be creating a community survey to gather opinion, ideas and suggestions as to what people would like to see happen with the VH and recreational field.

**Fundraising** is going to a key activity for the forthcoming months if we are going to progress our rejuvenation plans so in-coordination with our marketing team, we need to generate new ideas and opportunities to increase income potential via local activities and in the search for government/parish/corporate funds and grants. We can no longer simply wait for bookings.

Whilst the holding of our regular and popular events (Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween Disco, Beer & Carols, Christmas Market etc) need to return when appropriate we also need to be looking at new and exciting opportunities to really make our wonderful VH a better facility for all to enjoy for many more years to come.

List of ideas/opportunities in planning:

* Local, small band music venue
* Exhibitions of local talent – eg. Art Gallery, Craft Fayres
* 100 Club
* Community Cinema - Moviola
* Community Library/Book Swap
* Outdoor sports equipment
* Basketball court
* Car park lineage
* Improved pathway access to building
* Outdoor shelter and patio area
* New, externally accessed changing rooms! (Rejuvenation Phase 2)

**Use of Volunteers**

Volunteers are a critical resource in our community work. Volunteers are involved in most of

our community activities and we have 9 trustees regularly giving their time freely. One of our

objectives is to increase community engagement and involvement in the Village Hall. Although we have been restricted in our events and activities this year, we have increased awareness of the charity and its continuing needs. So much so that we now have 4 new Trustees members.

**Community Involvement**

Wider participation of the Community and collaboration with other community organisations such as the Church and School are significant ways to improve the community spirit of the village. The Village Hall is committed to continue these relationships and has worked closely with these and other community groups, clubs & societies earlier in 2020 as part of the VE day 75th celebrations which had to be postponed for obvious reasons. Whilst the VHC must ensure their events cover running costs, the priority is a wider community involvement and engagement rather than to generate a profit.

It is hoped that we can soon encourage members of the community to organise and run events at the VH again with the support of the VHC. We also intend to extend the type of events offered and increase the accessibility of the venue to provide wider interest and benefit. We are actively in discussion with local talents and community groups for new ideas and to identify areas where continued improvements could be made. We are aiming to publish a community survey in 2021.

**Communication and Engagement**

The Village Hall has tried hard this year to maintain regular communication with the community and has used multiple methods to reach as many as possible. For example, a ‘Friends of AOVHC’ WhatsApp group was created to engage directly with local volunteers who have shown an interest in helping when they can – this proved itself via the successful Clean Up Day last year and also for small bench and roof repairs etc. We also regularly use our Facebook page and re-post on to the Oakhill Village Life page where appropriate. In addition, we maintain our pages on the Ashwick Parish website and use posters on local notice boards and word-of-mouth to advertise events. The VH have also increased its presence in The Beacon newsletter and aims to have at least one item in each edition.

**Current Clubs/Groups/Activities**

The charity carries out a wide range of activities and hosts several clubs, groups and societies. The trustees consider the activities they provide a real and tangible benefit to their immediate users and the wider community. The hall and recreational ground provide a valuable educational and recreational resource to all in our local community. In the next 12 months we will be attempting to increase the use of the facility and extend its use to a wider number of the community

**Chair .. Last words**

As Chair of the AGM I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Village Hall Trustees for their support, effort and time over the last year. It has been an absolute privilege to work with you and to see what we have managed to achieve in the face of adversity and without actually seeing each other in person!!

The volunteers who give their time to the community are a phenomenal and committed group, without whom, local community events and activities like we have had this year (and the mountain of other work behind the scenes!) simply would not take place. Thank you!

I am genuinely excited about the next 12 months and hope we can make our facilities a real hub for the community.



Andy North

**Appendix A – Audit Annual Account**