

Earl Stonham Village Hall Annual Report – 2025-26

Hall income for the 2025-26 was similar to 2024-25 and despite us not increasing rental charges for the last 4 years, it covered our operating costs and most repairs. The attendance charge for quiz nights amounted to nearly £1000 for the year and this has been donated to the St Elizabeth Hospice. Attendance at Supper Evenings is still very good and the profit from these is what pays for the improvement works so please do keep attending!

We have seen a number of changes of hall trustees this year. On a very sad note, Maddie Roles died before Christmas after fighting cancer for many years. She was always cheerful and the first to volunteer to help with every event and will be sorely missed by the committee. We have welcomed Anne Stanford onto the committee as the PCC representative, the first time we have had a church representative for many years. Anne Perkins has decided to stand down as Treasurer after her move to Stowmarket and the committee are very grateful for all the work she has done to keep the finances in order for nearly 10 years. Ruth Mann has joined the committee and has taken over as treasurer and has quickly come to terms with the role. We have also had a new auditor appointed (J Farrow) this year as our previous one retired.

We continue to undertake improvements to keep the hall at a high standard. The main hall floor has been re-sealed and we have recently purchased a new commercial freezer for the kitchen as the existing one was getting unreliable. We have also replaced the large screen TV in the club room with a larger and more modern one that is both simpler to connect to and much easier to see!

Work continues to improve the ex Bowls Club site. The club house (now the Garden Room) has been timber clad to solve structural issues and improve weather tightness as well as greatly improving its appearance. The old portacabin has been disposed of as it was no longer needed and this area will provide a new grassed area. In addition the old Bowls toilet block has been stripped out and reconfigured as a store area for gardening equipment.

Our long standing cleaner Jeff decided it was time to retire this year. He kept the hall in great shape and was clearly going to be a hard act to follow. We have been very fortunate to welcome Collette as our new cleaner and she is certainly a great find!

As well as our normal regular bookings, we are pleased to have had a number of new exercise classes start this year. We have a yoga class on Mondays, Chair Fit class on Fridays and Pickleball on Mindays.

Another busy, successful year at the hall. Bookings are at a good level and the overflow car park has meant that we can better accommodate meetings in both halls simultaneously as well as continuing to rent the hall when there are cricket matches. Attendance at quiz evenings dropped off at the end of 2024 but have now picked up again with a record attendance in February. Supper evenings continue to be well supported and we have now set a cap of 30 people for all but special events like VE Day. The profit from the supper evenings for the last year has been used to improve facilities in the kitchen – more details on this below.

The hall organised the village celebrations for the 80th anniversary of the D Day landings last year with a very well attended beacon lighting, a supper evening with entertainment for 60 people on the Saturday and a fun day on the Sunday. A very exhausting time, only made possible by the huge amount of volunteer help. We are now in final planning for the VE Day 80th celebrations which will consist of a beacon lighting on Thursday 8th and a themed supper evening on 10th.

A raised flower bed has been added to the entrance to the car park. This has been done to remove the risk of commercial vehicles cutting the corner and damaging the lamp post. So far this seems to have been successful and it looked very jolly planted with daffodils this year. Darren at Perfect Perennials will kindly be donating plants for a more permanent planting scheme later in the year. The new signs by the entrance and a campaign of phoning commercial companies who use the car park without permission, has resulted in a significant drop in the number of large commercial vehicles and this in turn has greatly reduced the wear and tear on the car park surface which is very welcome.

Unfortunately we have still not got a solution to the EV Charger and it remains out of use. Suffolk County Council are putting together a new scheme for the EV chargers which we may choose to partake in but at present there are some issues with the proposed scheme which we need to address, so it is just watch this space for the moment.

As mentioned above, the overflow car park on the former bowls green has been very a very useful addition and we have added another street light at the entrance to it to make it safer. The section we reserved as a wildflower meadow looks like it will be far more successful this year. Unfortunately we have still not found a long term use for the buildings but we have had a few bookings for the former club house this year so hopefully this might grow. In the short term, we will just keep the buildings on care and maintenance and as part of this will complete the timber cladding of the club house this year, as that will ensure it is fully watertight and will not suffer further deterioration.

The gents toilets have had a major upgrade with the replacement of the old stainless steel urinal trough with new ceramic ones and tiled walls. This should be more hygienic and better for users.

Finally, you may have noticed some changes in the kitchen. The microwave failed its testing this year and has been replaced with a commercial model that is easier to use and clean. The success of Supper Evenings has put rather a strain on the existing domestic cookers and so a commercial table top oven has been installed to help with this. We also had a scheduled Hygiene inspection so in preparation for this, we put more robust processes in place for food preparation and Babara and Tony both completed Level 2 hygiene course and allergy awareness training. The end result was we achieved the highest level of 5 stars from the inspection.

Tony Turner

Chairman - Earl Stonham Village Hall Management Committee