



EVERSHOLT PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Annual Meeting of the Parish of Eversholt held on Tuesday 30th May 2023 at 7.45pm in the Village Hall, Eversholt

PRESENT: Cllr M Gabrys (Chairman), Cllr P Collin, Cllr P Richardson, Cllr E Crichton

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs K Barker (Clerk), CBC Cllr Baker, Anna Blomfield – Church,
Andrea Cawthorne – Village Hall Committee, Julie Todd – Parochial Charity

1. Apologies for absence – Cllr Miller, Cllr Creamer, Cllr Newport-Hassan, Gaynor Miller – Eversholt Lower School, Ian Meadows – website, Simon Collier – Parochial Charity
2. Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish 2022
The minutes of the meeting held on 24th May 2022 were approved. Parish Cllr Collin proposed, seconded by Parish Cllr Richardson the approval of the minutes as a true record. All agreed by those present and signed by the Chairman.
3. Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.
4. Report of Parish Council Chairman
Parish Cllr Gabrys thanked all Cllrs for their support and gave a report for 2022/23. The report is attached.
5. CBC Councillor Baker
CBC Cllr Baker gave a report for 2022/23. The report is attached.
6. The Church of St John the Baptist - PCC
Anna Blomfield gave a report on behalf of the Church for 2022/23. The report is attached.
7. Eversholt Parochial Charity
The Vice Chairman of the EPC, Julie Todd, gave a report. The report is attached.
8. Swimming Pool
The Swimming Pool Committee representative was not present. The report was read out and is attached.
9. Village Hall Committee
Andrea Cawthorne gave a report on behalf of the Village Hall Committee for 2022/23. The report is attached.
10. Website
The website report was read out and is attached.

11. Cricket Club
The Cricket Club were not present.
12. Eversholt Lower School
The School were not present. The School report was read out and is attached.
13. Public Participation
There were no comments from members of the public.

The Meeting closed at 8.18pm

Dear Resident,

Welcome to another update of my In Touch email newsletter. In this edition:

- Thank you for voting for me!
- An Independent Dawn.
- East West Rail

Thank you for voting for me

I'd like to thank you for endorsing me, again, as your Independent councillor for the Aspley & Woburn district. In May 2019, I received 78% of the vote and felt humbled, so you can imagine how I felt after receiving [90% of the vote](#) in this election. I'm still stunned, if I'm honest.

This result was on a turnout of 54.9% voters, just a little down on the 57.4% figure of 2019. Across the council area, most wards saw turnout in the mid 30s, hence the residents of Aspley & Woburn have for the second consecutive election engaged strongly in the Local Elections.

Thank you to the team of people who have supported me over the last four years, delivering the In Touch leaflet, and providing endless moral support.

Thank you to Lorraine King for supporting me on this journey, being so calm and collected at the count, and challenging the draft result (presented before declaration) after noticing that 50 votes for Labour had been erroneously placed into the Liberal Democrat pile.

I also wish to congratulate my fellow candidates for joining me to watch the votes counted in good spirits.

With your endorsement, I will carry on working for you to ensure that the council delivers the services you expect. I must be honest: it's never easy and I can't solve every problem, but I understand you want a councillor who focuses the council on getting the basics right and that remains my priority.

We're all equal

I wanted to tell you a little about the count, before discussing the profound change that took place on the council.

Election to a principle council is a nerve-wracking process. It doesn't matter what role a councillor enjoys (leader, cabinet member, committee chair, or general dogsbody like me), we all walk into the count knowing that we could be ejected from the council at the will of residents.

Candidates wait patiently and observe a process managed by council officers. The count process for Aspley & Woburn took 90 minutes. For larger wards, such as Ampthill or Biggleswade, it took many (long) hours.

The draft result is shown to the candidates and if the result is tight, a recount can be requested. In Dunstable South, circa three recounts took place before the an Independent candidate lost by two votes to Conservative Phil Crawley.

At this election, 19 Conservative councillors were shown the door by residents. The new council, which includes four new seats after a boundary review, compromises of:

- 27 Independent (up 11)
- 20 Conservative (down 19)
- 10 Liberal Democrat (up 7)
- 5 Labour (up 4)
- 1 Green Party (up 1)

I would like to wish former colleagues well in their future endeavour and thank them for their contribution to the council.

An independent dawn

On Thursday, Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) elected Independent Councillor Cllr Adam Zerny as Leader of the Council. The first ever Independent Leader of CBC, or any of its predecessors, and the first Independent Leader of any significant Unitary Authority.

A truly momentous event in the history of Local Government. You can listen to my proposal speech for Cllr Zerny [here](#).

Cllr Zerny has appointed a team of Independent councillors who will lead the various departments, and those appointments were noted by the council. I was appointed the lead councillor for finance and constitutional reform. With the council in No Overall Control, the administration will be attempting to reach consensus with others wherever possible. It's a huge honour, and we're ready for the challenge.

May I say, it was also lovely to see a busy public gallery, including my predecessor, joining us for the event.

Modernisation

A little over four years ago, when you first elected me as your Independent representative at CBC, I joined a council that felt like a dusty relic of the 1970s:

- meetings being held during the day time (10am), inconvenient to most people who work, with no ability to attend via video link.
- special taxpayer funded allowances that were completely out of sync those who work.
- a head office at Chicksands, inconveniently located to most of people it serves.

We argued strongly for change over the last four years, and some progress was made - but not enough.

The new administration hopes to address some of the above, by introducing more evening meetings (so more people with day jobs can attend), encouraging a greater focus on technology so you can ask a question more easily (via remote video), and a review of those allowances.

We'll also be looking at whether some meetings can take place in "satellite" locations, where major issues (to say, Dunstable or Leighton Buzzard) can be located near the people most impacted.

Cutting allowances

Upon taking office, Cllr Zerny announced an immediate cut to the allowances typically paid to councillors forming the administration, which will free up over £110k for spending on our priorities – such as tackling fly tipping. And he will ask the Independent Remuneration Panel to review the myriad of councillor special allowances at its earliest opportunity.

Proper scrutiny

In the past, the the Conservatives gave all the scrutiny committee chair positions to themselves. They scrutinised themselves, and it didn't work.

The Independents have already scrapped this regime, with these important roles shared

proportionally amongst the political groups - the Conservatives will play a significant and leading role in scrutiny.

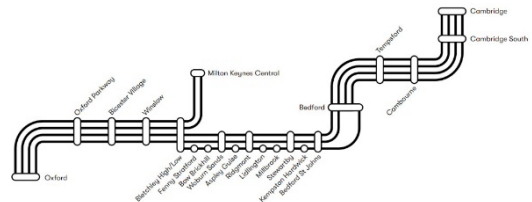
Difficult decisions

I've only been in my new role one day, and I'm already horrified. A council running an annual £9m deficit, a £320m capital programme over four years that isn't affordable with interest rates where they are now, efficiencies that are unlikely to be made and numerous (mostly expensive) decisions simply "parked" until after the election.

There are huge challenges ahead of us. We will get it wrong on occasion and in advance we request your understanding. But we will learn and we aim to improve the council for you and your family.

East West Rail

East West Rail (EWR) is now consulting on its (long awaited) proposal for completing the Oxford to Cambridge rail line.



Whilst the Oxford to Bletchley phase is well underway and due for completion within a couple of years, the two remaining sections (Bletchley to Bedford and Bedford to Cambridge) have been kept under wraps, but are now being opened up for public consultation.

Clearly, funding has been heavily cut back and the Marston Valley line will remain largely intact but with a reduced service. Notable changes include:

- a reduction in the line speed - from 100mph to a figure between the current speed (60mph) and 100mph.
- a reduction in the number of services running on the line, which in turn allows some level crossings to remain open.
- no changes (given the map) to station locations.
- no new bridges, and hence Bow Brickhill crossing likely to be more congested than ever.

The service pattern diagram, attached, shows four services per hour from Oxford to MK, and Bedford to Cambridge, but three per hour between Bletchley and Bedford.

The proposals for this area include:

- Woburn Sands and Aspley Guise stations to remain as currently located.

- Level crossings to remain open, although the word “potentially” sits around the Woburn Sands crossing, perhaps due to the sheer amount of road traffic using it compared to Aspley Guise.

EWR is also looking carefully at increasing freight usage, with a target of an additional two freight trains per day in each direction. EWR admits it would require more funding to provide additional capacity.

Consultation events

EWR will be in Woburn Sands at the Summerlin Centre, 30th June at 2pm. You can read the full consultation [here](#).

Finally, I'm always here to help you solve your council related problems and I'm delighted to be getting back to the task of being your local councillor after a long election campaign.

John Baker

Cllr John Baker, Independent, [Aspley & Woburn](#).

Working for local residents, all year round.

Report on Eversholt Church activities in the last year

Since my last report, we have sadly said goodbye to our Rector, Steve Nuth, who retired at the end of May'22, and our lay reader Malcolm Curtis who retired in June. Since then our monthly Holy Communion service was usually taken by Reverend Anne Barker, the Bedford Prison Chaplain, with our other service on the first Sunday of the month being taken by our Churchwarden, Rita Chidley. Also while the coronavirus restrictions were in place we had the benefit of the online services produced by the team in Woburn church.

After Steve had left, we were allowed to advertise for a new incumbent, which is quite a lengthy process, and which resulted in our being very happy to welcome the Reverend Rachel Snow as Rector of Eversholt and the Woburn Benefice. She and her husband are living in the Vicarage in Woburn.

She was formally introduced in Woburn Church on March 14th and has been conducting services for us at Eversholt twice a month since then.

With Rachel's guidance, we have now decided to have an Evensong service at 5 o'clock on the third Sunday of each of the summer months when we hope to welcome more members of the village and their children to meet Rachel.

The first Evensong service will be on June 18th with drinks and nibbles after.

The 9 o'clock Holy Communion service will continue on the first Sunday of each month.

The Parochial Church Council, or PCC for short, that runs Eversholt church has two Churchwardens, Rita Chidley and Ann Clarkson, the Secretary is Carolyn Howell, Treasurer Chris Hawkes, Organist Richard Ireland with Sandy Smith, Mary Summers and myself and we are very happy to have Clare Faysse and Duncan Arthur who joined us during the year.

We meet about 5 times each year and often end up discussing how to best maintain the church building.

As I mentioned last year, we have had a serious problem with the church heating. The old cast iron pipes to the radiators were leaking and eventually we had to renew the entire run around the church interior which cost £18,060. It cost £2,869 to maintain the churchyard and we had to pay a Parish Share of £12,449 to the Diocesan Board of Finance, so our expenditure was even more than usual. We have to have an architect's report, called a Quinquennial, done every 5 years to check on any health and safety issues and urgent repairs needed. It was done this year and the report was fairly good except that some of the stonework on a window in the tower needs to be replaced and the painting of the Angels on the wall above the cupboard inside the church needs renovating.

We do have the £5,000 insurance money from the theft of the St Michael on the war memorial which we hope to replace this year with a cross and poppies design made by the designer of Catherine & Bill Pougher's metal gate. I think it will look attractive but it will not be worth nearly as much as Edward Aveling Green's bronze statue, so we hope that it won't be such a target for thieves.

Concerning our income, we received £10,000 from the Parochial Charity and £665 from the Parish Council but our donors contributions and church collection money was less than usual, so our reserves are dwindling and we would be very grateful if the Parish Council could be persuaded to increase their churchyard grant.

Lastly, I must say how grateful we are for all the volunteers, those who ring the bells, the men who help maintain the churchyard and the ladies who do wonderful flower arrangements, and to Eversholt School who encourage the children to sing in the church and to make wonderful Easter gardens, and Food Bank donations at Christmas. Our new Rector is very happy to become involved with the school and is also looking forward to meeting people after the Evensong services, so we look forward to an even greater contact with the village community.

Apologies, I can't be there in person to share news from Eversholt Lower School.

We have had another really successful year.

With the extra land we have leased from the Bedford estate, we now offer Forest School throughout the school. Forest School supports play, exploration, supported risk-taking alongside outside, inspirational learning processes. Forest School is the top three of the children's favourite things about school.

Thank you to the village community who came to support our Christmas Fare. This is a lovely return after being unable to hold it due to Covid for the last two years. We raised over £2000 for the school.

The children took part in the Eversholt amble in the autumn term. It's important for the children to get to know our village beyond the school gates. We had lots of support and sponsors, and this event raised over £4000 for the school.

Fundraising is vital for the running of the school's extracurricular activities. As you may be aware, budgets for schools are tight.

The school has seen an increase in children with special educational needs. We have employed additional staff to offer 1:1 support to work alongside specific pupils. This extra cost was not budgeted for when we set our budget last year.

We converted the old SEN room into a sensory room during the summer holidays. Time in the room is an essential timetabled activity for some children. We are progressing with converting our old pond area into a sensory garden. This will include space for our daily sensory circuit sessions and a quiet space for children.

The school has been recognised for our results from the DfE phonics screen from June 2022. This phonics screen is taken by all Year One children aged 5 and 6. We achieved 100% pass rate putting us in the top 1% of schools in the country. We recently had a letter from Nick Clegg congratulating the school on this achievement.

Our school numbers are looking strong. We have a full cohort joining us in reception in September, with 9 currently attending as our nursery children. We also have six children on our waiting list. This is great news for the school and shows we continue to be a well-respected sought-after school.

We've had two very successful residential trips this year. Our Year 3s spent three days at a PGL outdoor adventure centre, and our Year 4s have just returned from spending 4 days in York. We have the Year 2 sleepover in school left to look forward to this term.

A new initiative we are embracing is becoming an OPAL (Outdoor play and learning) school. We are excited about embarking on this programme, and the benefits for the school include more enjoyment of school, less teaching time lost to disputes between children, fewer accidents and greatly improved behaviour through given opportunities of physical activity, socialisation, cooperation, coordination, resilience, creativity, imagination and enjoyment all through improved play.

All staff have taken undertaken Dyslexia training and we will be accredited now as a dyslexic-friendly school.

Unfortunately, our Coronation plans were a bit of a washout due to the weather, but the children could still parade their floats and perform to their parents, all squashed into the hall. We want to thank the residents of Church End for the early hanging of their bunting. The children really enjoyed seeing it the week before the festivities.

The school was invited to be part of the Woburn Estate Christmas Carol service, which is always a lovely way to begin the Christmas festivities. I was also honoured to be asked to represent the school at the installation of our new vicar Reverend Rachel Snow. She has already been in school to deliver an assembly, and we look forward to working together in the future.

Swimming is due to start after half term. We are now able to offer swimming for all children in school. It is an important life skill, and we are lucky to have such a wonderful resource on our doorstep. Thank you again to the chair and committee for enabling us to do this.

We still have our annual Leavers vs Stayers Cricket, which is taking place on June 18. Please do come on support if you're passing. There is always some great cricket to watch. We then have our sports day, followed by the key stage two playing their recorders in a musical concert at the Grove Theatre in Dunstable.

Eversholt Parish Council AGM May 2023

The Parish Council meets on the last Tuesday of the month (except in August and December) at 7.30pm in the village hall and these meetings are open to everyone. I would like to express my thanks to all of our councillors for all of their hard work, dedication and support.

We continue to address day to day matters such as potholes which affect our environment here in Eversholt and we endeavour to ensure that such issues are dealt with as speedily as possible by Central Bedfordshire Council.

We are currently putting together a submission to Central Bedfordshire Council about measures which could be considered to help prevent accidents on the C100 at Water End Barns by better warnings for road users. The railings along New Water End have been damaged several times and recently a car veered across the road and collided with the brick wall outside Water End Barns which could have been a very serious incident not mention the costs involved in repairs. Recently, a “walkabout” has taken place with a representative from Central Bedfordshire Council to look at any other current issues with our roads, verges and signage.

We started a dialogue last year with the Bedford Probation Service about the painting of the railings around the cricket and recreation ground by people on the Community Payback Scheme. Some work began but there were difficulties in coordinating the work due to various reasons and the Parish Council are now looking at alternative solutions in order to get the work completed within a reasonable time frame.

Other current matters which have been dealt with include the refurbishment of the village notice boards which we are now in the process of getting new locks for; secondly, the possibility of having a village flagpole and/or beacon which we have shelved for now, due to not identifying a suitable safe site and thirdly, we have been investigating speed control measures such as digital speed displays which, due to the layout of our village, would mean at least four such displays being erected at various points throughout Eversholt. Many residents are not happy about further street furniture on our lanes. The SpeedWatch Scheme has not continued because the rules about where these can be sited means that there are only a couple of areas in Eversholt where SpeedWatch can be put into operation and this meant that the worth of the SpeedWatch Scheme is actually not worth the effort of arranging it and that of the volunteers’ time.

We are monitoring Brook End Bank and hope to see this being repaired sometime in this new financial year by Central Bedfordshire Council.

Planning applications are always discussed and considered in the light of any resident’s concerns or support. We submit our decisions to Central Bedfordshire Council and the final decision is theirs.

The About Eversholt publication is up and running again. We are grateful to Lizzie Barnicoat and the village volunteers who coordinate, edit and distribute it to every house in Eversholt.

The Parish Council is actively supported by our District Councillor John Baker, and he adds an extra voice to any issues not being dealt with in a speedy manner by Central Bedfordshire Council.

The minutes of our meetings can be found on the website.

Eversholt Parochial Charity

TRUSTEES REPORT **FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2022**

1. ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

In February 2022 we welcomed Sarah Denton to the Charity. Sarah is a long-term resident of Eversholt, raising her family here and also with strong local connections. The trustees were very pleased that she agreed to join us.

On 21st February existing trustee Steven Smith was identified as the representative of the Village Hall Committee.

In May our Reverend, Steven Nuth retired, and this trustee role became vacant pending the recruitment of his successor.

In June trustees were pleased to be able to meet to remember our late friend and trustee, Robin Smith, by gathering to mark the installation of a memorial bench adjacent to the swimming pool and rec where he spent so many happy hours with his grandchildren.

2. PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Our land agents, Carter Jonas LLP, continued to manage the estate on a day-to-day basis with regular communications to the chair, property sub-group, and all trustees.

Working with our managing agents the trustees explored the implications of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards which expect landlords to upgrade their buildings' Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) by 2025. The implications are that all new tenancies must have an EPC rating of at least Band C from 31st December 2025 and for existing tenancies this date is from 31st December 2028. The trustees were advised that there are some exemptions within the regulations.

The trustees and managing agents also undertook a land and property opportunities review for the long-term property management, investment potential and strategies of the Charity. The trustees recognise the responsibility of managing these significant assets and ensuring that our objectives are met for the beneficiaries of the charity.

The Green Man

Following the financial support provided by the charity during Covid-19 lockdown restrictions the trustees were pleased to see and support The Green Man fully reopened for business during 2022.

However, the tenants continued to report challenging trading conditions, most likely linked to the cost-of-living crisis. Discussions were had in relation to the full repairing lease and the tenants' responsibilities in that respect.

In early summer 2022 The Green Man had a significant leak to a mains water pipe under the ladies toilets. Reinstatement works were extensive and required an insurance claim.

Town Farmhouse Barns

The structural repairs to resolve failures in the building started in 2021 were completed. This process was frustrated by the need to find a new building firm due to the original contractors going out of business. This work was still managed and completed within the building insurance budget.

Elsewhere – Properties & Land

Eversholt Parochial Charity

All other land and properties remained tenanted, with various repairs and rent reviews undertaken as necessary.

3. FINANCIAL & BANKING SUMMARY

For 2022 the approximate figures are:

£106,000	Income
£35,000	Costs
£30,000	Thirds
£41,000	Ringfenced for dilapidation and development of properties

4. DISTRIBUTIONS – ‘THE THIRDS’ SUMMARY

In 2021 a total of £30,000 was allocated to the Thirds. £10,000 to each.

a) Wellbeing Third

This is our most active Third with much effort put in by a number of trustees and other local volunteers, we are so grateful for their kindness, time and varied contributions.

In 2022 a total of 24 residents received an award of £250 from the Wellbeing Third. In addition to these individual awards the Charity also funded;

Village Agent

The Charity continued its commitment the Village Agent scheme led by Lizzie Barnicoat. Lizzie continued to be very busy and remains contracted to us for 12 hours per month.

In the past year:

7 Attendance Allowances have been completed and awarded – this totals approx £24,000 pa
4 Blue Badge successful applications
3 households supported with housing issues

Plus Lizzie offers a very valuable friendly, listening ear and has distributed various practical aids to help around the home and referrals to Community Transport services to increase independence.

Lizzie Lunches

Village Hall lunches recommenced in March followed by an Easter tea and then by six more lunches including the fish and chip lunch where Milton Bryan join us. In December, the Lizzie Lunchers (some 26 strong) were given a sneak preview of the school's nativity play which was excellent.

Chair Based Exercise Class

In 2022 trustees established regular chair yoga classes. The aim of these exercises are to help people with balance and some strength, increase mobility and flexibility, help avoid falls alongside an increased chance for socialisation and to have fun.

Following an initial trial period where a small (but not required) suggested weekly contribution to costs was requested, an application was made to Central Bedfordshire Council for an 'active community grant' to fund Chair Yoga. The Charity were very pleased that this application proved successful as we were then able to provide this class at no cost and also open to a wider audience drawn from the surrounding villages. An average of 24 people attend the classes.

Registered Charity No. 200693 Registered at 20 Leighton Street, Woburn, Bedfordshire, MK17 9PH

Eversholt Parochial Charity

About Eversholt

Working with Eversholt Parish Council, the Parochial Charity led on bringing back the village newsletter by trustees taking a role on ensuring that content was produced, and the charity also provided funding of an external editor to prepare each edition. The Parish Council funded printing costs and organised circulation. The reintroduction of this newsletter has proved very successful in reinforcing the connections between residents and also to ensure that the activities arranged by the Parochial Charity reach a wide audience to increase participation.

b) Village and Education Third

We received and agreed Further Education Awards to 11 individuals of £400 each following receipt of their written applications, cheques were raised, signed and sent to those individuals. These Further Education Award applications are required to be received by the Clerk prior to August 31st of any year for consideration.

An 'Annual Discretionary Award' of £5,420.00 was made to Eversholt Lower School.

c) Church Third

The Church Third of £10,000 was awarded to the Eversholt Parochial Church Council to assist with the care of the fabric of the church and churchyard. Trustees attended meetings in relation to the recruitment of a new Vicar who will become a trustee of the charity once appointed.

5. GOING FORWARD; 2023

The trustees will continue to efficiently manage the estate with the assistance of the managing agents and professional accountancy services to ensure the Charity is fit for purpose. We are also discussing the potential for renewable energy projects and development projects alongside the refurbishment of property as necessary.

We intend to continue with the varied programme of Wellbeing Third activities and we are keen to broaden attendance to connect with as wide a demographic from our community as possible.

Eversholt Swimming Pool - Annual Report for Eversholt Parish Council - May 2023

Eversholt Swimming Pool had a successful 2022. Visitor numbers were on a par with prior pre covid seasons and private hire and early morning adult swim sessions proved popular.

Planning for the refurbishment of the changing rooms and kiosk area is ongoing and is expected to progress further in the latter part of this year once the pool season completes. The refurbishment is expected to include the installation of solar panels in order to increase energy efficiency and reduce the pool's carbon footprint. Opportunities for this are being investigated alongside the Village Hall's own plans for the use of this technology.

Significant changes occurred with the Eversholt Swimming Pool Committee in 2022 with the addition of a number of new members and the 'retirement' of a number of existing ones. Andrea Cawthorne, Jess and Dave Bottle, Nick Whyte and James Allen all stepped down from the committee, with Michelle Cox-Burnage, Amanda Heyes and Suzanne Harmer joining. The committee would like to thank all the retiring members for their work over the years in helping to keep the swimming pool functioning.

For 2023, the pool is set to open on Saturday 27th May and will continue to offer pre-booked swimming sessions as well as season ticket passes.

A number of young people from the village have once again been sponsored by Eversholt Pool and have successfully completed or are due to undertake the National Lifeguard qualification. Additionally, the pool continues to provide employment to under 16-year-olds from Eversholt and the surrounding villages for kiosk work, in order to provide retail working experience.

Given the current economic climate, a main focus this year for the pool will be on controlling costs and expenditure (which are expected to increase significantly) and maximising revenue, in order to ensure the continued operation of the pool for the foreseeable future.

Adam Miller

Chairperson

Eversholt Swimming Pool

VILLAGE HALL & RECREATION GROUND CHARITY
REPORT OF THE CHAIR TO THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING (May 2023)

OPERATIONS

2022 was the first full year of being open following the pandemic. The Hall is now well used by the village with regularly sessions for the Lizzy Lunches, Chair Yoga, dance classes, young farmers and meetings of village committees.

The biggest source of income for the Charity is the hire of the Hall for weddings. 2022 was very busy with pent up demand following the pandemic and 2023 will be similarly busy. Bookings to non residents are restricted to ensure that at least one Saturday per month (2 in summer months) are available for resident bookings although take up on these is relatively low.

The Recreation Ground is also a well used facility. The ground and the hall were used for the Jubilee celebrations and a tree to commemorate the Jubilee was planted near the playground area. During summer the multi-play unit had to be closed for a while due to safety issues, but this was repaired as soon as practical and the swing which had been missing for some time was also replaced.

Hall maintenance work has continued throughout the period with significant improvements being made to the Hall in 2022 and early 2023. The floor of the main hall was replaced as were the rear doors in the lobby area. The front roof elevation was also replaced and unfortunately revealed a need to replace the remainder of the roof. The committee are currently investigating whether the roof repairs can be combined with the installation of solar panels, which will help reduce our very significant electricity costs, or whether there is a more optimum green energy solution. Any solution should also benefit the pool as currently there is a shared supply.

FINANCIAL

Financially the charity is in a good position. Income for 2022 was £52k comprising £46k from Village Hall activities and £6k of covid related grants from Central Beds Council. 2023 should be again a good year for income as wedding bookings are strong. That said costs are substantial and the charity recorded only very small surplus in 2022.

In 2022 we were protected from rising energy costs due to being on a fixed tariff but in 2023 we moved to a new tariff and the increased electricity cost will add financial pressure which means a more economic energy solution and securing funding to implement is important.

COMMITTEE

I have been Chair since March 2021 and the Committee currently has 12 members, with 6 members representing village organisations (Church, Parish Council, Parochial Charity, Cricket, Tennis & Pool) and 6 general members. All committee members are volunteers and their contribution is very much appreciated.