

## Chair's report 6<sup>th</sup> May 2025

### 1/ Thank yous

To members of last year's committee who stood down:

- Kathryn Robinson-Burge, Jackie Leow & Nick Kennedy's (whose minutes were commented on as 'exemplary' during our Hallmark process!)

To current committee members:

- Alison Walker – bookings secretary, kitchen lead, soup and puds organiser, instrumental in achieving Somerset Council Food Hygiene level 5 rating; also organising individual training for safe food handling;
- Carol Windeatt – treasurer, publicity, & policy writing which greatly contributed to the hall's Hallmark 1 award;
- Jill Payne – lead on Health & Safety, fire, Safeguarding, maintenance (organising hall redecoration & squirrel removal!);
- Tracey – liaison with maintenance contractors, organising events – last summer's sports day & recent Games Night, running the bar and BBQ.
- Village organisations. We started the year ensuring that one another's diaries didn't clash but this has grown into more collaboration – eg the sports day, and working with the church at the summer and Christmas fetes.

In addition many other volunteers eg soup and puds contributors, opening up hall & meeting workmen, putting up and taking down tables and chairs and marquees for events.

### 2/ The last year

The hall has had a very busy year, with both one off events eg Hapless Sailors' concert, quiz night, sports day, support to the church summer fete, Christmas fete, Sunday lunch, games night and regular activities eg soup & puds, weekly Pilates and Yoga groups, Hapless Sailors rehearsals, short mat bowls and Halse Players rehearsals.

In addition we have been engaged in several programmes.

- the Hallmark 1 programme where we were required to evidence our procedures, maintenance etc
- Food Safety. Having contacted Somerset Council we are classified as a food business and were vetted, achieving the top rating. It's unlikely that we'll need to be vetted again for 3 years. Fortunately as volunteers contribute to catering needs no more than monthly – soup, puds, cakes etc their kitchens do not need to be approved!
- Somerset Decarbonisation programme. At the village halls conference last year there was a big focus on communities reducing carbon usage with presentations by various groups. As a committee we decided to participate and aim to reduce our consumption. This entailed a 'DIY' energy audit and the compilation of a carbon reduction plan. On submitting these we were fortunate to be awarded a free

professional audit, the findings of which combined with our own, formed the basis of a grant application to the Somerset County Foundation to carry out more roof insulation, better fitting door and window repairs and more energy efficient appliances. Funders also need to be assured that any grants are going to a worthwhile cause, so we carried out a consultation with the village. Thanks to everyone who completed our questionnaire. We expect to hear whether we have been successful by the end of May.

- ACRE (Action for Communities in Rural England) promoted a Village Halls' week in March, the theme 'celebrating volunteers'. For such a small village there is a veritable army of volunteers, for all organisations, not just the village hall, all contributing to social cohesion, so we created some displays; also taking the opportunity of adding some of the hall's history.

### 3/ Community Council for Somerset (CCS)

We have renewed our membership with CCs as we have seen many benefits – advice and training, meetings/ seminars with the opportunity to network with other village halls.

### 4/ Insurance

Last year we agreed a 3 year deal with our broker – Allied Westminster. This provides us with an annual discount to our premium. We have also received discounts for achieving Hallmark level 1 and having the cost of the rebuild of the hall brought up to date.