Woodcote Village Hall Charity

Chairman's Report to the Annual General Meeting

Woodcote Village Hall

18th May 2026

The Woodcote Village Hall Charity is registered with the Charity Commission (number 304393) with the charitable aim of '*providing and maintaining a village hall for the use of the inhabitants of the parish of Woodcote and surrounding District*.'

The Trustees are:

- Geoffrey Botting — Chairman
- John Worsfold — Vice-chairman
- Ken Ison
- Sam Peates
- Malcolm Smith

David Booth

I reported last year on the poor health of David Booth, our Treasurer. It is with great sadness that I have to report that David died in 2025.

David contributed greatly to the Woodcote community. As Treasurer of the Charity, he kept a close eye on our always challenging finances and steered the Charity through the COVID enforced shut down. He was a quiet source of valued advice and expertise who will be greatly missed.

Governance and Trusteeship

The Parish Council are still registered with the Land Registry as the owner of the Hall. During the 2026-26 year Malcolm Smith has worked with the Parish Council and respective solicitors to ensure that the ownership is clear and best fitted to the respective roles of the Charity and the Council. We are confident that this work ill be completed during our 2026-27 year.

The Trustees are grateful to Malcolm and the Council clerks for their work and to the Council for their support with the significant costs incurred.

Establishment of the Woodcote Village Hall CIO.

Clarification of the ownership of the Hall is one part of a two-part programme to strengthen the Charity's ability to continue as an improving community asset. The second part is to update an untidy, 60-year-old constitution that is no longer supports, as effectively as it could, the delivery of the Charity's objectives in the second half of the decade and, ideally beyond.

To that end, during the year the Trustees agreed that the charitable objectives would be better delivered through a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Among other benefits this means:

- the charity can enter contracts, employ staff, lease property, and hold assets in its own name;
- trustees have limited liability, normally protecting them from personal financial risk unless they act negligently or outside their powers; and
- the organisation is regulated solely by the Charity Commission, not Companies House, reducing the administrative burden.

I'm pleased to report that though the considerable efforts of Malcolm Smith the CIO has now been established. On 28 April 2026 an e-mail from the Charity Commission confirmed that they '*were satisfied that WOODCOTE VILLAGE HALL is a charity and it has been entered onto the Register of Charities with the Registered Charity Number 1217830*.'

Work is still necessary to complete the transfer of the current charity to the CIO, but the Trustee Board is grateful to Malcolm for what is a significant achievememt.

Operating Income and Expenditure

As reported at last year's AGM the Trustees agreed to align the Charity's financial year with that of the Council. As a result, the 2025-26 financial year ran from 01-Mar-25 to 31-Mar-26.

The loss of David Booth left the Charity without a treasurer. We were fortunate, however, that Malcolm Smith took over the role and acted as Treasurer during the remainder of the 2025-26. His report will follow. However:

i. the Charity recorded a small loss at the end of its extended financial year;
ii. this loss followed considerable expenditure on refurbishment and new facilities funded from operating income;
iii. we expect 202627 year to be difficult:
    - there will be a will be a loss of income, historically some 6% of rental income, while the roof is being repaired; and
    - there are significant increases in labour costs and, potentially, increases in utility costs.
iv. the loss will be partially offset by an increase of 1% in bookings but, overall, with a projected operating margin of £160 it is unlikely that the Charity will be able to fund much refurbishment or new facilities from operating income during 2026-27.

Overall, it has been a successful 13 months, and the Trustees would like to thank:

- Malcom Smith as acting Treasurer;
- Louisa Devismes, our Hall Manager,
- the organisers of the Summer Fete,
- the Woodcote Charitable Association for their generous donation which, like many before it, continue to contribute to improving the Hall's facilities;
- Maggie Filipova-Rivers for a grant from OCC; and
- the Parish Council for their grant support.

Hall Management

The Hall Manager, with support from Paul Carter, continues to maintain the physical state of the Hall. This is no small task for a heavily used, old building with ageing heating and leaky windows and roofs. Considerable effort has gone into the boilers, which have been rewired to reduce the risk of failure, and the hot water system. In addition, the kitchen, pavilion toilets, stage toilet, function room and lobby's have all been redecorated. Among the improvements this year are:

- upgraded Main Hall lobby entrances;
- new kitchen appliances including a refrigerator and a quick cycle domestic dishwasher;

- new chairs and tables for the Function Room;
- a new external, secure, bin store; and,
- the removal of the glass bricks and installation of new double doors between the Main Hall and Pavilion to improve both soundproofing and appearance.

The Trustees remain concerned, however, about the crumbling exterior of the Hall, the constant attention needed to maintain the Hall's sanitation facilities and users parking in a manner that blocks the wheelchair exits.

Hall Development

Flat Roof Replacement

The flat roof over the Pavilion and Changing Rooms has been leaking in recent years. Despite repeated repairs it continues to fail in the event of downpours and prolonged spells of rain damaging the walls, electrical components and the fire alarm.

We are fortunate that the Parish Council plan to replace the flat roof during August. They have specified the work, are currently seeking tenders and will be managing the work during August this year. The roof has been failing for many years, and the Trustees are immensely grateful to the Council for both funding and leading this work. Safety requires that the building is closed during the work and thus the Hall will be closed from Monday 27-July to Monday 31-August**.**

Marketing and Events

This year has seen a completely new website which continues to attract a lot of attention and is an essential part of promoting the use of the Hall. In addition, the Hall Manager successfully applied for an alcohol licence for the Hall.

For the 13-month period 01-Mar-25 to 31-Mar-26 booking were up more than 6% to more than 1400 which, at a very conservative estimate, and excluding audiences for music, drama, village events suggests that over 14000 used the Hall during that period. Towards the end of that period, however, there was an indication that demand is softening as economic uncertainty increases.

Next Year

The Charity has three key objectives for the forthcoming year:

1. support the Parish Council to ensure that the Hall is back in operation following their replacement of the flat roof;
2. complete the transition of the Charity to a CIO and enlarge the Trustee Board; and
3. begin work to reduce the Hall's carbon footprint and utility costs. The first step in this was an environmental audit from the Low Carbon Hub conducted on the 15-May-26.

In addition, and subject to funding the Trustees would like to:

- Replace the ramp and steps outside the Hall's double doors.
- Refurbish the Function Room toilets.
- Upgrade the heating system to include smart thermostats.

Longer Term

We are rapidly approaching a limit on bookings growth resulting from the restrictive internal layout of the Hall. Whilst we can only deal with one major project at a time, and I would like to see a joint Council/Charity plan developed for modifications to the internal structure and to improve energy efficiency.

The Youth Club

We remain concerned about the future of the Youth Centre. There has been a long association with the Hall, and it is our earnest hope that volunteers are found to replace the existing team who have contributed so much to the lives of Woodcote's young people.

Finally

As chair during some interesting times, I'd like to record my thanks to the Trustees for their support and efforts on behalf of the Community, to Louisa for her enthusiasm and contribution, to Paul for his work, to the Village Fete team, the many others who have helped us, and to those who have weathered the various plumbing, flooding and heating crises during the last year.
I would also, on behalf of the Trustees like to record our appreciation of the support from Kevin Davies, the Chair of the Parish Council, to Kevin Byrne for his calm advice and support, and to Nick Kolpin for getting us started on the task of environmental improvement. It is much appreciated by the Trustees.

I have already expressed our gratitude to the Parish Council but their project to replace the flat roof will make a major contribution to the continuing availability of the hall and hence the community.

Geoffrey Botting
Chairman, Woodcote Village Hall Charity Trustees
May 2026