

Item for Farthingstone Parish Council.

Farthingstone Village Hall Report.

John Acres (the new FVH Chairman) reported on a quiet year for the Village Hall (due to Covid) but nevertheless a financially successful year due to the generosity of Government grants designed to help village halls through the Covid Pandemic.

John Acres replaced Colin Benham as Chair at the last AGM. Christine Barrand had replaced Sue Stanton as Secretary and Malcolm Coulson had replaced John Acres as Treasurer. Jenny Clark (now Acres) remains as the Booking Clerk for those seeking accommodation at the Hall. 01327 361007.

The Trustees took full advantage of grants made available to compensate for the lockdown, receiving £17,597 in four separate grants. As a result, the end of year figures showed a record net surplus of £15,608 for the year. This is being invested to undertake essential repairs, improve facilities and provide a cushion against tougher times to come. Northants ACRE were praised for their helpful advice on grant aid during the Covid crisis – well worth the £40 annual subscription. Our outgoings were well below normal due to the lack of activity because of Covid. However, we will need to review our costs in the light of rapidly rising fuel prices

There were few public functions held in 2021. The main event was the October Harvest Festival, with proceeds being shared between the Church and the Joy Mead. Yoga started up again in the autumn on Monday mornings, after a long absence for Covid and there were a sprinkling of other private bookings and events once the lockdown was eased.

John explained that their ambition for 2022 was to provide a much greater range of events and facilities so that many more people use the hall and it becomes a real focus for the community. In addition to the regular events, we propose to introduce indoor bowls, cinema evenings and maybe even a Pantomime – subject to volunteer support and a willing cast.

John Acres Village Hall Chairman

Joy Mead Annual Report 2021

Charity name: Joy Mead Charity Trust (No. 304191)

Despite another year of Covid 19, life in the Joy Mead seemed almost back to normal in 2021, with the garden hosting a number of events as well as continuing to provide a lovely venue for visitors to relax or play in. A total of nearly 5000 people found their way through the gate.

Highlights of 2021:

- The grant of £9000 from the Finnis Scott Foundation enabled us to carry out essential spot repairs on most of the Cloister roof in May (the 8th side needs completely replacing when we have the approximately £70,000 necessary).
- Early in June the Joy Mead hosted another challenging and fun 'Farthingstone Foot Fest'.
- Later in June we opened our gardens for a second very successful 'Farthingstone Open Gardens' with the Joy Mead as the centerpiece providing all the teas and plant sales. We raised a fantastic total of £2700 for village charities of which just under £2000 came to the Joy Mead.
- July saw a lovely sociable get-together for the annual 'Tea' followed by a great concert night at the end of the month with 'Back in Time'.
- A number of exceedingly generous donations made during the year have boosted our reserves and demonstrated strong support for the Joy Mead. The reserves will be essential for the next stage of work on the Cloister roof.
- An outstanding year in terms of total income generated: in total, with grants, donations and income from events, our income was £29,000.
- Various private hires ranging from children's birthday parties to a works 'do' – with many thanks – for our local surgery.
- The best 'Christmas in the Cloisters' yet with the Cloisters packed with people, a massive queue for Santa, everyone having a great time – and over £1600 raised.

Maintenance carried on as usual with the mowing rota over the summer and spring and autumn tidy-ups as well as other tasks such as hedge-cutting and weedkilling. Many thanks to everyone who helped – we couldn't manage without you!

Looking ahead:

2022 is going to be a busy year with a number of events planned to celebrate the 100th birthday of the Joy Mead. The key dates are as follows:

Saturday 2 July - 'Wind in the Willows': an outdoor theatre production of the classic tale.

100th birthday weekend 15 – 17 July:

Friday 15 July - Evening concert of 'Popular Music and Music Hall Songs from 100 years ago' in costume by 'GreenMatthews' duo.

Saturday 16 July - Evening concert by 'Chain of Fools'. Motown Soul and R&B straight out of 'The Commitments' film.

Sunday 17 July - Afternoon '100th Birthday Party' with teas, games and music from the Abingdon Wind Band.

The next maintenance priority is the '8th side' of the Cloister roof which needs a complete overhaul. The total cost is likely to be around £70,000: taking into account our current reserves (and leaving £5000 contingency) we therefore need to raise about £35,000.

Other projects which need addressing are re-pointing sections of wall (as much as possible by volunteers) and finishing off re-laying and securing the final section of path for which we have had a quote of £3000.

Report from St Mary the Virgin for Parish Council May 2022

1. **Finance:** Current Balance £13497.45 of which £3000 is in restricted funds. For the year 2021 the Parish Share (what is paid to The Diocese for clergy etc) was £7344 of which £1560 was paid. The Diocese recognised that many parishes would not be able to pay in full and Farthingstone PCC decided to keep sufficient in its accounts so that it could continue with some of the work identified in the quinquennial. Most of the income came from regular giving, profit on the lottery and a share of the fund-raising activities in the village.
2. **Services:** When restrictions were lifted the normal pattern of services resumed; congregations are on average 5 or 6. However 25 attended The Harvest Festival and 58 The Carol Service.
3. **Funerals:** The funeral of Clarice Blackwell was held in the Church, followed by burial in the Cemetery. The ashes of Mary Murray and Reginald Hurley were interred in the Churchyard.
4. **Repairs:** The pinnacles on the Church Tower have been removed and are currently on the floor at the base of the tower, but they are beyond repair. The next job will be to repair some of the floor boards in the pews.
5. **General:** The Parish Council maintains The Churchyard and the clock and a number of individuals support the Church: undertaking repairs, helping with cleaning, providing flowers and participating in the lottery. At present the PCC has no secretary and there is an urgent need to appoint one.

2022 Annual Councillors Report

Cllrs Rupert Frost, David Smith and Jo Gilford

Dear Parish Councillors and Residents,

On May 6th last year we were honoured and privileged to be elected as your three ward councillors and have really enjoyed working with you since that time. Much of the past year has been spent dealing with the impact of the pandemic and WNC distributed over £1.5m to residents in our half of the county suffering hardship over the winter period. We also provided financial support to thousands of local businesses across West Northants to help get them through the pandemic, distributing grants totalling nearly £6m.

Daventry's new "ARC" cinema complex opened in March and we will deliver our first year on budget, setting a balanced budget for the year ahead and making robust plans to tackle financial challenges. The council answers 27,000 calls a month, with an additional 9,000 enquiries per month being handled via email. However we are of the problems some of you have had with contacting council officials and hope that the new phone system will facilitate a better service. We should be in a position to distribute a list of direct telephone numbers in the near future.

Work on HS2 continues to progress and a new HS2 warden had been appointed to ensure the construction work is controlled. A new highways contractor will start in September (to be announced in June) and we are acutely aware of the road problems that have built up in our part of the county over the past decade. Our road signs need cleaning urgently and we know many of our roads have been damaged by heavy goods vehicles and that remedial work over the past few years has not necessarily fixed the problems. We will keep discussing them in your meetings and do all we can to get them fixed as soon as the new contractor takes over.

WNC and Oxfordshire County Council have jointly made arrangements with Stagecoach West to fund the 200 service on its current timetable until 27th August. We are liaising with Cllr Phil Larratt, Cabinet Member for Transport, and council officers to ensure a permanent solution is in place after that time.

We are aware of the problems many of you have experienced with planning issues and expect service levels to improve in the next year as a new IT system is implemented. Before WNC was formed each of the four previous planning authorities had their own processes and IT, ways of conducting planning committees, managing any call-in of applications, managing the public interface in terms of planning applications, and enforcement procedures. West Northamptonshire Council is developing a new housing strategy and we want to make sure that it covers the housing issues important to residents and stakeholders so are encouraging everyone to complete the survey on the our website. We welcome your views and comments on the four draft themes, along with the suggested priorities that will help deliver them.

We try to respond promptly to your emails and always aim to have at least one of us present at your parish council meetings. We look forward to seeing you again soon and if there is anything we can help with in the meantime do let us know.