

Annual Meeting Report- Denham Community Council

May 2023 -24

The priority for Denham Community Council over the last year has continued to be the complete renovation of the Village Hall, in conjunction with Denham Parish Council.

At the start of this period, following engagement for over a year with the National Lottery, we were close to being awarded a substantial grant and had agreed to work with Needhams as the preferred building contractor for this project. Eventually in early September 2023, £150,000 of funding was agreed and work began on the Hall immediately. The funding was provided to the Parish Council and Community Council Trustees and members supported the delivery of the project on the ground.

It was estimated that the project would take around 4 months but unexpected additional work, issues with reconnecting the Hall back to the national grid for electricity, delays to funding flows and the impact of the very wet weather on work, especially the rendering of the external walls, have meant that the project has extended well beyond the time originally envisaged.

Throughout this time, the Community Council has continued to apply for grants to fully kit out the Hall on completion. This has resulted in a grant of £2,500 being secured from the Mid-Suffolk Council Small Grants team to fund a professional cooker, £1,000 from Councillor Matthew Hicks for kitchen equipment and £518 for a fridge and freezer from Adnams Community Trust. We have also been fortunate in the support of volunteers at the Red Feather Club, especially Duncan and Nat from the Monday night dance class who have donated over £1,000 to the project. We look forward to working with the Club in the future to support the amazing job they do in keeping the WW2 history of the area alive. We are also looking forward to working with other charities and organisations within Denham and surrounding villages, to ensure we use all available resources to improve the lives of residents and to enhance the wonderful rural environment we are so fortunate to live in.

Trustees have also focused on what will be required to run the Hall going forwards, including securing an alcohol license and other licenses for the performance of live and recorded music. The Community Council hopes to begin discussions shortly with the Parish Council to put in place the necessary documents to transfer the running of the Hall to them, while the Hall is retained in Trust for the Parish.

Plans are already underway for a community event to welcome people back to the Hall and as soon as we have a date for the Hall to be handed back to the Parish Council, we will update everyone on this. We hope that this will be an opportunity for members of the Denham community and beyond can join us to celebrate the return of the Hall to public use and to see the results of the renovation project. We will also be keen to explore new ideas for the use of the Hall and for future community events to ensure that it becomes a hub for the community.

Once the Hall is back in use, we would welcome anyone who would like to get involved in the running of the Hall and associated events, to engage with the Community Council. The true value of this project is not just the renovation of the building but how it is used and what it delivers for local people.

Future fundraising will include submitting a bid in October for CIL funding from the District Council to support the development of the outside area around the Hall.