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## Hawstead Community Council Chair's Report 2021-22

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Once again, the past 12 months have been challenging for Hawstead Village Hall. With the hall effectively closed March until May 2021, we began to reopen slowly, only to have many private events cancel due to uncertainty about COVID and permitted maximum numbers.

COVID-secure council elections took place on 6 May 2021. This was followed shortly thereafter by our first village social event for quite some time – our newly re-established Spring Plant Fair on Saturday 29 May. We benefited from sunny weather and welcomed lots of villagers to browse the plants and seedlings on offer while enjoying a hot drink and cake. Other summer village social events included a Nature Walk and Talk led by JC and CC, and our September Fete. We also staged our annual Seniors Christmas Lunch, despite concerns about rising COVID rates. Nevertheless, the event was a spectacular success and there were no reports of infection! We did, though cancel the Christmas drinks party, feeling it was an unnecessary risk this year.

For the village children, we fully funded pantomime tickets for the under-12s, and Hawstead's Christmas Elves and Easter Bunnies made home deliveries of chocolate coins and Easter eggs to all children aged 16 and under.

We hosted two weekly yoga sessions (Tuesday and Thursday) throughout the year, as well as a Thursday night fitness class and Hawstead Bowls Club on a Tuesday evening. In addition, the hall was used for a social event once every other month (moving to monthly from January 2022) by the MNDA (when judged safe to do so), and our local wine appreciation group also used the hall once a month for its meetings, moving to the main hall due to its popularity. The parish council hired the main hall bimonthly for its meetings, with some ad hoc smaller meetings accommodated in the meeting room. During lockdown, a villager (who is self-employed) started to use the meeting room all day Wednesday–Friday, and this had continued. WSBKA has also continued to use the hall for its monthly club meetings, as well as its usual spring training course. From April 2022 we re-established Friday Fish & Chip Nights on alternate Fridays, so popular during lockdown.

The Community Council has supported a number of charities with free hall hire. These have included Macmillan Cancer Support and Jessie's Fund. We have also worked with the local church team to offer a number of no-cost events for them, including the Advent service and Lent lunch.

Our Village Voice newsletter has continued, albeit published once every 2/3 months now. Villager AE compiles each edition, and SW edits/proofreads it. We are very grateful for their work. Issue 19 was published in April 2022.

We have again benefited from a closure/lost income grant, totalling £2,667 in this financial year. At present our bank account is very healthy, having also attracted lots of post-COVID weddings over the summer of 2022 and 2023. This financial year we have made a profit of ~£12,000 to date, although it is boosted because we have been unable to fill the paid role of bookings clerk and relied on a volunteer instead. Our current account stands at over £40,000. However, we are mindful of a number of significant expenditures being required in the next few years as the hall ages, including the replacement of damaged ridge tiles, new flooring, new curtains, new upholstered chairs, resurfacing of the play area and full replacement of the play area equipment (now more than 20 years old). We are reluctant to spend monies frivolously just because the bank account is so

healthy. We understand the significant costs coming our way in the very near future, and will replace equipment/refurbish the hall at the most opportune moment. We have, however, asked villagers for their ideas for spending these monies over the coming months.

As a Committee, JS has worked hard to manage building maintenance, helping to maintain the quality of the building fabric, fixtures and fittings. BB has offered his secretarial skills to keep minutes of our meetings, and ensured that the bins have been put out and brought back in for rubbish collection. LJ, our Treasurer, has worked hard to keep finances correctly accounted, as well as issuing bond refunds and paying invoices. CM has been focusing on social event management and community engagement, while AB has been dropping into the hall weekly to ensure housekeeping tasks are completed. SW has remained as chair, and has also been managing the bookings while we continue to look for a new Bookings Clerk.

Villager JW has kindly audited our accounts and helped with mowing the cut areas around the village hall, ably assisted by CP. We are also very grateful to resident JWe, who has been cutting grass regularly in the play area during the spring and summer months to ensure everything remains smart and tidy.

Going forward, the Community Council is seeking new members with the capacity to take on some level of responsibility, hopefully enabling our duties to be better shared within the community. We are keen to find an efficient and long-term Bookings Clerk, hopefully supported by a flexible caretaker and a dynamic volunteer committee.

SW

Hawstead Community Council

May 2022