

## **Earl Stonham Village Hall Annual Report – 2023-24**

The hall has had a successful year, with bookings mostly back to pre-pandemic levels. Supper Evenings continue to be well attended and these provide useful additional income to pay for ongoing upgrading work. Quiz nights have also been more popular this year with typically six teams competing and the attendance fee of £3 per person is donated to local charities.

The Car Charger in the car park that was installed as part of a Suffolk County scheme remains out of use. This is because the original management model resulted in the need to charge uncompetitive rates for its use, together with poor management and reporting by the company concerned. Suffolk County Council are in the process of going out to tender for a new way of managing these units which will hopefully solve the original issues and enable us to put the charger back into service later in the year.

Continuing with the car park, as you will probably have seen, the surface has been badly affected by the weather this winter with lots of potholes now apparent. Further top-dressing will take place in May to fill these in. As mentioned in earlier reports, creating a hard surface for the car park would be very expensive, however you have to start somewhere, and we have therefore decided that we need to start to plan for this in the future. We have therefore set up a ring-fenced fund within the hall accounts to fund future maintenance and upgrading work. The proceeds from the recycling bins and surcharges for large hall bookings are already being reserved for this fund. Also the street light by the car park entrance has been re-instated – the replacement was supplied by the parish council but will be managed and funded going forward by the hall, so removing the cost of this from the PC.

The formal lease on the Bowls Club was agreed in December 23. The extension of the car park into part of the old bowls green has already been very successful, providing up to 26 additional spaces when needed. This area is being kept secured at the moment and only opened when needed in order to ensure it is not damaged by anti-social use. Early concerns about how well the grass surface would fare have so far proved unfounded as even with the very wet winter the grass is standing up well.

The far side of the Bowls Green that we seeded last year as a wildflower meadow has not proved to be quite so successful and it would seem all we achieved was to feed the local bird population!. We have tried again this year and have installed some low-tech bird scaring so hopefully we will be more successful and we will all be impressed with a stunning array of wild flowers!

Turning to the bowls club buildings themselves, a tenant offered to use the clubhouse in the autumn last year and with volunteer help, the room was repaired and repainted and new steps installed up to the bowls green. This tenancy was short lived but it also showed up a major structural problem with the back wall of the clubhouse. This needed extensive rebuilding and has now been clad in timber to provide long term stability and weather protection. It looks likely that similar work will be needed in future on the remaining walls but until a long term use has been identified for the building, we will simply continue to keep it weather proof. The remaining buildings are currently being used for storage but the long term plan is to convert the portacabin to a toilet block but once again this will have to wait until we have a definite use for the buildings and we have a secure revenue stream.

**Tony Turner**  
**Chairman - Earl Stonham Village Hall Management Committee**

