

Woodton Village Hall Charity

Annual General Meeting

18 July 2026 – 10am to 12pm

Trustees present: Caroline Wells (CW), Janet Ridden (JR), Paul Webster (PW) and John Turner (JT)

Apologies: Maria Palmer (trustee)

Members of the public: Four

CW thanked everyone who'd come along, CW set out what the focus had been for the new management committee and where it plans to focus its efforts over the next few years.

Background

Woodton Village Hall is a volunteer-run charity that receives no government funding. It is separate from the Parish Council and Woodton United Charities. The aim is that its running and maintenance costs are through the income it generates through bookings.

Committee changes

After many years of dedicated service, Caroline Seaman stepped down from the charity in December 2025. We extend our sincere thanks to Caroline and the previous management committee for their long-standing commitment to the hall.

In January 2026, a new management committee of residents was formed to oversee the charity and hall's operations. We thank them for their time, energy and support.

Financials

Income

Our financial year runs from the 1 April to 31 March.

Our total income to 31 March 2026 was £4,731.13. This was made up of:

- £3,144 income received from the hiring out of the village hall
- £1587.13 donation (the majority of which came from a donation left to the village hall by a resident in their will).

Since 2021, the amount each year the hall has generated from bookings has consistently hovered around £3,200.

This means that for the last several years, the amount of income coming in from the hire of the hall hasn't been enough to cover its running costs. A government grant given out to village halls and community centres during the pandemic, helped to fill the gap between the income coming in, and the hall's outgoings.

Costs

It costs just under £4,800 a year to cover the hall's current running costs.

Bookings

We are pleased to report that regular bookers of the hall have continued with their bookings (and we thank them for their patience while we got to grips with everything and got the necessary work done to the hall).

In addition to the hall hosting regular art classes, steps classes, indoor bowls and a 'come and meeting everyone' we've been delighted to welcome two new activities; Karate and Pilates, with hopefully more to come.

But we still need more bookings to cover our running costs – and enable us to put some money aside to cover future expected larger maintenance projects.

Our mission

Our aim is to ensure Woodton Village Hall remains a valued community asset. We want to create a space that more people and organisations choose to hire – allowing us to reinvest income into the building, its facilities and its décor. Our long-term vision is a modern, warm, welcoming, safe and environmentally conscious hall that supports community life and hosts a wide range of events.

To achieve that our focus is on three main areas:

1. To ensure the amount we are charging residents and non-residents to hire the hall is appropriate and covers (without over-relying on donations) the running and daily maintenance costs of running the hall.
2. To explore and apply for eligible grants and funding, to enable us to invest in major projects to improve the facilities in the hall, so it is a warm, welcoming and well-maintained space for all.
3. To look at ways to reduce the running costs of the village hall, by improving its energy efficiency and energy usage.

Hire charges review

In February 2026, we reviewed our pricing structure to ensure hire fees were appropriate. We compared our charges with other local village halls offering similar

facilities. We also listened to feedback from current and potential users who requested more flexibility for shorter bookings.

The review showed that changes were needed to both what we charged (it hadn't been enough) and how we charged (there wasn't the flexibility), to ensure the core running costs of the hall were being met. But we also needed to balance the need for us to increase hire charges with the impact this could have on regular users and ensure that residents could still benefit from a reduced rate.

From 1 April 2026, hire charges have been based on an hourly rate, with a minimum booking time of two hours. Further details of the rates available can be found here: [1b8160_371d38b578ed4ec48a5ee6def7502935.pdf](https://www.woodtonparishcouncil.gov.uk/1b8160_371d38b578ed4ec48a5ee6def7502935.pdf)

We will review the hire rates at the beginning of each year – with any changes coming in from 1 April.

Ensuring we are charging the hall out at the right cost is important but how often the hall is hired out is going to be pivotal to its future.

Maintaining and improving the hall

Since January, the committee has focused on essential works, to ensure the hall remains a safe, welcoming and well-maintained space for all. As we gained a clearer understanding of the hall's condition, the order and scope of work evolved. Much of what was required fell under **essential maintenance** or **regulatory compliance**, meaning it had to be funded from the charity's own reserves, rather than through grants.

Priority work completed

- **Electrical works** – replacement of the consumer unit (fuse board), full electrical assessment (EICR), and partial re-wiring
- **Fire safety improvements** – new smoke detectors, illuminated fire exit signage, fire-retardant blinds to replace window curtains, and new fire-retardant thermal stage curtains
- **Personal safety** – replacement of the broken alarm in the accessible toilet
- **Flooring** – renovation of the wooden floor in the main hall and repair of lifted black vinyl beading
- **Installation of 4G Wi-Fi and TV Licence** – enabling residents and visitors to stay connected and have greater access to online information, resources and educational materials (and WiFi is an essential requirement for grant applications).
- **Replacing the felt roof on both flat roofs** – after the felt on the flat roof extension failed in February 2026, it was replaced with new bituminous waterproof membrane with a 25-year guarantee.

More recently, a generous donation from Woodton Parish Council (following a payment it received from South Norfolk Council related to the new estate on Church Road) helped us to build back up our necessary reserves.

Scaled-back cosmetic improvements completed

To remain within our reserves policy while still improving the hall's appearance, we have focused on a modest set of cosmetic enhancements:

- Painting the entrance and main hall
- Installing a new noticeboard and external Woodton Village Hall sign
- Replacing the ceiling lights – made possible thanks to a generous donation of new lights from a local resident.

Exploring funding and grants to complete our other priority projects

Due to the financial impact of the roof replacement and essential works, other priority projects – such as:

- a new kitchen
- replacing broken and leaky windows
- replacing the hall's front door; and,
- replacing the internal doors with fire doors

will remain on hold until we rebuild our reserves or secure external funding.

We are actively exploring what grants are available and our eligibility for those grants - including and how much money we are required to raise ourselves to improve our chances of success of a grant being awarded.

We are focusing our efforts first on securing a grant to help us install a new kitchen. This will help the hall to look like a more attractive hire, and enable us to run events, such as breakfast/lunch clubs. The rule of thumb is that we are expected to contribute at least 20% towards the overall costs.

The recent garage sale raised a total of £273.72 on the day to our savings pot for a new kitchen, and since then we've received a couple of generous donations from residents which has bumped our total pot up to £700. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who has, and continues to support us, in this project.

Quick wins and cosmetic improvements

We've added:

- wellbeing care packs in the toilets
- honesty fridge of soft drinks
- water filter jug to improve the quality of the drinking water
- a third 'quick boil' kettle
- new drinking glasses
- two new back door mats.

We will also be looking at other quick and cost-efficient wins we can do to help improve the hall's facilities and how it looks on the inside. This includes:

- further cosmetic improvements – including repainting the toilets and area outside of the toilets, and meeting/storage room
- replacing the chairs and tables with lighter-weight and outdoor friendly versions
- repainting the porch ceiling and lines on the step into the hall
- replacing the green crockery with modern and dishwasher safe crockery
- installing an EV charging point at the hall
- purchasing a container to store excess tables and chairs and equipment to free up the stage and enable the meeting to be used and hired out to groups looking for a smaller room
- having our own website.

JT explained Norwich County Council is running an initiative to improve residents' access to EV charging points. He is talking to the council about it and if the village hall is confirmed to be a suitable venue, the council will fit an EV charging point at no cost to the hall (either in terms of its installation or ongoing maintenance costs). The rate people pay to charge their vehicle is set by the council.

Looking at how we can improve the energy efficiency and energy usage of the hall

Replacing the leaky/broken windows and the front door will go some way to improve the energy efficiency of the hall, but our longer-term aspirations are to be successful in being awarded a grant which will enable us to invest in solar panels, battery storage and the means for the hall to run during power outage situations – so it can be a light and warm place residents can come to.

Increasing bookings of the hall and take up of existing and new activities

CW explained that while the three areas of focus all these activities have and will help to improve the hall's facilities - and ideally create a space people want to spend time in and hire, the bottom line is that we need more people hiring the hall, and more groups hiring the hall on a regular basis for it to cover its running costs.

A member of the audience tentatively offered help through their daughter with Facebook posts, and another audience member thought that it could help if we also posted on Instagram to reach a wider audience.

Attendees discussed how much residents know about what's on offer at the hall, and the challenges in reaching residents who aren't on Facebook and may not see the notices displayed at the noticeboard.

Although a regular leaflet drop isn't practical or cost effective, the room could see the merit of doing one if it was part of a larger community event – for example a breakfast club or a coffee morning, in addition to doing a special feature as part of

the parish council's next half yearly newsletter. The idea was also floated of the village hall having an information leaflet about it in the lobby area, so visitors can take them away with them and share them with others.

The hall was felt to be an excellent space for art groups to use, with the new lighting being a very welcome improvement, and a member of the audience said that they would be happy to spread the word about our space to others.

One other suggestion was to encourage users to leave a Google review, to increase our visibility on search engines as a potential venue.

There was also a discussion about the types of community-led activities residents might like to take part in – and finding people willing to run them. In September, JR and CW will put out a call for interest in a range of activities – and importantly, the volunteers who can commit to running the activities.