The next chapter for the Village Hall is perhaps one of renewal. It’s over 20 years since the lottery-funded extension was complete and there are signs of maintenance issues and improvements required, as well as a lot of potential if we can engage the community and raise the funds.

Our revenues are insufficient to cover our costs, which have been rising rapidly, resulting in a shortfall. In round terms, the annual costs are £16k and the revenues are only £11k, so at that rate it won’t take long to burn through our reserves and then we would be facing the loss of the hall altogether.

The capital requirements are likely to be significant. We need to properly understand the current status of the fabric of the building and the systems in it. We need to reduce our energy and associated bills, by improving the fabric, systems and insulation to make the building altogether more efficient and contribute to a lower running cost, as well as making the hall more appealing to more users, to drive revenues.

We are about to embark on phase 2 of the supporting communities 2020 grant from EHDC. This will provide 2 accessible parking spaces and a path to the Jubilee entrance to the hall, including a new ramped entrance. The path will continue around the rear of the building improving the safe access for users of the pre-school Nursery. A planting bed will separate the path from the parking bays and a safety kerb will be installed, like the one at the front of the car park.

Moving forward, we need a plan with a clear set of objectives to guide our decision-making and investments; a vision for what we want the hall to be. We can’t do that in isolation, so we must engage the community. That’s where there is an opportunity to be more joined up with the Parish Council and other local organisations, to act together to support the community to flourish. Ultimately, I’m sure we all want to see the village hall thriving as a **sustainably successful,** **community facility**.

The 1937 Trust Deed under which the Village Hall operates, needs a review and an update and we need to get on top of the **Charity Commission’s** latest requirements for reporting. The administration of the Hall needs an overhaul and the review of the key documents, which takes place annually, may have to go a bit deeper this year.

We have recently joined the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) who provide access to information, guidance and other support services. This was free to join, given the small size of the VH charity and will help us with access to trustee guidance and training, from risk assessments to charity banking arrangements and insurance.

We were recently successful with an application to **EHDC’s Community Climate Action Fund**, receiving an offer of £10k, which will have to be match-funded, so we have some fund-raising to do so that we can replace halogen spotlights, improve insulation of the main hall, improve the efficiency of the heating system and put some solar panels on the roof.

In search of more funding, enquiries have been made about the requirements of the Parish & Town Council Grants, with up to £30k available. There are also government funds available for the replacement of oil-fired boilers. We will need someone looking at available grants and will liaise with the Parish Council who have someone fulfilling this role.

There is lots to do and lots of opportunity, but we need a co-ordinated plan and a set of committed and engaged trustees and volunteers, engaging the community, to ensure the Village Hall not only survives, but helps the community to thrive.

Robert Shepherd - Chairman of the Trustees of Froxfield Village Hall

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