

## WOOTTON MEMORIAL HALL COUNCIL

### Chair's Report

AGM June 4, 2025

I took on the role only in February after the resignation of the existing chair. The Hall Council was faced with an organisational rethink in 2024 when the long-serving and very hands-on Chair, David Blackburn, resigned. David had been both a strategic leader and perhaps more significantly had an invaluable day to day involvement in maintaining and improving the facility. As is often the case in organisations when a very significant individual leaves finding a replicate was unlikely if not impossible. The Council, via a series of discussions, took the decision to aim for a more collective solution with roles and responsibilities spread in a focused way across the Council.

The implementation of such a strategy was made feasible by the successful outcome of appeals, led by the Treasurer/Secretary, for volunteer members. This resulted in a significant increase in the number of active Council members and just as importantly it increased markedly the range and depth of skills, knowledge and experience on the Council. A satisfying aspect of this development is the way it mirrored the intention of original founders almost a century ago to have a community facility run by the community and managed by its representatives. Today is a different world and the Wootton 'community' is a long way from that of the early 1930s but I'm sure our current incarnation follows the spirit of the original.

I'm aware the Secretary/Treasurer's report will itemise the range of decisions and actions affecting the structure and management of the Hall but I'd like briefly to identify those that seem especially significant. The Hall's continued successful survival rests on its quality as a facility and its ability to generate funds as a means of maintaining and improving it. A major step in underpinning this was the development of the Hall website which emphatically put us into a wider public world. This was done by utilising the knowledge, skills and time of Council members and was only made possible by the additional volunteers. I'd also draw attention to our establishment of a link with the Parish Council. We now have access to their facilities maintenance manager which means we're less reliant on a range of individual contractors. This relationship has already had positive consequences via both advisory and practical help. Although we're an independent charity the more formal link with Local Government has both integrative and symbolic community implications and initial evidence also suggests it has positive consequences for the Hall as a facility.

As a trustee for almost two decades, I see the Hall continuing in rude health and adapting very well to changing times. This owes much to the previous long-serving Chair, David Blackburn, but I'd also thank our Treasurer/Secretary, Neil Goram, whose Stakhanovite output and astonishing command of detail helps keep everything together and moving forward. Charities are as good as their volunteers and over the last years ours have been exceptional. Thanks to all of them.

Michael Penny

Chair