



## Debenham Village Hall & Playing Field Trust 45<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting - 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2010

### Chairman's Report

*The Trust is a charitable company limited by guarantee and was incorporated on 20 February 2003. It is governed by a memorandum of articles of association. The company was established, following a review of legal structure, to take over the activities of the unincorporated charity, Debenham Village Hall & Playing Field Trust (registered charity number 304742) established under a scheme approved by the Charity Commissioners under seal dated 4 July 1988. The charity owns and runs the Debenham Leisure and Community Centre for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Debenham, Suffolk and neighbourhood.*

*The charity's objective is the provision and maintenance of a village hall, recreation ground and other recreational facilities for the use of the inhabitants of the Parish of Debenham and its neighbourhood without distinction of political, religious or other opinions, including use for meetings, lectures and classes, and for other forms of recreation and leisure time occupation, with the object of improving conditions of life for the said inhabitants.*

Welcome to our 45<sup>th</sup> AGM and thank you for taking the time to attend.

#### Thank You's

This last year has been a challenging year! We are extremely grateful to **Greene King** and our Account Manager **Annie Wright**, who have supported us through this period and for working with us to restructure our debts.

**Mid Suffolk District Council** has, this month, given us a grant of £25,000. This is the second year of a three year grant for which we are extremely grateful and our thanks go to **Chris Fry** and **Tom Barker** and their colleagues at MSDC for this much needed support.

The **Debenham Parish Council** included an amount of money in the precept and has offered to pay for our new Oil Tank, which will be installed in a couple of days' time. I would like to thank **Lynne Cockerton** and her fellow Councillors for this support. I think it worth mentioning that the PC operates to strict regulations regarding what it can fund, and under what conditions, and the Trust also has a complicated tightrope to tread, being both a Charity and a Limited Company. However, we are continuing to explore other ways in which the PC can contribute to our financial well-being and further meetings are planned to facilitate this.

I would like to thank both **Eddy Alcock** from **Suffolk County Council** and **Kathie Guthrie** from **MSDC** for their support and goodwill. As a result of their efforts we have a match-funded grant to restructure the footprint of the Recycling Centre, which will make access easier. This work will start shortly.

Big thank you's are due to **David Hughes** and **Richard Blackwell** for their tireless efforts over the years in support of the Trust. Between them, David and Richard have contributed over 38 years of service to the Trust. Thank you both for your commitment. Thanks also are due to my fellow Directors - Martin, George and Dennis who continue to provide much needed advice and support and to the managers and staff who regularly work long hours to make it all happen.

I think the biggest thank you of all must go to the Friends and Users of the Centre. These are the organisations, clubs and individuals who join in the classes and sports, who use the gym, who meet here regularly - whether it is for a sedate afternoon game of Bridge, an evening of Squash, a hotly contested game of Football or a



contemplative service on a Sunday morning. These are the people who managed to raise a staggering £4,000 at our recent Auction of Promises. Thank you, all of you.

## Next Steps

We are extremely heartened by the end of year accounts, which shows a greatly improved financial situation, reversing a downward trend into something more promising. As mentioned previously, we have worked with Greene King and also with our bankers, NatWest, to restructure our debt and overdraft facilities into longer term loans. This was completed earlier this month and whilst this doesn't solve our financial problems, it gives us a bit more breathing space in order to move forward.

We need to move towards each sector of the Centre being self-funding where possible. Last year Richard's calculations showed that each usable square meter of space costs £182 per year to maintain - just to break-even. If we want to stand any chance of paying off our debts, we have to improve on this. Some of our activities are not profit-making and we need to look at each activity and cost centre in turn and make some hard decisions regarding whether it is cost effective to run and maintain. Whilst we endeavour to supply a wide range of activities suited to a wide range of people, we cannot hope to match the prices of publicly funded Leisure Centres. We are awaiting further information and requirements from the Skatepark Project, before continuing discussions.

The grant from MSDC will be used to perform some much needed preventative maintenance, including a fully revised HSE risk-analysis. The recent flood in the boiler room highlighted measures that need to be taken, our new Insurers have also asked for some changes to be made to our security arrangements and the Charity Commission has asked us to install CCTV in the Centre. None of these are optional.

The staffing of the Centre has been strengthened over the last few months, with the addition of Sue Thurlow (Business Manager), Mick Sizzey (Maintenance), Jenny Sizzey (Cleaning), and from next month, Steve Spurling (General Manager). Mel Aldis becomes Sports & Leisure Manager.

Last year saw the formation of the "Friends" group who have made a big impact and this year we have introduced the concept of Working Parties. Each Working Party has a specialist remit and reports to a named Trustee to mastermind a particular Project. Some of these Projects are expected to be implemented this year whilst others are part of our long term plan and the end date is still under discussion.

- **HSE & First Aid** - Spearheaded by Steve Spurling and reports to Suzie
- **Marketing** - Spearheaded by Mick Morley and reports to Dennis
- **Green Energy** - Spearheaded by Richard Blackwell and reports to Suzie
- **IT & Website** - Spearheaded by John Feeney-Howells and reports to Suzie
- **Community Centre Kitchen** - under discussion
- **Finance & Grants** - Volunteers sought

The Trust has always relied heavily on bar trade which generates most of the profit which funds the organisation. Over the last year we have been working with our Stock Taker and Till Supplier to monitor this area and profit on the Bar is now averaging about 48%. It is hoped that the Marketing initiative will further contribute to the profitability of the Events and Bars over the next year.

We are always looking for volunteers and if you would like to help us support our village asset, then contact details can be found on our website.

Thank you,

Suzie Morley  
Chairman, DVH&PFT