

Chairman's Statement – June 2021 for y/e 31/12/20

The year 2020 will be remembered as the COVID-19 pandemic year, but it began as a normal year with just a hint of the drama that was going to unfold.

March marked the beginning of the COVID-19 emergency in the UK. The 'lock down' was introduced. Aghalee Village Hall was designated as a local Covid-19 Emergency Support Hub for Aghalee, Aghagallon & Ballinderry with the Committee responsible for supporting the community. More than 100 additional support volunteers were recruited and organised, and a food bank was set up. Food deliveries continued for 13 weeks, at the height of which over 100 people a week were being delivered food parcels and other support. After these 13 weeks support continued until it finally ceased a full year later at Easter 2021.

Members of the AVH Committee played a significant role in the organising and management of these activities and we offer many thanks to those members for the time and effort that they committed to this.

Special thanks go to those who instigated the hub idea – Councillor David Honeyford, Gerald Colan-O'Leary, John Hewitt, Fiona Maree and Pauline Buller, and to those co-ordinated and ran the entire programme – David Corbett, Martin Cavanagh, Fiona Maree, Pauline Buller, Mark Davidson, Sarah McCambridge, Catherine McQuillan and Tess Barker.

Thanks also to all those other volunteers who checked in daily and weekly with their vulnerable person throughout the crisis; without all of you Aghalee, Aghagallon and Ballinderry residents would have been lost.

All normal activities and events in the Village Hall were suspended and AVH Committee decisions were made via email. We had to cancel the 2020 AGM and asked all Committee members if they would remain in post for 2020, which they did.

Lock-down restrictions reduced in June, and in September some activities were permitted to resume providing they followed social distancing and PPE rules. The Committee had to implement new risk assessments, new protocols and install signage and sanitizer at all doors to enable this to happen. AVH committee meetings resumed.

November saw the reintroduction of harsher restrictions and everything stopped again; the Christmas event was postponed until the 17th of December and then went ahead under a pre-booked system over three days, which worked very well indeed although it took considerably more time, effort and volunteers.

On a personal note, I was unable to participate in any of the events that AVH organised. My wife had to 'shield', during most of the year and as her primary carer I also was housebound.

Two other matters

1) Secretarial / Administrative Duties

In 2019 it was decided that due to pressure of work on the Secretary, who was also dealing with Funding and Courses for the hall, and with no one on the Committee able to help, the Committee would seek to hire the services of someone to assist by carrying out secretarial and administrative duties. Sally Crawford carries out the same function for The Balance House and was recommended by David Twigg. The Secretary and David met with Sally in March 2021 to discuss and after this it was agreed to hire Sally on a trial basis for 3 months (paid monthly on invoice) with a review after 3 months. This was agreed and passed in the April 2020 meeting. Sally will not sit as a Charity Trustee, but as support to the Committee.

We welcome Sally this evening and hope the union is a fruitful one for both parties.

2) I would like to say a special word of thanks to Ken Greer who is retiring this year. Ken has been a much loved and valuable member of the Committee since 1995, which makes a total of 25 years up to the end of 2020. Initially he represented Junior Badminton club and then later as a Public Representative. He has also been part of the Maintenance Committee and has kept the weeds around the hall in check for many years. We would like to publicly thank him and acknowledge his commitment to the hall, along with all the work he has carried out over the years and we hope he enjoys his retirement.

(We believe he will continue to keep the hall weed free and for this we are very grateful)

I am very proud to be associated with the AVH Committee. During what has been a very difficult year, the members of the Committee have worked extremely hard and managed to keep the hall running, maintaining the primary function of the AVH, which is to support the local community.

In closing, I want to thank you all for your dedication and hard work. I wish you a happy, prosperous and Covid-19 free 2021.