

Hacheston Parish Council – Annual Parish Meeting

20th May 2026

Report from Hacheston Village Hall

1. Trustees and Personnel

There have been a number of changes with regard to Trustees in the year. Stephen Musk became a Trustee and took over as Treasurer in September 2025. After stepping down as Treasurer, Adrian Barney has remained a Trustee. Alan Perry became a Trustee in June 2025. Rebecca Jennings stood down as a Trustee in January 2026 having served the Village Hall in a number of roles over many years. The Trustees wish to record their gratitude to Bec for her contribution to the success of the hall, thankfully she will continue to run the quiz and Harvest Supper. The Chair will stand down after the Trustees meeting in June 2026.

By mid-2026 the hall will be looking for two new Trustees and for someone to take on the Chair's role. It is vital that volunteers come forward to fill the Trustee vacancies.

The Booking Clerk remained in position for the whole of the year maintaining stability in hall operations. The Trustees thank the Clerk for her contribution to the hall's continued success. The Caretaker / Cleaner left in March 2026, a new Cleaner / Caretaker was recruited and he has settled well into his role.

Following the departure of Chris and Lee White it was not possible to find a volunteer to take on the Bar Manager's role. Since June 2025 a group of volunteers have managed the bar and stock purchases. The arrangement has worked well to date.

2. Meetings and Governance

The Trustees met four times in 25 / 26. At each meeting Health and Safety issues, safeguarding and financial performance were reviewed along with other current issues.

The required independent examination of the 25 / 26 accounts was successfully completed in April 2026 by Chris Dobson.

The Register of Trustees on the Charity Commission website was updated as required. A full annual return for 24 / 25 was made in June 2025 consisting of the Chairman's Report, the accounts and the Independent Examiner's Report.

3. Health and Safety Activity

Following the annual third-party Playground Inspection in October 2025, remedial works were agreed and undertaken in February 2026. Routine monthly inspection of the playground equipment continues to be undertaken.

In February 2026 a resident, who was walking their dog in the across the car park in the dark, was nearly run over by a speeding car. 5MPH / Beware Pedestrians signs were put up in the carpark and notices posted in the hall requesting that people take care when exiting / entering the car park.

The hall's defibrillator failed in January 2026 and had to be returned to the USA for repair. Fortunately, it has an eight-year warranty (expires 2027) and this work was carried out FOC including the loan of a defibrillator whilst ours was repaired.

In June 2025 there was an incident involving a visitor to the hall and the main door which closed onto the visitor causing them to fall and suffer minor injuries, fortunately not serious. The incident occurred because the automatic function of the door was switched off at the time due to ongoing difficulties in maintaining it operable. Despite being serviced twice since the incident it has not been possible to keep the door operable. The view is that the door needs to be made to fit better in the frame and then a new auto opening mechanism installed.

4. Financial Position

The hall made a small loss in 25 /26 (£698) primarily due to the exceptional expenditure that the Trustees agreed to in March 2025 as reported at last year's AGM. The only item of expenditure that exceeded the estimate given last year is the solicitor's fees for changing the legal status of the charity which were £6243 as opposed to the £2000 estimate. The reasons for this are discussed in section 5 below.

Despite making a small loss the Trustees consider that the hall delivered a sound financial performance for 25 / 26, underpinned by our core regular hirers, one off hires and the many successful resident events organised by the Volunteer group.

Finances were also bolstered by donations / grants. £2500 was received towards the battery project (£1500 HPC CIL funds and £1000 ESC Enabling Communities Budget). £2250 was received towards playground maintenance (£750 SZC Neighbourhood Fund and £1500 ESC Outdoor Playing Spaces Fund). HPC continues to support the maintenance of Fairfield Green. The Trustees are grateful for all of this support.

Total funds at the end of 25 / 26 stand at £33.6k which, although lower than last year, exceeds the £30k estimated at last year's AGM.

Notwithstanding the continued high cost of energy, the battery project has enabled greater control over them with electricity costs reducing by £900. Disappointingly, water costs have risen this year reflecting both usage and price increases.

With the increasing age of the hall and green the Trustees anticipate that the cost to maintain both in the required condition will only grow, however, with a solid regular

hire base and vibrant community support, the Trustees remain confident that the hall will be viable despite having to face these considerable challenges.

5. Change in the Legal Status of the Charity

As reported at last year's AGM, in March 2025 Trustees decided that the legal status of the hall charity should be converted from an unincorporated trust to a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO).

This process began in March 2025 with an application to the Charity Commission (CC) to form a new charity of the same name and objectives but with the status of a CIO. The new charity was registered by the CC on 31.7.25 with registered number 1214363.

Following this it became apparent that the solicitors the Trustees had previously engaged did not have the necessary experience and expertise to guide us through the legal transfer process nor was it possible to obtain guidance from the CC in a timely fashion.

The Trustees decided in September 2025 to instruct the Charities Team at Birketts Ipswich to undertake the work. In order to reduce costs, as much of the work as possible was to be carried out by Trustees but despite this, fees in excess of £5k plus VAT have been incurred by the charity.

The core process, obtaining approval from the CC to the transfer, was relatively straightforward but took the CC over 16 weeks to approve. It was finally granted on 3 March 2026.

However, complexities arose with the two title deeds (for the hall and green) that the charity owns and would transfer to the new charity. The title deed for the green was signed on behalf of the charity by the people who were Trustees at the time and their agreement would be needed to transfer the land. There was a restrictive covenant on the title in favour of Natural England (who provided the grant to establish the green) and their agreement would also be needed. Similarly, a restrictive covenant existed on the title for the hall in favour of the Big Lottery but fortunately, on enquiry with the Big Lottery, due to the time expired since their grant was given, they no longer required the restrictive covenant and so their consent was not required once it was removed from the title deed.

After substantial effort these issues were resolved to the extent that at a resident's meeting on 30 January 2026, residents resolved to go ahead with the Transfer and subsequent to that close the charity down. At a Trustees' meeting on 11 March 2026, Trustees agreed to enter into a Transfer Agreement with the new charity and a Deed of Consent, Covenant, Undertaking and Release (DCCUR) with Natural England.

On 30 April 2026 the Transfer Agreement and the DCCUR with Natural England were executed and the transfer took place. A consequence of which is that the two employees of the charity have transferred to the new charity.

Alongside the legal process to make the transfer are numerous practical issues such as opening a new bank account and getting all hirers to use it from 1 May 2026, changing arrangements with various suppliers and registering the new charity as an employer with HMRC.

Birketts will now lodge the title documents with the Land Registry but it is expected that the Land Registry will take up to two years to register the new title documents. When deemed appropriate they will also register the incorporation on the register of mergers and remove the unincorporated charity from the register of charities.

6. Leases with Hacheston United Charities (HUC)

No progress has been made with HUC in acquiring either the freehold or extending the lease term for the land upon which both Fairfield Green and the hall are located or leasing the small section of Fairfield Green (situated adjacent to the B1116 and to the south of the hall) which it doesn't currently have control of.

7. Battery Storage Project

The battery storage system came fully into operation in May 2025 and has operated throughout the year without issue. Over the first-year electricity consumption has reduced by 26% reflecting increased utilisation of solar generated power. The split between day units and night units has also been changed (3:1 – 1:1) by charging the battery over night from the grid during winter months and this benefits the average unit rate paid as night units are cheaper.

8. Assets of Community Value

Both Church Meadow (the land on which both the hall and the green are located) and the Allotment land were registered as assets of Community Value with ESC in early 2025. The registrations will last until early 2030 at which point they will have to be remade.

9. Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP)

This project has been on hold while the legal status of the charity was being changed. Now this work is substantially complete it is hoped to re-engage with SCC and rejoin the project.

10. Proposal to Improve the Facilities Offered by the Village Hall

No progress has been made with this proposal in 25 /26. Trustees have continued to engage with representatives of the SZC Community Fund to maintain our

understanding of their priorities and processes. Trustees will be rethinking the approach in 26 /27 to hopefully access this funding source.

11. Volunteers

The Volunteer Group continued its good work throughout the year putting on attractive events for the benefit of residents every month. A similar calendar of events has been established for 2026.

Particularly pleasing is the number of events that are being supported by families such as the Bring and Share Lunch and the Christmas Celebration. The Trustees are grateful to HPC for supporting the Big Lunch event.

As ever we need more residents to come forward and volunteer to help. Not only with events but grounds maintenance and routine inspection of the playground equipment.

Nevertheless, the Trustees thank all volunteers for their massive efforts throughout this year without whose help the hall would not be as successful as it is.

Malcolm Robinson
Chair of Trustees – Hacheston Village Hall

6 May 2026