



Bramley Village Hall

Bringing People Together

From 2025 to 2030: a strategic plan for the next five years.

Summary: With the fabric and infrastructure of the Village Hall largely updated, the Trustees have few concerns about capacity issues looking forward to 2030. We will continue to build on our sustainability agenda and we will strive to ensure that wherever possible we will align with the changing regulatory environment. We will continue to recruit more volunteers for gardening and interior maintenance work while managing running costs effectively. Trustee resilience and succession planning will become a growing challenge and we recognise that some of our user groups will decline and may cease during the next five years.

When we last produced a strategic plan for the Village Hall, in early 2020, the Covid pandemic still lay ahead of us; much has changed since then, not just in terms of our recovery from the pandemic but the reshaping of the Hall premises, modernisation and improvement of our infrastructure and a shift to more sustainable business practices. At the beginning of 2025, we have to ask ourselves the question yet again, how much will things change over the next five years? What will our community look like in 2030? Will it still be growing with new housing, more families, a bigger primary school, more shops and amenities, and improved services? Will the Village Hall be able to continue to meet the demands of the Bramley community in

2030 and beyond? The key issues facing us over the next five years may be summarised as capacity and resilience, both of our user groups and of our body of Trustees.

Our Village Hall

Since 2019, the Village Hall has benefited from over £400,000 in investment, provided chiefly by the Borough Council and Hampshire County Council, the Parish Council, the National Lottery Community Fund, National Grid and the Bernard Sunley Foundation, amongst others. This funding enabled us to add an additional meeting room at the front of the Hall and refurbish and extend our core facilities; refurbish both of our kitchens; refurbish the specialist flooring in the main hall; install a modern fire safety system; add new heating and ventilation controls; install a new CCTV system to protect our premises; replace our car park surface with a modern, hard wearing but more sustainable capability; and replace our garden shed and our external signage. Some further works are planned, chiefly to effect repairs and upgrades to part of the roofing on and adjacent to the Bramley Room, but much of our maintenance is now subject to life-cycle planning. Our Caretaker and a body of volunteers are adept at minor repairs and decorating.

Shortly after the Covid pandemic eased and our premises were able to return to a normal operating regime, we assessed that we had sufficient capacity to deal with anticipated growth in footfall over the following 5 to 10 years, although we recognised that the effects of the pandemic might slow the pace of that growth initially. In reality, we returned to pre-Covid levels of activity quite quickly during 2022. Around the same time, we assessed that collectively the community facilities across the village had sufficient capacity to cope with expected demands up to and probably beyond 2030.¹ We did not believe there were sufficient grounds to seek funding for additional space and we remain confident that we have sufficiently flexible space across the Hall to meet hirers needs.

Capacity

¹ Those community facilities are the Village Hall, Clift Meadow (The Pavilion and Brocas Hall), Cross House and facilities at St James Primary School.

Writing in 2020, we had the benefit of a *Neighbourhood Plan* which offered us a snapshot of what the community might look like by 2030, and the *Plan* described the place of the Village Hall:

*In 2029 Bramley will be an attractive village with a strong historic character, an unspoiled rural setting, excellent and conveniently located community facilities, a range of high-quality homes fulfilling local needs, safe and convenient access to transport services and green spaces, and good opportunities for locally based employment.*²

The *Neighbourhood Plan* anticipated that by 2025 the village would exceed 2000 homes with a population of over 6,000 people, with the potential for further growth. In 2025, development continues, with a major site at Stocks Farm, with 140 houses, about to commence and numerous smaller sites and ‘in-fills’ underway or seeking planning consent. Investment in the supporting infrastructure has not kept pace with this scale of change. With the Government removing or relaxing limits on housing development, there is the prospect of even greater development across the parish over the next five years or more. At the end of 2024, representatives of the Wellington Estate wrote to Bramley Parish Council expressing an intent to put forward a large swathe of land to the north and east of Bramley as part of the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council ‘Call for Sites’ for the emerging Local Plan.³ It is unclear what this means in terms of housing numbers but if it goes ahead, it is likely to exceed Stocks Farm many times over.

However, given the length of time the planning process required for the Stocks Farm development, construction of new housing is unlikely to get underway before 2030 and is unlikely to have an impact on our planning over the next five years, but any expansion in housing stock will need to be considered in planning for our capacity for 2030 and beyond. One key factor to be borne in mind is that any plans to increase the capacity of the Village Hall may result in the Hall becoming increasingly subject to Martyn’s Law (the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025). At present, the terms of the Act only apply to any event, or events, with a

² For details of the Bramley Neighbourhood Development Plan please see <http://bramleyndp.org.uk/documents/final-document-versions/>

³ Bramley Parish Council, minutes of meeting held 17 December 2024, see <https://bramley-pc.gov.uk/parish-council-meeting-minutes-17th-december-2024/#more-3538>

capacity of 200 people or more held on a premises such as a Village Hall.⁴ Currently we do not meet this threshold but any expansion in capacity could make us subject to the new regulations to provide for the security of users of the venue.

The Communications Challenge

The Village Hall Trustees are responsible for ensuring that the Hall is available to our community for everyday use and for one-off events; the Trustees are not responsible for organising events themselves unless they choose to get involved. The Trustees try to ensure that the Hall is a safe and secure venue with the amenities required for the groups who use it, and they encourage and support initiatives for new community groups and activities (see below). Engagement with the community is important to ensure that the Trustees are proactive in meeting the needs of the community and communication is critical in this respect.

We have established a broad range of communications across the Bramley community to ensure that people know what facilities are provided by the Village Hall, have advance notice of events and are aware of opportunities to engage with the Trust to create and deliver new meetings, events and activities whether community based or delivered by commercial partners. Having successfully launched a 'Young Trustee' scheme in 2019 to involve younger volunteers in the work of the Trustees, we would like to maintain the role of at least one 'Young Trustee' with specific responsibility for communications and we will ensure that we make better of social media platforms and other on-line applications to promote Bramley Village Hall.

However, despite regularly advertising the 'Young Trustee' role since 2022, we have not received any expressions of interest and the role remains unfulfilled. The need to involve younger people as charity trustees has been recognised by the Government and has been promoted by some of the umbrella organisations in this sector.⁵ Like many other charities across the country, the Village Hall Trustees demonstrate an age profile which reflects life and work experience and the ability to devote time to the needs of managing the Hall but the inability to attract younger

⁴ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2025/10/section/2>, see section 2c for capacity threshold.

⁵ Encouraging Youth Involvement in Village Halls and Community Spaces, Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE), 2024.

Trustees remains a nagging concern. We will need to focus on building our own resilience over the next five years to ensure the continuance of the Trustees as a body. Additionally, we are aware of similar challenges facing some of our user groups; indeed, one long running group will cease activity in December 2025 as it has been unable to find any younger members willing to step forward and take on an organisational role. We know of other groups which may disappear for similar reasons. While the loss of such groups will have an impact on Hall finances, the longer-term impact on the community is more difficult to assess.

Kick-Start

A perennial challenge we face is that people in our community have ideas for groups and events but neither the time or space to develop those ideas into something concrete and lasting. As part of our strategy, we will continue to be innovative and supportive, offering partners in the community the space to develop ideas, to experiment and trial events or new groups without worrying about room hire costs. Additionally, we can offer help and mentoring, sharing our experience and contacts across the community. If the new group achieves momentum, then we can offer an appropriate hiring charge or work with the group to secure funding to underpin their activities. In these circumstances we will be prepared to accept a degree of risk, i.e. some loss of hiring income while a new group gets established.

Finances

The Trustees will continue to operate Bramley Village Hall in keeping with its charity status and will continue to meet the objectives of the original donors of the land on which the Hall sits:

*To provide and maintain a village hall for the use of the inhabitants of the Parish of Bramley, Hampshire without distinction of political, religious or other opinions. This should include it's use for meetings, lectures and for other forms of recreation and leisure with the object of improving the conditions of life for inhabitants of the Parish.*⁶

The Trustees will ensure that the Hall's operations generate sufficient income to meet running costs and immediate maintenance requirements. Planned

⁶ Bramley Village Hall Conveyance and Trust Deed, Schedule 1, 1a, 1969

refurbishments and replacement of furnishings will be dependent on grant aid, fund-raising efforts and donations. The additional space and improved amenities delivered from the extension and refurbishment project may encourage more commercial entities to utilise the Hall for training, conferences or other events; this may provide a useful income stream, but we will be careful not to plan works dependent on such income.

Equality and Diversity

The Trustees remain committed to a policy of treating all staff, users and partners equally irrespective of their ethnicity, age, gender, religion, disability or sexual orientation. Discrimination and victimisation will not be tolerated. The Trustees will set an example by ensuring that its membership continues to be diverse and will strive to recruit younger and more ethnically diverse volunteers.

Sustainability

A key change since 2020 has been the greater focus on sustainability and environmental issues. Refurbishment and modernisation work has included the installation of more modern, energy efficient systems such as LED lighting, and more effective insulation which has helped to reduce our overheads and maintenance costs. The installation of solar panels has helped reduce our electricity costs by half. We have benefitted from a close liaison with Wilder Bramley, who have advised on a more sustainable approach to managing the green spaces around the Hall and we have appointed a Trustee with responsibility for Sustainability. The reliance on volunteers for gardening and maintenance work will continue in support of our efforts to drive costs down, and we will encourage the involvement of those individuals and local businesses in our community interested in sustainability, environmental and nature related issues. We will continue to develop our 'greener' approach over the next five years.

Trustees

We will continue to work to attract more and younger prospective Trustees and volunteers to support the work of the Committee. Succession planning and resilience will be important to ensure that the trustees can sustain their work and that knowledge and experience is shared. We need to ensure that we have Trustees and

volunteers who are confident in using the latest technology to communicate and to run our business efficiently. Environmental impact and the sustainability of what we deliver will become increasingly important as the UK strives to develop a carbon-neutral society and we will continue to play our part in meeting those objectives. The Trustees will continue to engage with other charity organisations within our community and across Hampshire to share experience and knowledge whether bi-laterally or by working with umbrella groups such as 'Action Hampshire'.

Summary

As Trustees our strategy going forwards may be summed up as:

- We will be proactive in meeting the aspirations of our community;
- Work closely with other community bodies across the Parish to ensure that we fully understand the changes occurring around us and respond effectively to the challenges arising from housing growth and infrastructure change;
- Communicate effectively with our community through a broad range of channels;
- Ensure we achieve sufficient income to sustain the Hall and maintain it to meet appropriate standards, including Health & Safety requirements;
- Develop plans for improving sustainability over the long-term;
- Encourage diversity and resilience within the Trustees and with our users and partners; and
- Share our knowledge and support generously in the spirit envisaged by our founders.

Gareth Jones

Chairman, Bramley Village Hall Trust

Chairman@bvht.org.uk