

Leavenheath Village Hall Committee Report for the Parish Council AGM 2026

There is no doubt that the last year has been a bumpy one for Leavenheath Village Hall.

Some new activities were tried but failed to attract enough interest; however, others have thrived and we now have a very diverse range of events going on in the hall ranging from a variety of fitness classes, social get togethers, crafts and ladies groups, children's activities, a new youth hub and even a monthly health talk. Our newest group is a men's social club.

The hall has its own Facebook page, and Instagram account. This has become even more important since the closure of the LSPN. We know that there will be many local residents who are not on social media, and we continue to share village hall news and updates via the hall foyer and noticeboards around the village. The village hall also has its own website www.leavenheathvillage.com There is a wealth of information about everything 'Village Hall'.

The electric car charging point had been out of commission for some time but the contractual problems were resolved towards the end of 2025 and it is now fully functioning. Also installed was an InPost Locker – an automated parcel machine that anyone can use for sending and collecting parcels.

While we have a modest increase in revenue from the InPost lockers and the EV charger, we will soon lose income with the removal of the bottle banks. Once these have gone and the area cleared, we think this space would be ideal for a street facing noticeboard for community use and will be seeking funding towards this cost.

Another charge to affect our finances is that the business rate increase will have a substantial negative impact. Previously the £98 rate equated to 10 x 1-hour slots whereas for the new, higher rate of £270, it's 28 x 1 hours. As the hall is only hired for 17 x 1-hour slots in an average week, the impact will be dramatic.

One of the projects we have been trying to get off the ground this year is 'The Leavenheath Village Hall Solar Project'. The village hall has an unobstructed south facing roof, which makes it a great place to install solar panels and could contribute enormously to keeping our energy costs down. These account for roughly 60% of the hall's overheads per year. We did apply for a grant from the Babergh CIL Fund. However, it would have been conditional on a survey costing several thousand pounds to ensure the roof was strong enough to take the solar panels. This was money which would be wasted if the roof proved too weak and we could not take the risk, so have reluctantly shelved the project. Another project we are struggling to finish due to lack of finance is the provision of car park spaces for disabled.

With the cost of living rises and particularly energy costs increasing, we have had to increase our hire charges. However, it is worth noting that our charges are still lower than neighbouring village halls! As our only income is from hirers and events the committee runs, we have organised some events over the past year – a Christmas Fayre at the end of November was very successful and the jumble sale we held in conjunction with the Scout group was a tremendous success. We do have ideas for other events but sadly lack the manpower to run them.

The committee is run entirely by volunteers and unfortunately one of our members has recently moved away and some others are no longer able to devote the time required. We need new members and would call on **all** local residents to consider joining the village hall committee which is vital if the committee is to continue to achieve its main aim: maintain and improve Leavenheath Village Hall so it can be used by the community for many years to come.