

## **Shiplake Memorial Hall AGM**

The AGM of Shiplake Memorial Hall took place on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March at the hall. The hall, which is one of the most complex in Oxfordshire, had a sound year financially in 2018, generating a small cash surplus. The hall reserves are in a reasonable state, although the maintenance of a 93 year old building and a large playing field continue to require substantial funds. At some point in the next few years major expenditure of around £70-80,000 will be required to replace and insulate the main roof.

The hall is in the process of moving from operating under its 1949 charitable scheme to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with a new constitution based on the Charity Commission's Foundation template. This change has a number of advantages including the ability for the hall to employ people on a PAYE basis, the ability to place contracts in the hall's name and a reduction in the personal financial liability of the trustees. The new CIO has already been set up and approved and registered by the Charity Commission. Legal work is now beginning to move all the hall and its assets to the new CIO and hopefully it will come into full operation by the end of this year.

In the annual report, the Chairman emphasised that the major challenge for the hall was finding a sustainable model for its future management. Despite the commitment and efforts of a great team of staff, the key trustees, (who are all unpaid volunteers), are having to put massive amounts of their time into running the hall. Hardly a day goes by when they are not involved in dealing with hall issues in some way and this level of voluntary input is unlikely to be available once these trustees retire or resign. Ideally the hall should have a full-time manager to take on much of the load currently done by the key trustees, but the hall's finances will not support this without significant revenue growth (which is unrealistic given its charitable objectives), or some kind of subsidy. The environment in which the hall operates has changed significantly in the last couple of decades, with much higher and demanding usage, an ageing infrastructure, much more complex hall related legislation and fewer and fewer people with the right skills able or willing to commit to active volunteering. Solving this problem is not going to be easy, but if this vital asset is to survive, the community must work together with the trustees to find a long term solution.