

## Community Halls Study (Part 2)



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## **Executive Summary**

This report collates the information provided by BDC's report on 'Current provision and policy guidance 2015', a further desk top survey of community facilities, the responses to a consultation questionnaire distributed in late August 2016, and the experiences of RCCE Village Halls & Community Buildings Adviser.

The questionnaire was distributed to 54 village halls in Braintree district. BDC intend to use the results to inform planning for community facilities in these areas. The main findings and conclusions are listed below:

- There was a 65% response to the questionnaire
- RCCE followed this with telephone calls to non responding halls
- 83% of halls are managed by charitable trusts
- Only one hall sub-leases part of the hall premises to the parish council
- 48% of halls employ staff
- 97% of hall committees include volunteers and trustees
- Condition, average capacity and typical use were provided
- 76% of halls serve the 'Town or Village and surrounding parishes'
- 25 free text responses indicate when the facility is underused
- 24 free text responses indicate what, if anything, prevents hall committees from accommodating additional users or activities in the future'
- 27 halls had identified works, improvements or expansion of the facilities
- 21 halls provided a list of proposed works to improve the facilities and costs

A gap in the provision of community facilities was highlighted in Cressing where church halls and a social club have limited availability to the general public but no village or community hall exists although public consultation has highlighted a need. Gaps were also identified in the facilities offered particularly in larger Parishes and the services provided, especially youth provision.

Rural village halls offer significant opportunities for local employment and volunteering, and facilitate space for a wide range of services, clubs, classes and organisations. The majority of halls are used regularly and there are few spaces in the regular programme of events at most halls, although some highlighted availability during school holidays which could be optimised.

Overall, the main facilities at the hall ie main hall, toilets and kitchen were generally considered to be in 'good' condition but the main obstacle for the development of services and facilities is accessing funds.

## Introduction

Historically, village halls were established in rural areas of the district as the community expanded and the need for a community facility was identified primarily by the local community. This often led to an act of altruism and philanthropy by local landowners who bequeathed land and/or buildings to be managed by a separate charity or the parish council. Each village acquired its own hall in response to this local need and often as a memorial to losses in the First and Second World Wars.

In later years, halls were established as a response to increases in housing in the post War period. There was little or no planning by the local authority to establish or site halls in particular areas. Wider 'Planning' of the establishment and siting of halls by local authorities is a more recent aim that lacks any specific national standards for the level of provision of community facilities per head of resident due in part to the complexities of imposing a formula on a subjective community 'need'.

Use of the hall has to be within the charitable 'objects' of a village hall ie:

*'The Property and the trust fund and its income shall be applied for the purposes of a village hall for the use of the inhabitants of the Parish of XXXXX without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, race or political, religious or other opinions, including use of the Property for **meetings, lectures and classes or other forms of recreation and leisure time occupation in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the conditions of life for the said inhabitants**'.*

The brief for this consultation was provided by Gary Sung, Senior Planning Policy Officer at Braintree District Council (BDC) and followed the format of a previous survey undertaken and reported in January 2016.

The rationale for the consultation is:

*'Braintree District Council is currently working on a new Local Plan which will guide development in the District between now and 2033. When adopted, this document will replace the Local Plan Review 2005 and the Core Strategy 2011. Population growth in the District is likely to be substantially higher than in previous plans putting pressure on community facilities, but also opening up opportunities for investment.*

*As part of this work, the Council would like to assess the current community/village halls and facilities which are located within the District with a view to assessing what will need to be required in the new Local Plan to meet the needs of the new and existing population.*

### **Specification**

*Research work has already been undertaken by the communities section at BDC. In order to supplement that work we would like to receive more information from all the village halls identified in the District in terms of size, usage, potential expansion opportunities etc'.*

Discussion with BDC resulted in a revised questionnaire distributed to 54 identified rural village halls across Braintree district.

The halls contacted are listed below (highlight indicates a return):

- |  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Althamstone Village Hall                | 32. Lamarsh Village Hall           |
| 2. Ashen Village Hall                      | 33. Little Yeldham Village Hall    |
| 3. Belchamp St Paul Community House        | 34. Mount Bures Village Hall       |
| 4. Belchamp Walter Village Hall            | 35. Notley Green Community Assoc   |
| 5. Blackmore End Village Hall              | 36. Panfield Community Assoc       |
| 6. Black Notley Community Assoc            | 37. Pebmarsh Village Hall          |
| 7. Black Notley Village Hall               | 38. Rayne Village Hall             |
| 8. Borley Village Hall                     | 39. Rayne Old Schoolroom           |
| 9. Bradwell Village Hall                   | 40. Ridgewell Village Hall         |
| 10. Bulmer Village Hall                    | 41. Rivenhall Playing Fields Assoc |
| 11. Castle Hedingham Village Hall          | 42. Saling Millennium Hall         |
| 12. Coggeshall Parish Hall                 | 43. Shalford Village Hall          |
| 13. Cornish Hall End Village Hall          | 44. Sible Hedingham Village Hall   |
| 14. Courtauld Memorial Hall, Colne Engaine | 45. Stisted Village Hall           |
| 15. Cressing Community Hall Fund           | 46. Stambourne Village Hall        |
| 16. Earls Colne Village Hall               | 47. Steeple Bumpstead Village Hall |
| 17. Faulkbourne Village Hall               | 48. Sturmer Village Hall           |
| 18. Feering Community Assoc                | 49. Terling Village Hall           |
| 19. Finchingfield Village Hall             | 50. Twinstead Village Hall         |
| 20. Foxearth Village Hall                  | 51. Toppesfield Village Hall       |
| 21. Gestingthorpe Village Hall             | 52. Wethersfield Village Hall      |
| 22. Gosfield, Maurice Rowson Hall          | 53. White Colne Village Hall       |
| 23. Great Bardfield Town Hall              | 54. White Notley Village Hall      |
| 24. Great Maplestead Village Hall          |                                    |
| 25. Great Yeldham Reading Room             |                                    |
| 26. Greenstead Green Village Hall          |                                    |
| 27. Halstead Community Centre              |                                    |
| 28. Hatfield Peverel Village Hall          |                                    |
| 29. Helions Bumpstead Village Hall         |                                    |
| 30. Henny Parish Room                      |                                    |
| 31. Kelvedon Institute                     |                                    |

## **Method**

Following the engagement of RCCE to undertake this work, the questionnaire was revised in consultation with BDC (see Appendix A) following the earlier experience and consultation undertaken with urban halls. The main changes were to question 9 'the type of activities', and question 11 'who uses the hall?' as these were not thought to have contributed any useful statistical information. BDC provided a letter from Alan Massow, Senior Policy Planner, to accompany the questionnaire.

The questionnaire contained 15 questions with the intention of finding out:

- Each community halls' current size and condition
- How each community hall facility is presently utilised
- What future projects/schemes each hall committee would potentially like to implement

The questionnaire and letter were initially distributed by email on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2016 with a deadline of 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2016. This deadline was extended when it became clear more time would be required to chase non-respondents. A further distribution of the questionnaire was undertaken on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 21<sup>st</sup> September and 29<sup>th</sup> September, when respondents were again contacted to respond. Finally, in early and mid October non-responders were contacted by telephone and a further 11 questionnaires were returned through this action. In total 35 completed questionnaires were returned.

Hall contact details were sourced from the RCCE database, the Charity Commission registrations and from individual halls' websites.

Information from the completed questionnaires were entered onto an Excel spreadsheet and analysed from this for this report.

Copies of raw data are available in Appendix B.

## **Results**

- Of the 54 hall committees contacted, 35 made a response = 65% response
- Respondents were asked to provide details of a main contact and 100% of respondents provided this information.
- **Question 3** asked respondents to identify their legal structure:
  - ❖ 29 halls are registered charities = 83% of respondents
  - ❖ 5 halls are managed by Parish Councils = 14% of respondents
  - ❖ 2 halls are registered charities and has the Parish Council as Sole Trustee (Finchingfield & Great Bardfield)(included in the figures for charities and parish councils above)
  - ❖ 1 hall is managed by a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (The Old Schoolroom, Rayne)

**Commentary:** At the last national survey<sup>1</sup>, 90% of community halls in Essex were owned and/or managed by independent registered charities. The result of this latest BDC survey showed a slightly lower percentage of halls managed by registered charities. When halls with CIO governance is included in the number of 'registered charities' the percentage of halls owned or managed by charities increases to 86%.

(<sup>1</sup> ACRE Rural Community Buildings in England 2009 Key Findings)

- **Question 4** asked respondents if their organisation is affiliated to any other support or advice service
  - ❖ 21 hall committees are affiliated to RCCE
  - ❖ 1 hall committee is affiliated as a RCCE Parish Council member
  - ❖ 1 hall committee is affiliated to NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations); and 1 hall committee is affiliated to both RCCE and CAS (Community Action Suffolk)
  - ❖ 3 hall committees are not receiving support from any other external organisation

**Commentary:** It is reassuring to know that the majority of hall committees recognise the need for support and advice in what can be a specialised area of law and management. 3 halls don't receive any external support which could hamper their effectiveness as a committee.

- **Question 5** asked respondents if they sub-lease or allow another organisation to occupy space at the facility under an Occupational Licence:

- ❖ 1 hall respondent indicated they did sub-lease to a Parish council.

**Commentary:** Hall committees with surplus space for their charitable activities can enter into sub-lease or Occupational Licence to allow other groups exclusive use of surplus space from which to operate but only if their governing document allows this. This provides an additional regular income for the charity especially for those charities managing large, older properties which have high maintenance costs associated with them.

- **Question 6** asked who is involved in the organisation?

- ❖ 17 hall committees indicated they have paid staff = 48%
- ❖ 34 hall committees indicated they have volunteers and trustees = 97%
- ❖ The total number of staff involved in the 17 organisations is 34, which gives an average of 2 per hall
- ❖ The total number of volunteers and trustees is 319, which gives an average of 9 volunteers for each of the 34 halls.

**Commentary:**

Half the hall committees employ staff, which makes rural hall charities a significant local employer. The number of staff employed at individual halls varies from 1 to 5 with the larger community centres being the highest employers. Charities employing staff are subject to the same requirements and responsibilities as any other 'business' even though the trustees employing them are all volunteers.

There is a good ratio of volunteers to each hall which indicates active community involvement in the running of the charities. The number of volunteers involved at individual halls varies from 3 (the minimum required by the Charity Commission) to 20.

- **Question 7** asked about the condition of the hall facilities and a list was provided of areas of the hall. Respondents were asked to rate the condition as:

- ❖ New/newly refurbished;
- ❖ Fair condition (no major repairs or updates required); or
- ❖ Poor/In need of repairs or updating



Facility	Facilities available	How would you rate their current condition:		
		New/Newly Refurbished	Fair Condition (no major repairs or updates required)	Poor/In need of repairs or updating
Main Hall	34	9	17	7
Secondary Hall	12	4	6	1
Meeting Room	18	2	12	3
Stage	22	2	15	3
Kitchen	34	11	16	5
Toilets	34	10	15	7
Disabled Toilets	27	10	14	1
Shower/Changing Rooms	6	1	3	2
Licensed Bar	6	0	5	0
Office	7	8	0	0
Car Park	24	5	12	6
Cycle Parking	2	0	2	0
Disabled access	29	7	16	4
Attached land/outside area	20	4	10	5
Baby changing	14	3	10	1
Storage	25	2	15	6

**Commentary:** A high number of the 35 hall committees that responded i.e. between 27 and 34, offer the basic facilities i.e. main hall, kitchen, toilets, disabled toilets and disabled access, to their communities. A small number of respondents provided information on facilities but failed to grade their condition.

A smaller percentage, i.e. 20% also offered showers/changing rooms, bar and office facilities. 68% of halls have car parks available and 60% of halls have land attached or an outside area.

3 halls offered all but two of the stated facilities: Black Notley Community Centre, Feering Community Centre and Rayne Village Hall.

Most hall committees keep the main facilities i.e. Main Hall, Meeting Room, Kitchen and Toilets in 'good' or 'fair' condition. Nearly all hall committees indicated areas of the hall that are in 'poor or needing repair' condition. All halls with car parks, outside areas and storage areas require repairs or updating.

Many halls do not provide showers/changing facilities as with no land attached it wouldn't be necessary to provide these facilities. Those halls which indicated they had attached land/outside area didn't always provide showers/changing facilities. This is because the definition of 'attached land/outside area' is quite wide-ranging and varies from a small paved garden area to full recreation fields.

Given the popularity of cycling and the associated health benefits, it was perhaps surprising that only 2 hall committees provide cycle parking: The Maurice Rowson Hall, Gosfield and Rayne Village Hall, and hall committees could be encouraged to install these facilities through targeted grant funding.

- **Question 8** asked for an indication of the capacity for 6 areas of the hall:

Facility	No of responses	Average capacity
Main Hall	32	108
Secondary Hall	10	38
Meeting Room	18	19
Toilets	31	4.6
Disabled Toilets	25	1.1
Shower/Changing Rooms	5	11.4

**Commentary:** Most respondents gave a range of capacity for main/secondary halls and meeting room, depending on whether occupants were seated, seated at tables or standing.

Two halls with the largest capacity main hall were Terling Village Hall and Sible Hedingham Village Hall with capacities of 200 (there was no indication if this was seated, standing or at tables). The smallest main hall capacity was Henny Parish Room with a capacity of 50.

- **Question 9** required respondents to consider a list of typical activities and indicate if the hall was '*currently used for*' this activity:

<b>Use</b>	<b><i>Currently used for (nos. of responses)</i></b>
Meetings	34
Conferences	17
Training	23
Indoor Sports	23
Keep Fit & Exercise Classes	29
Other Health & Wellbeing Activities ( <i>E.G Slimming World, Health Checks etc.</i> )	17
Arts and Crafts Activities	29
Music and Theatre Events	20
Education activities	16
Crèche, pre-school, or play group	21
After School Clubs	12
Holiday Clubs	11
Scouting or Guide Groups	11
Youth Clubs or Drop in Sessions	13
Faith or Religious Activities	17
Private events/parties	32
Other Please specify: respondents included events such as Pumpkin Patch, Bonfire Night, Parish Council and PCC meetings, elections, quiz nights, weddings etc	21

**Commentary:** The majority of village halls are being used predominantly for meetings, keep fit & exercise classes, private parties, and arts & craft activities, providing a good range of activities for the communities.

It was surprising that educational activities are only offered at 47% of halls as 'education' forms part of the 'objects' of a village hall charity and are usually a mainstay of activities there. With health providers encouraging both physical and mental fitness into old age, this is an area of provision that all hall committees should be encouraged to develop, seeking partnerships with individuals and organisations such as professional gym instructors, Indoor Bowls Federation, The British Heart Foundation, Alzheimer's support groups, Age UK, U3A, WEA etc.

With only 32% of halls offering After School Clubs, Holiday Clubs, Scouting or Guide groups and youth clubs, there appears to be a gap in the rural provision of these services across the district. After School and Holiday Clubs provide working families with essential childcare and allow parents to continue to work or encourage parents back to work knowing their children will be cared for. However, the provision of these services may already be offered by local schools or dedicated facilities rather than at village halls which would significantly affect the result.

The range of 'other' types of use of the halls show that hall committees are willing to diversify from 'traditional' uses in order to encourage and support their communities to use the facilities.

- **Question 10:** Respondents were asked to provide an opinion to indicate the catchment area for the premises i.e. where do most users come from:

There were 36 responses to this question.

- ❖ Two halls indicated users come from both the parish they are located in *and* Braintree District. These tend to be the larger village halls or community centres and closer to urban areas: Rayne Village Hall, Feering Community Centre and Kelvedon Institute.
- ❖ Halls close to large towns but only serving their parish include Black Notley Community Centre, close to Braintree and Rivenhall Village Hall close to Witham
- ❖ 76% of hall committees indicated users came from the 'Town or Village and surrounding parishes'. These halls identify closely with their parish and are rurally located away from the large centres of Braintree, Halstead and Witham
- ❖ Cressing Community Hall Fund didn't indicate a catchment area as the hall has yet to be constructed but as the location is close to Braintree any hall would draw users from the Town and parish.

Most hall governing documents indicate within the 'objects' of the charity that the hall is there to serve the nominated parish and this is closely adhered to. So it is perhaps unsurprising that the majority of hall respondents consider their parish and surrounding villages as the main catchment area for their hall.

- **Question 11** asked respondents to indicate sessions when the main hall facilities are used:

DAY	Facility	Number of responses		
		AM	PM	EVE
Monday	Main hall	18	15	25
Tuesday	Main hall	21	22	29
Wednesday	Main hall	19	13	28
Thursday	Main hall	15	20	25
Friday	Main hall	15	16	20
Saturday	Main hall	17	15	21
Sunday	Main hall	10	12	8

**Commentary:** Respondents indicated regular use of the halls throughout the week and throughout the day. Some respondents indicated multiple users possibly including the use of a secondary hall or meeting room.

Highest use is on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings.

Weekend use is predominantly private functions, parties, fundraising events by the hall committee, and on Sundays, some religious use.

- **Question 12** asked respondents to consider any periods of the year when the facility is underused. This was a 'free text' response with 25 hall committees providing a reply:
  - ❖ Throughout the year we could accommodate more users
  - ❖ Not at present
  - ❖ Want to take on more
  - ❖ Most clubs apart from carpet bowls/keep fit either meet monthly or quarterly. There is potential for further day time or evening hire
  - ❖ Less well used on Sundays and the summer months.
  - ❖ School holiday as a number of classes only operate during term time. Also there is availability during the day
  - ❖ The Annexe, the smaller Hall is underused most weekday mornings and on Sunday.
  - ❖ Yes, underused generally/all year
  - ❖ Day time 9.00am - 3.00pm and during school holidays
  - ❖ During school holiday periods, though trying to encourage more kids clubs to use the facilities. We have 2 regular children's clubs each holiday but would like more.
  - ❖ No
  - ❖ None
  - ❖ Most weekdays and too many weekends there are not any bookings
  - ❖ During the School holidays all the children's groups finish, so the hall is a lot quieter. Thursday morning is quiet. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday are also quiet.
  - ❖ August is our quietest month and the hall is underused.
  - ❖ No
  - ❖ Summer Holidays
  - ❖ Many clubs take a summer break in August.
  - ❖ Main hall - afternoon are less busy than previously during week. Most of the gaps above are occupied at least 2 -3 times per month by frequent but not regular hirers and at

weekends by occasional bookings (ie one-offs) almost every week (eg Heritage Society meetings, monthly ballroom dancing, monthly folk music nights, adult drama productions at least 6 Fri/Sat evenings per year plus 9 x 10am to 10pm Sundays per year set buildings with major rehearsals- also Junior drama less frequent performances but regular use for Sunday rehearsals etc) School holidays are least busy - this year all main hall regular bookings transferred to New Hall during August for main hall refurbishment.

- ❖ Summer Holidays
- ❖ The odd few hours here are there.
- ❖ There is less usage during school holidays.
- ❖ All mornings
- ❖ August is generally quiet
- ❖ No not really only schools holidays but then they have holiday club in six weeks holidays
- ❖ Hall is generally underused, especially on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays. During school holidays generally only in use for pilates class and party hire
- ❖ Yes, daytime use is very limited

**Commentary:** Not surprisingly many hall committees reported underuse during the school holidays when some clubs shut down. This could be utilised by holiday clubs and activities for children and the elderly to encourage social interaction and provide an increased income for the hall charity.

Two hall respondents indicated more hirers could be accommodated; and one further hall committee indicated the hall was generally underused all year.

Hall committees need to consider other means of advertising and marketing the halls including hall specific websites, posters around the village, contact details readily available at the hall, magazine articles, and marketing leaflets to all residents some of whom may be new to the village due to housing developments and may not know of the hall and the activities. Funding for these types of marketing can be sought locally.

- **Question 13** asked respondents whether in its current condition would the premises have capacity to take on additional users or increased levels of activity:  
This was a 'YES/NO' response with 30 halls responding:
  - ❖ 25 halls indicated a YES response
  - ❖ 5 halls indicated a NO response
  
- **Question 14** was a 'free text' response to the question 'what if anything would prevent you from accommodating additional users or activities in the future'. 24 respondents provided comments:
  - ❖ Lack of secure storage, Security to building, No shower provision, No stage.
  - ❖ Having just one main hall. We would like to create an additional smaller hall/function room with a view to hiring to corporate clients, meeting room, creche etc.
  - ❖ There is little that would limit additional use apart from current commitments and size and nature of the desired use
  - ❖ The original entrance doors are heavy wooden doors. They are double doors and each door is not wide enough to accommodate a wheel chair or a child's buggy.
  - ❖ Provide a more suitable multi-use access.
  - ❖ We have just carried out a survey to identify 'use and need ' for the future of the Hall. This is being analysed by the RCCE. We recognise that the Hall is not currently fit for purpose.
  - ❖ Cressing Community Hall Fund (CCHF) is a charity formed to raise funding to build a new village community hall. We aimed to hold many activities in the hall if we were successful in our project. We hold monthly lunches which are regularly attended by 50+ residents of the village mainly aged over 60. We cannot seat more than 60 in any of the venues we currently use due to their small size. There is the opportunity for more guests to attend but not the room to accommodate more.
  - ❖ The small room is not large enough for most hirers as the Oak room (middle hall) is very popular. Also we have long standing hirers that like the timings they use now and don't want to change.
  - ❖ The oldest part of the building dates from 1934 and lacks dampproofing. We have employed a local resident Lisa Vohmann, who is an architect, to survey the building to compare the costs of renovating against total rebuild. There are areas that have been identified for work already.



- ❖ We are very small so we have only a handful of volunteers to oversee events and do admin and org
  - ❖ Nothing
  - ❖ Nothing
  - ❖ Lack of storage for regular hirers/groups to store equipment, car parking is also a problem for current/future users.
  - ❖ Final phase of major refurbishment work planned for summer 2017.
  - ❖ Nothing given mutually convenient times available/required.
  - ❖ Condition & facilities
  - ❖ Nothing
  - ❖ The lack of a second meeting area outside of the main hall. Basically, a one room building.
  - ❖ Lack of available sessions
  - ❖ The hall is reasonably well utilised and only small level additional activities could be accommodated
  - ❖ Small recurring bookings from small local organisations that have been using the hall for many years.
  - ❖ Only time of hiring limited
  - ❖ The toilets and main hall need improvement and we are currently seeking grant aid for these projects
  - ❖ No major obstacles to greater usage, although we have had to turn down potential hirers for dance classes where they want to do tap dancing as this damages the wooden floors. Also dancing and indoor sports such as table tennis require room to store equipment which we cannot provide. Seating capacity for the hall is about 60 so large events cannot be accommodated.
- **Question 15** was in two parts, 15 and 15a. Question 15 asked if the hall committee had identified any works, improvements or expansions to the premises. This was a YES/NO response. 33 hall committees responded:
    - ❖ 27 halls responded YES
    - ❖ 3 halls responded NO

- **Question 15a** asked those hall committees who had responded YES to Q15, to identify the works and if available, give estimated costs. 26 halls provided details and costs:

No.	Hall	Works identified	Cost
1	<b>Alphamstone Village Hall</b>	1. Secure Solid Doors to Hall 2. Rearrangement of toilet area and small extension to provide improved personal privacy, showers and extra storage 3. Stage and lighting	1. £2,500 2. £7,250 3. £4,350
2	<b>Black Notley Community Association</b>	1. Extension to side of current building to create a small hall/function/creche room for hire 2. Refurbishment of the stage area to allow musical/theatre groups to hire and perform to the community 3. All areas require electrical re-wiring	1. £40,000 2. £25,000 3. £20,000
3	<b>Castle Hedingham Village Hall</b>	1. Replace Curtains 2. Refurbishment of hall floor 3. Ceiling fans, checking and maintenance	1. £2,500 2. 3,000 3. £1,000
4	<b>Coggeshall Village Hall</b>	1. Main Hall - reseal wooden floor 2. Main Hall - redecorate walls 3. Both halls - improve disabled access (replace heavy wooden entrance doors) 4. Replace door to meeting room	1. £4,000 2. £3,000 3. £6,000 4. £1,000
5	<b>Courtauld Memorial Hall, Colne Engaine</b>	1. Provision on a safe second entrance for multi-use	1. £2,000
6	<b>Feering Community Centre</b>	1. Update the Acorn Room. 2. Painting of all walls.	1. £3,000 2. £1,000
7	<b>Finchingfield Village Hall</b>	1. Rewire the hall and kitchen. 2. Fit dehumidifier. 3. Dampproof, rewire and renovate the kitchen.	1. £5,000 2. £1,000 3. £35,000
8	<b>Foxearth Village Hall</b>	1. To do a full new modern heater solution 2. So we are looking at perhaps 3 on a one for one replacement	1. £8,500 2. £1,500
9.	<b>Gestingthorpe Village Hall</b>	1. Upgrade toilets to have disabled facility and baby changing facility.	1. £20,000

10	<b>Great Bardfield Town Hall</b>	1. Replacement of Town Hall Roof - work currently. 2. Improvement of toilets and disabled toilets to be installed.	1. £46,500 2. Unknown
11	<b>Great Maplestead Village Hall</b>	1. Updated kitchen & Gas supply. 2. Village Emergency Hub. 3. Defibrillator unit.	
12	<b>Great Yeldham Reading Rooms</b>	1. Improvements to disabled access. 2. Fit external doors and disabled ramp to access rear garden. 3. Fit solar panels to roof to improve energy efficiency. 4. Extension for additional storage area.	1. £7 - 10k 2. Quotes in progress 3. £6,300 - 10k 4. Quotes in progress
13	<b>Helions Bumpstead Village Hall</b>	1. Dry-line & insulate Main Hall and Roof, redecorating. 2. Ventillation system Main Hall. 3. Dry-line & insulate meeting room . 4. Replace heating system, including storage heaters fed by solar panels	1. £45,000 2. £12,000 3. £12,000 4. £6,000
14	<b>Henny Parish Room</b>	1. Replacement of kitchen roof. 2. Flooring toilets and entrance 3. Cladding front of hall	1. £3,200 2. £1,600 3. £3,500
15	<b>Kelvedon Institute</b>	1. Grounds New Hall. 2. Repointing & remedial exterior work to areas original hall (built 1911) New Hall completed Winter 2015 3. Meeting Room & kitchen - minor replastering plus new paint work and replacement windows. 4. New chairs for main hall to complement complete redecoration completed August 2016 from hall funds at cost of £5,000 (plastering, all woodwork & walls).	1. £1,000 2. £15,000 3. £2,500 4. £2,000
16	<b>Little Yeldham Village Hall</b>	1. Rewire & Refurb of Meeting Room. 2. Repainting of toilets & minor repaint in main hall	1. £6,000 2. £750
17	<b>Old Schoolroom, Rayne</b>	Extension & Alterations	£34,000
18	<b>Ridgewell Village Hall</b>	1. Replace roof, improve thermal efficiency, upgrade heating and general modernisation. 2. New Play Equipment. 3. Multi use games area.	1. £450 - £516,000 2. £54,000 3. £84,000
19	<b>Rivenhall Village</b>	Looking into building a second hall	Unknown at

	<b>Hall</b>		present
20	<b>Shalford Village Hall</b>	New roof and upgrade of main hall.	£65,000
21	<b>Sible Hedingham Village Hall</b>	1. Upgrade of kitchen. 2. Upgrade of Lights. 3. New Floor. 4. Hardcore on bottom car park.	1. £5,000 2. £2,000 3. £10,000 4. £200
22	<b>Sturmer Village Hall</b>	1. Further cladding to main hall walls. 2. Replace 4 wall heaters	1. £800 2. £1,000
23	<b>Terling Village Hall</b>	1. Car park and drainage 2. Painting - exterior and interior	1. £75,000 2. £10,000
24	<b>Toppesfield Village Hall</b>	1. Roof repair 2. Adding heating to toilets	Unknown of date.
25	<b>Wethersfield Village Hall</b>	1. Toilets. 2. Main Hall. 3. General Improvements	1. £15,000 2. £15,000 3. £15,000
26	<b>White Colne Village Hall</b>	1. Renewal Roof - new slates and lead flashing. 2. Remedial work to external brickwork, pointing and external woodwork. 3. Landscaping areas to front of hall	1. £10,000 2. £500 3. £500

## **Conclusions**

The responses to the questionnaire gave a good indication and some detail of the community facilities and activities in the rural Braintree district area; and of the successes and challenges that arise. Of the halls that responded, community activity and need in the areas around the halls can be seen to be met and improvement works identified by some halls will increase capacity and financial and social sustainability.

The level of response to the questionnaire was good at 65%; with 35 out of 54 hall committees responding to the questionnaire. It is reassuring that 21 of the 35 hall committees are affiliated to RCCE.

One group responded even though there isn't currently a hall facility constructed. Cressing Community Hall Fund is working towards the funding and establishment of a village/community hall facility in the village, as the need for a facility has been evidenced by community consultation. Although some facilities are available in church halls or in the social club in this area, these have limited availability and appeal.

Leasing of the charity premises is not common as leases of over 7 years duration is considered a 'disposal of property' by the Charity Commission and most charitable halls choose to avoid this preferring instead to use the standard hire agreement.

With 48% of respondees employing staff, this makes rural village hall charities a significant local employer and supporter of the local economy. All hall committees provide a major volunteering opportunity for local people, increasing their skills and knowledge and helping to contribute to sustaining and maintaining the community facility for the benefit of all residents. The level of volunteering is even more remarkable given that most hall charities are unincorporated trusts, which has a personal liability attached to the role of trustee.

It is well known that volunteers will often use the skills they have acquired in their employment or go on to volunteer for other organisations. However, there is increasing evidence<sup>2</sup> across the country that hall charities are struggling to retain or recruit volunteers often due to the personal liability of trustees but also as a result of a general apathy and reluctance to come forward and get involved.

<sup>2</sup>The State and Management of Rural Community Buildings in England 2009

Most halls in the district offer the basic facilities expected in a village hall with a smaller percentage offering showers/changing rooms. These halls presumably have recreation fields attached or nearby. Office facilities, bars, second meeting rooms etc. are usually available at the larger halls or community centres. It is disappointing to note the lack of cycling facilities available with only two halls providing cycle parking. Given the popularity of cycling and the associated health benefits, this is an area of work which could be encouraged through

partnerships and targeted grant funding and could benefit the hall committees with an increased hire income as cycle clubs hire facilities for all day events.

Project work to improve, extend or maintain the hall is always under consideration and again many of the contractors undertaking this work are very local or Essex based, adding to the local economy. Securing funding through grants or fundraising is often a long and arduous task so it is unsurprising that many hall committees still have areas of the hall in poor condition.

The majority of halls have a main hall capable of accommodating a capacity of approximately 100 people – sufficient for most use and for public meetings. Projects to extend a hall are often constrained physically by the site, setting and the extent of the charity property. Some very small rural halls have recently undergone major refurbishment and extension to accommodate increases in the population and to bring facilities up to a modern standard; Althamstone, Bradwell and Shalford Village Halls are good examples.

Halls in larger villages or towns not constrained by site are nevertheless constrained by a lack of major funding to support a refurbishment or extension project. Developing deliverable projects relies on volunteers' time and knowledge and from guidance and advice from support agencies. Halls in these areas can sometimes have more demand on the services and facilities and even a small reordering of the space or a small extension can provide separate usable facilities and additional income; Kelvedon Institute is a good example of this approach having constructed a new small hall behind the existing.

However, there are some halls in these larger Parishes which would benefit from better organised space, extension or rebuild. Feering Community Centre shares facilities with the local primary school which puts pressure on community use and would benefit from a new hall on a separate site; Sible Hedingham Village Hall has a good sized hall but lacks a smaller hall or meeting room and being built in the early 1960's will require major modernisation and/or rebuild soon. These and other areas such as Hatfield Peverel and Earls Colne may be subject to greater increases in population numbers due to housing development projects and may require additional work to the facilities to accommodate more users.

The halls are generally well used over the course of a typical week with very few periods of minimal use however 25 of hall committees indicated they have unused capacity. Often the obstacles to increasing capacity are physical and environmental ones e.g. wider and easier to access doors, more storage capacity, toilet improvements etc. Some hall committees are looking to extend their halls to provide a second hall in order to maximise use throughout the day. This is particularly relevant in halls hired by a pre-school as Ofsted requirements often impact on wider community use. A second hall would provide a separate facility with access to separate toilets and kitchen/kitchenette facilities to maintain the wider community use.

Twenty-six hall committees provided details of planned works together with approximate costs of the work. These range from £500 for remedial work to brickwork, to £516,000 for a major extension and refurbishment.

Overall, hall charities manage the halls very well. There are concerns over the governance and personal liability of trustees which it is hoped will be addressed in the future by the Charity Commission. The biggest issue for most hall committees is accessing funding and grants to make improvements and if Braintree District Council can facilitate funding opportunities from development opportunities or other sources, this will increasingly provide modern, comfortable and fit for purpose community facilities across the district.

## APPENDIX A



### 1. Details of facility:

Name of Facility:	Click here to enter text.
Address	Click here to enter text.
	Click here to enter text.
Town/Village:	Click here to enter text.
Postcode:	Click here to enter text.

### 2. Details of main contact:

Name of Organisation managing the facility:	Click here to enter text.
Contact Name:	Click here to enter text.
Position in the Organisation:	Click here to enter text.
Contact Address (if different to the address of the facility)	Click here to enter text.
Email Address:	Click here to enter text.
Telephone number:	Click here to enter text.

### 3. What is the legal structure of your organisation?

Registered Charity If yes, please provide your Charity registration number:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Company limited by guarantee	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Interest Company	<input type="checkbox"/>
Town/Parish Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Charitable Incorporated Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify): Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 4. Is your organisation affiliated to a support organisation such as RCCE, Community Matters, CVS?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please provide details:
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	

### 5. Do you sub-lease or allow another organisation to occupy space at the facility under an Occupational Licence?

Yes, please give details of the organisation:	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 6. Who is involved in your organisation? Please give an indication of numbers: (Please tick all that apply)

Paid staff including employees and self employed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Number:
Volunteers/Trustees	<input type="checkbox"/>	Number:

**7. Which of the following are currently available at your premises?**

Facility	Available?	How would you rate their current condition:		
		New/Newly Refurbished	Fair Condition (no major repairs or updates required)	Poor/In need of repairs or updating
Main Hall	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Secondary Hall	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Meeting Room	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disabled Toilets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shower/Changing Rooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Licensed Bar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Office	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Car Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cycle Parking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disabled access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attached land/outside area	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Baby changing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Storage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**8. What is the capacity in people numbers for the facilities? (This can be found on your Premises Licence or give an approximation):**

Facility	Capacity
Main Hall	
Secondary Hall	
Meeting Room	
Toilets	
Disabled Toilets	
Shower/Changing Rooms	

**9. What type of activities is your facility currently used for, and what could it be used for in the future (in its current condition)?**

Use	<i>Currently used for – please tick as many options as apply</i>
Meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conferences	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indoor Sports	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep Fit & Exercise Classes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Health & Wellbeing Activities (E.G	<input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Slimming World, Health Checks etc.)</i>	
Arts and Crafts Activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Music and Theatre Events	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Crèche, pre-school, or play group	<input type="checkbox"/>
After School Clubs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Holiday Clubs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scouting or Guide Groups	<input type="checkbox"/>
Youth Clubs or Drop in Sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faith or Religious Activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Private events/parties	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Please specify: <a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**10. In your opinion what is the main catchment area for your premises (where do MOST of your users come from? – please tick just one option)**

The Braintree District and beyond	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Braintree District	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your Town or Village and surrounding parishes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your Town or Village only	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify): <a href="#">Click here to enter text.</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**11. Who uses your hall? Please give an indication of the usual sessions your hall is hired. Please provide a typical programme of activities, if available.**

DAY	Facility	AM	PM	EVE
Monday	Main hall			
Tuesday	Main hall			
Wednesday	Main hall			
Thursday	Main hall			

Friday	Main hall			
Saturday	Main hall			
Sunday	Main hall			

**12. Are there any periods in the year when the facility is underused or not in use? Please provide details below:**

**13. In its current condition would your premises have capacity to take on additional users or increased levels of activity?**

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

**14. What if anything would prevent you from accommodating additional users or activities in the future?**

Click here to enter text.

**15. Has your organisation identified any works, improvements or expansions to your premises required?**

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

**15a. If yes: What works have you identified and what are the estimated costs?**

Work Required	Est. Cost
Click here to enter text.	£ Click here to enter text.
Click here to enter text.	£ Click here to enter text.
Click here to enter text.	£ Click here to enter text.
Click here to enter text.	£ Click here to enter text.

***Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.  
All information provided will remain confidential to BDC and RCCE.***