

Annual General Meeting Report October 2025 – September 2026

Solihull Lodge Community Association (SLCA)



1. Chair's Welcome and Executive Summary

Welcome to the Solihull Lodge Community Association (SLCA) Annual General Meeting Report for the 2025-2026 operational year. As we reflect on the past twelve months, it is with immense pride and gratitude that the Management Committee presents this comprehensive summary of our achievements, challenges, and strategic milestones. This year can unequivocally be defined as a 'Year of Transformation' for our beloved community centre. Emerging from a period of financial deficit and structural challenges, the charity has undergone a holistic revitalisation driven by the passion, dedication, and relentless hard work of our trustees, volunteers, and the wider community.

The overarching theme of this year has been one of modernisation and sustainability. From the foundational restructuring of our legal governance into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), to the extensive physical refurbishments carried out in-house by our incredible volunteers, every decision made by the committee has been geared towards securing the long-term future of the SLCA. We have not only stabilised our finances—turning a significant deficit into a healthy surplus—but we have also laid the groundwork for an ambitious five-year business plan that will see the centre expand its offerings, reconnect with isolated demographics, and become a true beacon of community spirit in Solihull.

None of these monumental strides would have been possible without the extraordinary commitment of our volunteer workforce. Whether they were scraping plaster, painting the Main Hall, running our bustling events, or meticulously auditing our accounts, their hands-on involvement has saved the charity thousands of pounds and breathed new life into our facilities. As you read through this report, you will see a detailed breakdown of the incredible amount of work that has been happening behind the scenes, ensuring that the SLCA continues to thrive for generations to come.

2. Governance and Strategic Restructuring

One of the most critical responsibilities of the Management Committee is ensuring that the charity operates within a modern, secure, and legally sound framework. This year, we undertook one of the most significant administrative overhauls in the history of the SLCA to guarantee our operational longevity.

Conversion to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

The most substantial strategic move of the year was the unanimous committee vote to transition the SLCA from its historical unincorporated charity structure into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The traditional charity model meant that trustees held personal liability for the organisation's assets and leases—an outdated approach that presented unnecessary risks and hindered our ability to secure long-term commercial contracts and larger funding grants.

By transitioning to a CIO, the SLCA now exists as a distinct legal entity. This

modernisation not only protects our trustees but also provides a much stronger foundation for holding property, entering into substantial contracts, and employing staff in the future. The committee has engaged proactively with Solihull Council to seamlessly transfer our assets and establish a new lease under the CIO, all while retaining our proud heritage and the 'SLCA' name.

Leadership, Compliance, and Safeguarding

Alongside our structural changes, we have bolstered our leadership team. We were thrilled to welcome Roger Leitch as our new Treasurer and Sally Lyons as our new Secretary, alongside new trustees Dawn Cox and Nikki Flavin. Their combined expertise has been instrumental in driving our strategic goals.

In terms of compliance, the committee has taken a zero-tolerance approach to regulatory shortcomings. This year, 100% of our Trustees signed updated Fit and Proper Person declarations, a crucial step in formalising our governance. We proactively reviewed the centre's status regarding Martyn's Law (the Terrorism [Protection of Premises] Bill) to ensure we remain ahead of national safety legislation. Furthermore, to guarantee compliance during our increasingly popular community events and bar operations, the charity funded essential Food Hygiene courses and Personal Licensee qualifications for key committee members, including Jen, Nikki, and Martyn. These accreditations are vital in allowing us to safely and legally host large-scale events that drive our revenue.

3. Financial Management and Efficiency (Treasurer's Report)

The 2025-2026 financial year has been a resounding success, marking a dramatic and much-needed turnaround in the charity's financial health. Through strict financial controls, aggressive cost-cutting in banking fees, and a tremendous increase in letting revenues, the SLCA has moved from a position of vulnerability to one of strength.

Income and Expenditure Overview

We are delighted to report a Total Gross Income of £59,649 for the financial year. This revenue was primarily driven by a massive increase in our Lettings Revenue, which surged to £42,145, demonstrating the renewed popularity of our halls for private and community use. Catering and Bar Sales contributed a highly respectable £9,502, while community events and ticket sales brought in £1,178. We also received £2,000 in restricted grant funding and £3,562 in generous public donations.

Against this income, our Total Expenditure was tightly managed at £53,966. The primary costs included Utilities and Rates (£13,226), essential Maintenance and Repairs (£9,512), and larger Building Renovations (£9,806). We also invested £7,096 into new equipment and furniture, directly improving the hirer experience.

The result of this financial discipline is a Net Surplus of £5,683 for the year. To put this

achievement into perspective, last year the charity recorded a deficit of -£7,983. This £13,000 positive swing is a testament to the hard work of the committee. Consequently, our Cash Funds at the end of the year stand at a healthy £9,030 (up from £3,347), providing us with a vital buffer for unexpected maintenance issues.

Operational Efficiency and Modernisation

A key factor in our financial success has been the modernisation of our back-office systems. The committee identified that our previous payment processor, PayPal, was charging an exorbitant 1.7% fee on transactions. By strategically switching to LoPay, we reduced our transaction fees to just 0.79%, saving the charity over £100 annually. We subsequently approved the premium version of LoPay to gain access to enhanced financial analytics.

To streamline our accounting, we successfully implemented HubDoc and Xero. This has allowed for transparent, consistent, and fully auditable expense tracking. The Treasurer successfully completed the historical accounts for the 24/25 financial year, ensuring all restricted funds were properly accounted for ahead of our independent audits. Additionally, by ensuring all trustees signed Fit and Proper Person declarations, we initiated the application process with HMRC for Gift Aid, which will open up a lucrative new revenue stream for all eligible donations moving forward.

4. Building Maintenance and Facilities Upgrades

Maintaining an aging community building is a constant challenge, but this year saw some of the most extensive and visually impactful upgrades the centre has seen in a decade. Crucially, a vast majority of this work was completed in-house by our Building Manager and dedicated volunteers, saving the charity tens of thousands of pounds in commercial contractor fees.

Major Structural Works and Repairs

Early in the year, we commissioned comprehensive building and drain surveys to actively monitor the structural integrity of the centre. One of the major victories of the year was successfully initiating an insurance claim for the sunken floor in the Main Hall, which aims to cover the extensive structural remediation and levelling required to make the space safe and usable. Additionally, we addressed outstanding leaks on the pitched roof; rather than hiring expensive roofers, the repairs were carried out safely and efficiently in-house using reclaimed tiles of the same make as the originals.

Extensive In-House Redecoration

The aesthetic transformation of the centre has been remarkable. The Main Hall, Reception Lobby, and the Toilet Facilities were completely re-plastered and repainted in-house. These fresh, vibrant spaces have drastically improved the first impression of the centre for prospective hirers. Externally, the fence-lines around the building were thoroughly tidied up, and old, rusted chicken wire was removed to improve the curb

appeal of the grounds - we are currently in the middle of further groundworks on the outside area, replacing overgrown conifer hedges and bringing the car park under control.

The complete refurbishment and refit of Priory, Lodge and Haven as well as the installation of the new kitchenette including a new microwave, and an air fryer, vastly improved our hireable space selection, providing much needed upgrades in capability and bringing these side rooms back in to full use for the first time in over a decade.

Seating, Furniture, and Equipment Overhaul

We undertook a massive overhaul of our centre's seating arrangements. The old, worn-out seating was completely replaced with the procurement of 120 new folding chairs and 50 new solid plastic chairs for use in Grafton and Haven. The tables were also replaced with 15 vibrant, light weight new ones, injecting much-needed colour into the space whilst providing capability to host larger parties in Grafton - further increasing our hire revenue as a result.

In the kitchen, we invested in a new standalone oven. We also purchased heavy-duty vacuum cleaners and new Binny bins to ensure our cleaning standards remain exceptionally high.

IT, Security, and Winter Safety

Understanding the need for modern amenities, we completely segregated the building's IT network. This crucial upgrade provides secure, reliable Wi-Fi and printing access for our guests and corporate hirers, while safely isolating and protecting the internal charity systems. We also implemented malicious web content filtering across all guest connections to ensure a safe browsing environment for all users.

To address winter safety and energy efficiency, we resolved a critical heating failure by rewiring the automation relays across the Priory, Lodge, Lobby, and Toilet block systems. We also installed a new grit bin and established a regular car park gritting schedule to ensure the safety of our visitors during the colder months. Finally, we conducted our first fire drills with every regular hirer to ensure our emergency procedures are robust and effective.

5. Community Events, Hirer Engagement, and Volunteers

The heartbeat of the SLCA is the community it serves. This year, we focused heavily on driving engagement, expanding our event offerings, and removing barriers to access for local residents and private hirers.

Major Events and Community Enrichment

The centre successfully facilitated several massive community events, most notably the hugely popular Spooky Lodge Trail and a major 4-day religious/community event starting literally the evening of this AGM. To further enrich our day-to-day community offerings,

we sourced a giant Connect 4 game and a bowling set, which have been incredibly popular. We also created intuitive posters featuring QR codes for the Giving Tree and the Community Bookshelf, making it easier than ever for visitors to interact with and donate to our ongoing initiatives.

Hirer Policies and Partnerships

To encourage more community uptake and make the centre more accessible during the cost-of-living crisis, the committee made the strategic decision to reduce the standard booking deposit to £200. We also standardised a minimum 4-hour hire time for parties, which ensures that staffing and bar coverage remains financially viable for the charity.

A major operational success was the establishment of a working partnership with Slide Away Castles and Pom-Pom Parties. This collaboration allows them to act as an official party planner partner, driving a steady stream of new hirers to the centre while ensuring strict adherence to SLCA deposit, cleaning, and insurance policies.

Communications and Grant Applications

Effective communication is vital for community engagement. This year, we implemented the Verticall phone system, allowing the centre to launch dedicated, professional phone numbers for the public to reach us. We also identified and fixed a significant bot issue on the centre's Instagram account that had been preventing community updates from posting, extending our social media reach as part of our advertising strategy.

Behind the scenes, we aggressively pursued new funding avenues to support our future plans. Major applications were submitted to the Solihull MBC Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) fund and the Great British Energy (GBE) fund - looking to secure much needed capital for the replacement of the pitched roof and energy efficiency/generation capabilities in future.

Volunteer Growth

Our volunteer base is the lifeblood of the SLCA. This year, we successfully ran core inductions throughout the year, bringing several fresh, enthusiastic team members onto the active roster. The dedication of our volunteers, many of whom give up their weekends and evenings to staff the bar, clean the halls, and maintain the grounds, is truly the reason the SLCA continues to operate and grow. We cannot thank you all enough!

6. Looking Ahead: Strategic Focus for the Next Year

While we have achieved an incredible amount this year, we cannot afford to stand still. Earlier this year, the committee drafted and presented a comprehensive 5-Year Business Plan to chart the future of the SLCA. As outlined in this plan, our focus for the upcoming 'Year 1' will shift towards completing our urgent foundational repairs while significantly expanding the diverse services we offer to the Solihull Lodge community.

Upcoming Year 1 Priorities:

- **Funding & Urgent Repairs:** We will secure initial grants and launch targeted crowdfunding campaigns specifically designed to complete the remaining urgent building repairs.
- **Community Garden:** We will begin the planning and physical build of a new community garden, working in close partnership with Solihull Council and Sunhaven, to provide a serene outdoor space for residents.
- **Service Expansion:** As well as working on the capital improvement of the facilities, we will aggressively expand our programming to include:
 - **Youth Programmes:** After-school clubs, holiday activities, and mentoring schemes.
 - **Adult Education:** Workshops and classes focusing on IT literacy, cooking, and arts & crafts as well as employability skills, basic english and maths.
 - **Health & Well-being:** Fitness classes, mental health support groups, and preventative health workshops.
 - **Community activities:** quiz nights, movie evenings, bingo, tea dances and more

We have already engaged Solihull College as a primary partner for the delivery of some of these activities and they will be starting imminently.

7. Conclusion and Acknowledgements

The 2025-2026 year stands as a testament to what a united community can achieve. The SLCA has been pulled from the brink of closure and transformed into a modern, compliant, and thriving hub of activity. We are profoundly grateful to our Trustees, who carry the heavy burden of governance; to our regular hirers, who bring life, music, and laughter to our halls every week; and to the local businesses and council members who have supported our grant applications.

Above all, our deepest and most sincere thanks go to our volunteers. Every single person who has picked up a paintbrush, manned the bar, or swept a floor this year: you are the heart of the Solihull Lodge Community Association. Because of your selflessness, the future of the SLCA has never looked brighter.

We look forward to embarking on this exciting 5-Year Business Plan with all of you by our side.