



So I decided to make it my mission to bring the village hall back to life.

While there was already a committee in place, progress had stalled. My friend Helen and I decided to join them to inject some new enthusiasm. We spoke to everyone, from those who'd lived there all their lives to teenagers. One thing was clear: not having somewhere where people could meet or get involved in activities was having a real effect on the villagers' mental wellbeing. That was all the motivation I needed.

As project chair, I've pushed myself further than I ever thought possible. As well as being a mum of two and working three days a week in my day job as an account manager, I've also co-ordinated funding applications, negotiated

## 'From the tea party to the sack race, young and old came together'

planning rules, dealt with architects, and pushed the project through to the final design. Now, at last, my dream of building a cutting-edge eco hall is finally coming true.

We've received some funding from the Big Lottery Fund to develop the project, and will hear in the next few months whether our bid for £650,000 to start the building work has been successful. We're hoping it will begin in February 2017, and that within six months our programme of activities for everyone in the village – from newborns to pensioners – will be up and running. We want to offer skills projects to help people get back into work, as well as youth groups and get-togethers for older people. And, of course, have lots of parties – where people can make the building shake as much as they want!

Our community is already feeling the difference. We now have nearly 40 villagers in our Friends of Wereham Village Hall group, which shows just how passionately people feel about the project. Recently, watching teenagers and pensioners at the pasta-making event we held, moved me to tears. ➔

The villagers prepare to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday with a tea party



Victoria with a cake to honour the Queen's birthday

country were planning street parties, but nobody had planned anything in our village. I decided to take matters into my own hands.

First, some other mums and I started off the Jubilee celebrations with a family day and picnic. Our efforts weren't entirely selfless, as we wanted to make the village a fun place for other families with children. From the tea party to the sack race, young and old came together, and the smiles on people's faces told me that it had all been worth it. But after the bunting had been packed away, I could see that nothing was going to change long-term unless there was a focal point for village life.