

Buckland Newton Village Hall Committee

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the village hall on 20th June 2022

Attendance

Nicki Barker (NB), Ian Scott (IS), Katharine Haynes (KH), Vinny McKenna (VM), Susan Moring (SM), Sandie Stout (SS), Kate Parish (KP) and Caron White (CW).

1. Apologies None
2. Approval of the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 6th July 2021.

The minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting by CW. The minutes were agreed unanimously as a true record by those at that meeting and were signed by the chair.

3. Matters arising
There were no matters arising.
4. Chair's report

Following the COVID shutdown of the hall through most of the last financial year, this year has seen the hall able to reopen, albeit on a somewhat limited basis in terms of both our regular user groups and the numbers that each group are permitted to host under the ACRE recommended guidelines. On the whole some of our regular bookings and one-off functions have been slow to return, although Artsreach did us proud by returning with three events: an outdoor Forest School activity using the rear wilderness area; a contemporary/classical music concert and a Klezmer music concert all of which raised over £300 for the hall. Hirings were further re boosted during the winter months by a large booking from the Piddle Valley Players leading up to a performance in February.

The result of this is that our hire income has not kept pace with regular expenditure. It now costs some £7000/year to run the hall. The management committee has always been aware that user habits may well have changed during the 18 months of lockdown and it would inevitably take some time for finances to return to balance. Hence, we have been increasingly appreciative of the generous government grants given to support the hall during closure and the grant given to us in May of this financial year to help us reopen. To counter this income imbalance, it was agreed at the July 2021 AGM that we would ringfence £10,000 of the grant funding to cover excess expenses until the hall returns to profit.

The Management Committee agreed that the remaining £17,500 grant funding should be used to help make the hall more attractive to future hirers. To this end it was decided to install broadband, upgrade those parts of the hall and its grounds that have been outstanding for some time along with carrying out electrical and plumbing work that should reduce future regular expenditure.

On this basis, the committee made a list of items (to include the Electrical and Fire Safety work already carried out in the previous financial year) and obtained a series of quotes for the different work identified. Following receipt of quotes, the works were prioritised based on the funds available and their relative benefit to the hall. The following works (Contractor and cost ex VAT shown) have now been completed during this financial year. It should be noted that as we are voluntarily registered for VAT, it is thanks to the reimbursed £4000 of VAT that the list below has been so extensive.

Sanding and resealing of the main hall floor (Mr Burch £400)
Installation of Broadband (BT £200 to cover a 2 year rental period)
Replacement of lights in the lobby, cloakroom and storage room with LED (S White £1197)
Replacement of fence panels along entire southern boundary (T Perrett £5135)
Removal of diseased ash trees adjacent n side of car park (P Needham £650)
Replacement of taps in disabled toilet (Aquaheat Services £136)
Removal of scrub and laying to grass NE corner of carpark (Dorset Groundscaping £625)
Resurfacing entire carpark area with tarmac (Dorset Groundscaping £9810)

With the rapid rise in prices throughout the year and additional unanticipated work, this has resulted in an overspend of around £2,700 on our agreed budget of £17,500, but still leaves us with sufficient funds to cope until the hall running costs return to balance.

A few outstanding items that have since emerged which will require additional expenditure. These are the servicing of the ceiling blinds; repairs to the ceiling tiles in the main hall and additional electrical works to remedy the last safety inspection. A new “wall hung” First Aid Kit has been purchased to address the identified need in last year’s Risk Assessment.

Our trusty hall cleaner of many years has finally needed to retire due to ill health and a sub-committee was appointed to advertise and interview suitable candidates for the position and from thereon, to be the first point of contact regarding future hall cleaning needs. A number of excellently qualified local

candidates responded and a rigorously fair interview process followed. We are delighted to welcome Debbie Goodfellow to the position and her cleaning skills have already been very positively commented on.

Additionally, on the cleaning front, we did not do an annual hall clean up during these last two years due to its low usage, but a work party of committee members plus some villagers spent 3 days in August cutting back and tidying the overgrowth around the carpark and clearing a good path around the wilderness area for use for a very successful Artsreach Forest School activity during the school holidays. An annual clean-up of the hall needs to be scheduled for this coming August to touch up the paintwork and give attention to the ceiling tiles in the main hall. Ricki Edwards our gardener has continued to trim the grass area around the hall.

Prior to the resurfacing of the car park, the various sheds at the rear of the car park were removed and the Parish Council relocated their salt bin and the store for flood sandbags to the Parish Pavilion. This has given us additional car park space.

It is with some sadness that our Treasurer Vinny McKenna is retiring. The hall owes him a huge debt of gratitude for obtaining and administering the various COVID related grants that have been available, without which we would not have been able to carry out all the above restoration and upgrade work.

It is also with some sadness that I have decided after 14 years in the chair, not to put myself forward as the new Chair of the Management Committee. Hence this is likely to be my last annual report documenting events. They have been happy and productive years for such a valued village asset which is now 21 years old. Following the remedial works during these last 2 years the hall and grounds are once again in very sound shape for a more youthful contingent of the committee to take the lead.

IS expressed thanks from the committee for Nicki's work and energy which has been much appreciated.

5. Treasurer's report (also see income and expenditure account document prepared by VM).

The position regarding hirers is better than the previous year which was down due to COVID. We have an excellent new cleaner whose salary of £12 per hour needs to be reviewed at the end of July. Regarding oil purchase a top up of only £90 was purchased last year. We assume that the tank was not topped up during the pandemic lockdowns. This May (during this

financial year) a top up of 900 litres was made. The commercial waste collection from the hall was discussed as there was concern whether the bin was being put out. The much larger sum for repairs and maintenance is due to work done such as electrical work, taps replaced, tree felling, car park re-surfacing, fencing and fire safety signs. There is more VAT money to come. Once the outstanding VAT repayment is paid in there will be £7,000 in the current account. Expenditure will rise regarding the cost of electricity and oil. Compared to before the pandemic, the hiring of the hall is reduced and we need to bear this in mind and be cautious regarding spending. There are on-going costs to meet such as WIFI (£32.99 per month) and bank charges (£7 per month). New prices in regard to the cost of hiring the hall are needed.

6. Resignation of existing representatives, elected and co-opted members elected July 2021

In accordance with the Charity Scheme, all committee members resigned.

7. Nominations to the hall management committee from user groups.

After being in correspondence with ACRE, IS addressed the issue of trustees liability and whether our present constitution, based on a Charity Commission approved model document in 1981, is fit for purpose. In reply to IS, Louise Beaton (the very experienced ACRE village Halls consultant), wrote that the vast majority of village halls in the country also used the same model document and in practice examples of trustees being held personally liable for anything in these cases were incredibly rare, pretty much limited to financial officers “having their hand in the till”. She added that the Charity Commission have the power to exonerate trustees who have acted reasonably and honestly.

It is possible to transfer to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation framework, which provides a degree of further protection for trustees in the event of business failure, but it is a lengthy and expensive technical process (which may have complications relating to the original conveyance of land and property to the charity). The key point is that Trustees need to be careful not to be negligent (e.g. failing to renew insurance). Her advice was to stay with the current Charity Scheme from 1981 (if it ain't broke don't fix it), and ensure that the hall is run appropriately according to it.

KP raised a concern that representatives from user groups need to understand that they are to become trustees, what that role entails and legal responsibilities. IS said that the representatives from user groups are nominated members and are confirmed as trustees only on signing their acceptance of being trustees in the minute book, and subsequently having their membership confirmed with the Charity Commission for the year ahead. It was agreed that Charity Commission/ACRE guidance on the duties

of trustees should be flagged up to all (e.g. ACRE Village Hall Information Sheet 17).

Nominations for Representative members were as follows:

Lunch Club – Susan Moring
Youth Club – Kate Parish
Gardening Club – Katharine Haynes
Exercise Class (Yoga/Pilates) – Sandie Stout
Artsreach – Caron White
Little Goslings – Emily Alford (subject to confirmation)
Village Café – Fizz Lewis (not a trustee)
Village People - Amanda McKenna (not a trustee)

Proposed by IS and seconded by NB.

8. Contacts for current non user groups

Parish Council – NB
Parochial Church Council – SM

9. Nomination of Elected Members

IS – proposed by KP and seconded by CW
NB – proposed by VM and seconded by KH

VM (as an Honorary member as treasurer though not trustee) – proposed by SM and seconded by IS.

10. Declaration of acceptance by new charity trustees.

Signed by committee members and to be pasted in the minute book.

11. Appointment of auditor.

NB will contact Jackie Cuff regarding the auditing of the accounts.
Proposed by IS and seconded by CW.

12. Consideration of ways to increase hall use.

Since lockdowns, social bookings for parties and weddings have not picked up. We also need to encourage commercial bookings. KP suggested that hirer fees need to cover our running costs and enable savings to pay for replacing things when the need arises. There was discussion regarding how to increase hall bookings. It was decided that we will have a promotional

campaign this autumn. The Council and local Health Authority would be contacted to raise awareness of the hall as a venue. KP suggested that we engage with the local community about how the hall can be used and that as a committee we need to act in a business like and competitive manner. IS suggested that after the annual clean-up we could hold an open day/afternoon/evening and invite local families and potential commercial users to attend. Wednesday 7th September was suggested. As part of the event local organisations could be invited to promote themselves. A display of photographs showing how the hall can be used for events, for example weddings, could be on show. A research and planning session is needed. KP said that she will produce a colourful advert for the Lyddon Vale news and face book and put together a list of public sector contacts. She will disseminate ideas via email.

13. Consideration of current hire rates.

NB stated that we need to balance the books and make a profit in order to replace things as necessary. If we were no longer registered for VAT, the hall fees would not have to be raised very much. SM felt that the hiring fees are too cheap compared with other halls. It was suggested that we need a balance of regular and additional users and that we aim to keep the cost of hiring down for local regular users and charge additional users more. Youth Club currently pays £12.00 per hour but will not be using the hall much over the summer. KP will inform IS/KH so that other bookings could be made. The double session fee for Yoga have been raised from £32.00 to £35.00 once the afternoon group returned to a viable number.

14. Items raised from the floor

None

Meeting closed at 11.50am