

COLTON VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of Thursday 29th July 2021

Members Present:

Richard Monbiot (RM) (Chairman); Alice Hadridge (AH) (Treasurer); John Macmillan (JM) (Secretary); Fiona O'Brien (FO'B) (Booking Officer); Nigel Parry (NP) (Parish Council rep).

1. Apologies

None received

2. New Trustees

Guy Reynolds (GR) was unanimously elected as a new trustee. **RM** welcomed him and Nigel Parry, the newly appointed representative trustee of the Parish Council, to the meeting and expressed pleasure that the number of trustees was increasing. **JM** gave a brief introduction to the charity and the role of the trustees in managing it.

3. Conflicts of interest

None declared.

4. Outstanding issues and matters completed since last meeting

4.1 The stile at the end of the Staffordshire Way section of the nature reserve had been replaced.

4.2 The new first aid box was in the kitchen. **AH** advised that it should not be attached to the wall like the old one as it seemed designed to be taken to the scene of an incident. Sonia Jenkinson was thanked for providing a supply of masks.

4.3 Mobile phone. **JM** apologised and said that because of pressure on his time from other directions he still hadn't located the old iPhone and would now do so as quickly as he could. **FO'B** said that she was keen to stop using her own phone for VH business as soon as possible [**Action JM**].

4.4 Playground Group. **RM** reported that he had been in touch with Chloe Hawkins who had expressed an interest in reviving the Playground Group. **GR** offered to help with the assembling of the picnic tables which had been purchased with a Tesco Bags of Help grant but were still in their wrapping beside the VH. It was agreed that if Chloe was unable to revive the group, then the trustees would have to organise assembling the tables. There was a significant amount of money (some £6,000) held in reserve which had been intended to be spent on a second phase of the playground, but the trustees were adamant that they would not permit a second phase to be built on VH land unless there was a thriving and active Playground Group to manage it. If that didn't happen then the money would be earmarked in the accounts as a fund to replace existing equipment when life expired.

4.5 The proposed updating of the website had not taken place. **FO'B** agreed to look at what had been done so far and take this forward in conjunction with Duncan Shortland [**Action FO'B**].

4.6 The replacement portable goal posts had not been set up and their whereabouts was uncertain.

4.7 Badger holes. **JM** reported that a professional survey had established that the two badger holes in the track leading to the nature reserve were no longer used and could be filled in. As they represented a H&S hazard it was agreed to ask Mark Bull to fill them in [**Action JM**].

5. **Treasurer's Report**

AH produced a report showing £46,481 in the current account. In addition, there were the working reserve of £4,000 and the playground reserve of over £6,000. We were beginning to see an increase in income from bookings and there were no extraordinary expenditure items on the horizon. One large refund has had to be made this month. The money in the bank was earning only a very low rate of interest.

6. **Chairman's report**

RM said that today felt like a new beginning, meeting for the first time for many months in person with two new trustees who will bring fresh ideas and energy. There were now enough trustees to spread the work load more evenly. We are entirely self-funded, apart from the possibility of the occasional grant and prior to Covid we were successfully managing the hall, bringing in enough to cover running costs and build up a healthy reserve. During the pandemic we had kept the hall and playground fit for use and well sanitised in accordance with Government requirements. We had benefited from a number of Government grants but these are now at an end. So far, the village organisations had shown some hesitancy in coming back to the hall for their regular meetings which was a shame because we manage the hall for their benefit and that of parishioners generally. Figures showed that we had succeeded in our aim of generating maximum income from outsiders from minimal usage, meaning parishioners and village organisations benefitted from very favourable room hire rates. In 2019 77% of bookings were from local people or organisations but the majority of the income came from external hirers. **RM** said that it was now very important that the VH helped to create the atmosphere and provide the encouragement to enable the hall's beneficiary group to once again, post Covid, become regular users of a thriving VH. It was our responsibility as trustees to make the VH available, attractive and in good repair. We need to encourage usage so as to generate revenue and we need to discuss what we might do to assist in this.

7. **Booking officer's report**

FO'B reported that the post office, for which we do not make a charge, had continued throughout lockdown as an essential service. Room hire bookings started to resume late in April. The dance group M3 resumed on the 19th of April and have continued for the summer term. Tai Chi resumed on the 18th May and have continued until the end of term in July. The Art club also resumed on the 19th May. The two bands have resumed practice at the end of May but are using the main hall rather than the Bellamour. We had our first weddings post shutdown in June along with a children's party, a training event and the PC meeting. Unfortunately, none of the village organisations felt safe to resume during this time. There was a lot of interest in viewing the hall in July and FO'B said she had shown nine couples around all of whom have booked for wedding receptions. She reported that we have a new regular external user who uses the hall for training events and books four to six times a year. This will be their second full year. In total we have 25 new events booked between now and the end of 2022. This equates to 75 sessions. This does not include events taking place that have been moved due to Covid. They total 11 which equates to 34 sessions. Predicted income from July until the end of 2022 with current bookings is approximately £10,031. So far as village organisations are concerned, the Old Folks Christmas lunch is booked for 12th December 2021. The WI are resuming from September. The produce guild intends to restart in October, numbers permitting. The Parish council are resuming their meetings in September, but she had not heard from the History Society or the Friendship Club. **JM** said that he understood from Gill Sykes that the History Society was on the verge of

folding through lack of volunteers to run it which would be a great shame as they had built up an impressive archive which is housed in the village hall.

8. **Revision of room hire T&Cs post Covid**

FO'B said that she had studied the latest guidance from Support Staffordshire which suggested that our T&Cs were still perfectly adequate in the light of the latest changes. As track and trace was no longer a legal requirement, SC1 should be amended to change it from a requirement to being advisory and para 2 of the poster should be amended to remove the reference to track and trace. The QR poster should stay in place for the time being. SC7 was redundant as social distancing no longer applied. She saw no need to change our booking practices. Our existing risk assessment remained adequate. **JM** was asked to make the necessary amendments [**Action JM**].

9. **Car park renewal**

There was a lengthy discussion about the state of the car park and whether there was a need to renew it. The general view was that although the last repairs had lasted much longer than feared and no accidents had so far been reported, the surface was clearly beginning to deteriorate and we had to be proactive with regard to H&S issues. In addition, a good car park was an important element in making the hall attractive to potential hirers. **RM** had obtained two quotes and a third was awaited. The cheapest quote so far was £19,824.00 + VAT which the VH would have to pay as the order could not be placed through the Parish Council. Given the state of the VH's bank account, this was eminently affordable and it was therefore felt that it would be prudent to have the work done now rather than wait until the car park had deteriorated further when the availability of funds might not be so good. It was known that no grants are available for car park refurbishment. It was further agreed that we should look into the possibility of having one or two electric car charging points installed as part of the renewal as the ducting for them would have to be under the car park and also replacing the now very unreliable car park lighting for the same reason. **NP** offered to research these two issues including the possibility of grants for charging points [**Action NP**].

10. **Parish Party**

RM felt that there was a real need to hold the party as a means of stimulating village activity and reviving interest in the village organisations all of which were struggling. The funding which the Parish Council and the VHC had offered to make available for the event which was originally scheduled for July 4th was still available. It was very regrettable that the extension of lockdown had meant that it had had to be cancelled but **RM** was hopeful that it could now take place on the second weekend in September. It was his understanding that Mel Crozier and Sarah Plater were available and willing to organise the event for that weekend and that the Dun Cow would do the catering, subject to giving us a final quote when we had a better idea of numbers. The band was still keen to take part. **JM** said that he wondered whether the event had much purpose so far after the end of lockdown if the village organisations were no interested in using it as a vehicle for recruiting new members. **FO'B** said that she had had a disappointingly poor response from VO's to her original enquiry back in June. **GR** offered to contact secretaries of VO's individually to try and generate enthusiasm for the concept [**Action GR**]. Several trustees were not at all sure that Mel would be available to organise an event for the second weekend in September as they understood she had other commitments and suggested further enquiries be made. It was agreed that without the organising team that had originally agreed to do the event on July 4th we would not be able to hold it on the second weekend

in September and if that proved to be the case the event could not take place at all.

11. The Christmas Fair

RM thought that it was very important to hold the Fair this year as it had become an important event in the village calendar as well as an important fund raiser for the hall. He understood from a recent conversation with Mel Crozier that her family were prepared to take on their usual roles including the provision of turkey baps for sale. Sales of the baps and donated cakes were key elements of the fund raising aspect of the event. The date of Sunday November 28th was agreed with the same format as in 2019. Start would be 12.30 and finish at 3.00 with the same number of tables to avoid overcrowding. **JM** offered to contact all stall holders from 2019 to see if they would be interested in a stall this year [**Action JM**]. **AH** and **FO'B** offered to publicise the Fair on the village Facebook page and in Parish News and invite people to apply for a table [**Action AH and FO'B**]. **JM** would ask Georgie Hine if she would organise the Christmas Hamper again as the main prize in the raffle [**Action JM**].

13. A.O.B.

13.1 **JM** reminded trustees of the need to hold an AGM as soon as practicable. **AH** reported that the accounts had not yet been returned from the independent verifier so it was agreed that the date should be set well ahead to avoid last minute postponements. Wednesday October 27th was agreed and **JM** was asked to send the notice and agenda to **FO'B** in her capacity as editor of the Parish News as soon as possible with the view to advertising the date in two consecutive editions [**Action JM**]

13.2 Playground Group. **RM** reported that he was aware that Chloe Hawkins had spoken to a number of potential new members for the group but so far nothing had happened. **JM** reported that a fox had begun scavenging in the orange Hippo waste bin which had a very wide gape. It was agreed that this should be replaced as soon as possible with a conventional bin which **AH** agreed to order [**Action AH**]

14. Confirmation of meeting cycle and date of next meeting.

It was agreed that the trustees should resume meeting on the last Thursday of odd numbered months and accordingly the next meeting would be on Thursday September 30th.

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Signed as a true record

Dated