

COLTON VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES

FRIDAY 12th APRIL 2024

Members attending: John Macmillan (Chairman) (JM); Richard Monbiot (RM); Fiona O'Brien (Booking Officer) (FOB); Lynne Richardson (Secretary) (LR); Guy Reynolds (Treasurer) (GR).

1. Apologies for absence.

Nigel Parry (Parish Council rep)

2. Declarations of interest.

None

3. Minutes of the meeting of January 31st

Approved.

4. Matters arising

- 4.1 Para 6.1 - Opening of interest-bearing accounts. **GR** conformed this would be done over the weekend [**Action GR**]
- 4.2 Para 6.2 – Reimbursement of outstanding playground maintenance costs. **GR** reported that all of the outstanding items had been paid out of the Playground Reserve account, not the current account. He will prepare a list of items from the last three years for **JM** to submit to the Parish Council for repayment [**Action GR and JM**]
- 4.3 Para 8.1 - Electrical maintenance items. Apart from the installation of a new isolator switch which was not in fact required as there was already one in place, all of the other items had been done.
- 4.4 Para 8.2 - Redecoration party. **JM** reported that this had been a great success. **RM** said that he would thank everyone by name in his next piece for Parish News. **FOB** kindly offered her hand-held steam cleaner to clean the curtains.

5. Booking Officer's report

FOB was thanked for her report. Since the last meeting, 14 enquiries had resulted in 10 confirmed bookings with two still to respond. In the 12 months ended today, the value of bookings made was up 33% on the previous period. Not all the money had yet been received. The level of business was steady. She felt that our current charges for weddings were about in the mid-range but suggested a 10% to 15% increase in the light of the financial situation. Saturday afternoon children's parties from external hirers were proving popular but any increase in prices would be damaging to the level of business. Bookings for parties by parishioners – who only pay half rate – were disappointing. She had already substantially increased charges for dog shows with effect from 2025 as they were well below a commercial rate. We are also charging far too little for caravan clubs. **FOB** will make enquiries of other local sites to find out what they are charging. We are also charging too little for weekday business hirers. **FOB** was

asked to put forward proposals for increasing both of those rates and also to produce a forecast of income for a 12 month period based on the proposed increases and current booking levels [**Action FOB**]. Trustees will be asked to approve the new rates by email. Both **FOB** and **JM** felt strongly that, if at all possible, price increases should only apply to external bookings. **FOB** was also concerned that we were not applying the cancellation conditions of our T&Cs stringently enough and that they were probably too lax anyway. **JM** was asked to look at them and propose changes.

6. Treasurers report

GR reported that we have £10,062 in the current account and £4,057 in the reserve account. He produced year-end figures which showed a loss on the year ended March 31st of £2,020 despite fees from room hire being up £1600 on the previous year. He noted that we had probably not yet seen the full benefit of the price increases introduced in February 2023. Utility charges were up by £2,800 on the previous year although the new gas contract which had come into effect only in mid-December, was already producing substantial savings. The last of the major planned refurbishment items had been done during the year at a cost of £1800. He suggested that for the purposes of financial forecasting, we should ignore donations received and rely only on room hire charges and money received from the Christmas Fair. He suggested that in order to restore the hall's financial reserves to the level needed to cover future major capital items, we had to generate a surplus of around £2,000 per annum. To achieve that and to eliminate the current level of loss required a 26% increase in hire charges. **JM** drew the meeting's attention to the income levels of the hall immediately prior to the pandemic. Income from room hire had been £4,000 more in both of the last pre-pandemic years than in the year just ended. He suggested that this was probably due in large part to the current cost-of-living crisis and, if so, it would be very unwise to increase rates too much. It seemed likely that as the cost-of-living crisis eased over the coming months and years, business would naturally increase. He also suggested that **GR's** projected figures were overly pessimistic for three reasons. First, it assumed no growth in income whereas **FOB's** figures showed significant growth. Secondly, it assumed the same level of energy costs whereas a full year of the new gas contract should produce a further saving of about £1,000. Those elements alone suggested break even for the coming year at worst. In addition, **GR's** own assessment of likely maintenance expenditure over the next three years indicated nothing other than routine items so a surplus of around £1,000 seemed much more likely than a £2,000 deficit. However, there was no doubt that over the next 15 – 20 years we had to grow the reserves to at least £40,000 to meet the next cycle of major capital expenditure. **JM** therefore supported targeted price increases as previously discussed but not across the board.

All agreed with his first two points and his last point, but not the third as there was always a risk of something unexpected and it was known that the big green storage shed was in poor condition and the secondary boiler, which heated the Bellamour Room, must be getting towards the end of its life. It was also agreed that we needed to find ways – preferably free of charge - of promoting the hall to external hirers. **FOB** and **GR** agreed to take on responsibility for promotion [**Action FOB and GR**]. **FOB** also

agreed to include regular items in Parish News promoting the hall to parishioners and reminding them of the heavily discounted rates available to them **[Action FOB]**.

7. Solar panels

RM reported that he had contacted about 4 potential grant makers none of whom gave grants for solar panels as they were seen as potentially revenue generating items. It was agreed that there was no point in pursuing this issue as we could not afford the capital outlay and given the pattern of usage of the hall, it was very doubtful if the outlay could be recouped within a reasonable time.

8. A.O.B.

LR reported that despite the trustees' previous decision, at least one Parish Councillor seemed intent on pursuing grants to install electric vehicle charging points on the VH car park. The trustees unanimously re-affirmed that they would not permit charging points to be installed on the car park and **JM** was asked to email the Parish Council Clerk to reiterate the point **[Action JM]**.

9. Date of next meeting

Thursday June 13th 2024.

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Signed as a true record

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Dated