

COLTON VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of Thursday 30th September 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): Guy Reynolds.

1. Apologies for absence

None

2. Conflicts of interest

RM declared an interest in item 8 – Pricing Structure.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

Signed as a true record. There were no matters arising that were not agenda items.

4. Chairman's report

RM said that it had been gratifying to see and hear the Village Hall being used more, but we were still a long way from the occupancy rate of the pre-Covid period. It was disappointing that it had not been possible to organise a post Covid Parish Party as a recruiting drive for village organisations and socialising in the village was still very much in the doldrums. It was to be hoped that the sequence of three open events that have been organised for October and early November (Garden Guild Harvest Supper, Wine Tasting and Christmas Fair) will help to change this. Progress has been made with the car park lighting and resurfacing, broadband facility and general sprucing up. It is good that we are reviewing booking procedures and terms. The effects of Covid and lockdown have changed the environment and social habits. Our policies and procedures must move with the times. Progress was certainly being made and he thanked everyone for their work and efforts in getting the management of the hall and the various projects into a smooth -running operation.

5. Treasurer's report

AH reported that at the start of September we had had a total of £48,398 in the bank. There had been a significant increase recently in bookings, particularly by external hirers, which were 3 times higher this month than last although still down on pre-Covid levels. In 2019/20 external bookings brought in £12,000 and this year so far we had £5,975 so we are well on track to equal that figure. Internal bookings remained low however with only £1682 so far this year compared with £7,008 in 2019/20. We were encountering a significant number of late payments of balances or failures to pay deposits although everyone had paid in the end with one exception. This was increasing her workload as she was having to check for payments twice a week. The exception was a person who had made a booking for the 5-7 November 2021 in late July but despite promptings had still not paid the deposit. It was agreed that **FO'B** should email her to say that because of this failure the booking was now cancelled [**Action FO'B**]. It was agreed that **FO'B** should have read only access to the bank account to reduce the demands on the treasurer's time: **AH** to arrange access for her [**Action AH**]. **AH** was still trying to organise a debit card to enable cleaning materials etc to

be purchased but the Lloyds Bank systems were proving difficult. **AH** said that the external independent verifier had flagged up the need to spend some of our reserves.

6. **Receipt and approval of Independent Verifier's report on 2020/21 accounts**

AH said that the IV was satisfied with the accounts which were approved by the trustees. **RM** and **JM** to sign. **AH** to circulate to all Trustees and **JM** to arrange for them to be posted on the website [**Action AH and JM**].

7. **Booking Officer's report**

FO'B reported that there had been 24 new bookings since the last meeting with a total value of £4599. Six were external business bookings, 7 external leisure bookings and 7 were internal (i.e. Parish) leisure bookings. The hall had been occupied for at least 28% of available time since the last meeting although the calculation of available hours was rather rough and ready. If one assumed that on weekdays available hours ceased at 10.00 pm rather than midnight which in practice was almost always the case, then the occupancy rate had been higher. Village organisations and regular users had started to return with the WI, Art Club, Parish Council and Produce Guild all making bookings. The History Society had held a successful afternoon meeting in a bid to encourage new members. The Post Office has continued throughout. Unfortunately, the old folks Christmas lunch has been cancelled, probably due to Covid related concerns. **FO'B** was complimented on the layout and content of her report.

8. **Pricing structure and deposit payment terms**

8.1 Pricing structure. **FO'B** was concerned that the current pricing structure inhibited the use of the hall for children's parties on Saturday afternoons. The price was £195 which most were not prepared to pay. She proposed that if the hall is empty and a booking is made within 4 weeks of the event, the charge should be reduced to the equivalent hourly rate which would normally mean a price of £24 for an external booking and £12 for a parishioner's booking. The evening rate would remain the same. There was a similar problem with Friday evenings if the hall wasn't booked for a wedding. She proposed that if the hall is free and the booking is made no more than 6 weeks prior to the event, a village event that is open to all or a short meeting should be charged at the Monday to Thursday evening rates. All proposals agreed -**RM** abstaining and not participating.

8.2 Special deposits. **FO'B** reported that not everyone was paying the refundable special deposit of £100 and fewer and fewer people seemed to have cheque books. Asking for the deposit to be paid as part of the balance of the hire fee was possible but would entail more work for the treasurer when it came to be refunded. **JM** said that when he had been booking officer it had been agreed that the booking officer should have a discretion whether to ask for the deposit depending on the nature of the booking and the people making it. It was agreed that this practice should continue. There was a brief discussion about the desirability of allowing hirers to make payment by credit card but **FO'B** said that, at the moment, there was no demand for it and it would create more work for the treasurer. She would keep the trustees advised if this changed.

9. **Car park**

9.1 Lighting. NP reported that after two long visits by the electrician, the problem with the lights had still not been solved. A slight fault in one cable had been found and rectified but the lights went out again after a week. Specialist equipment to locate the cables and the fault was needed which the electrician didn't have. It was generally felt that the lights were now too old and should be replaced, preferably with smart, energy saving functions built in. The work would have to be completed prior to the car park resurfacing. **NP** agreed to obtain quotes [**Action NP**].

9.2 EV charging points. NP reported difficulties in getting companies to quote. He had been in touch with 5 providers but none had got back to him. It was agreed that if chargers were to be installed they would have to be capable of providing a fast charge. However, it was felt that they were an optional extra rather than an essential and it was agreed that unless their installation could be fitted in with the car park resurfacing and the replacement of the lights the idea should be abandoned.

9.3 Resurfacing. Work would start on Monday January 17th and last three days but a further 24 hours would be needed before vehicles could use it. The dates were subject to confirmation in the light of prevailing weather conditions. It was thought that pedestrian access to the hall would still be possible during the work.

10. **Christmas Fair.**

JM reported that following a post by **FO'B** on the village Facebook page and Rugeley Rocks, 6 new enquiries had been received. We currently had 9 bookings and it was likely that the school PTA would want a table. It was important to avoid overcrowding, particularly if any village organisations wanted tables to try and recruit new members. It was agreed that there should be a maximum of 18 tables excluding tables for village organisations. We currently had no Santa or Santa's helper. **FO'B** offered to ask Mel Crozier about the whereabouts of the costumes and details of setting up the grotto. She would also speak to Georgie Hine about organising the raffle [**Action FO'B**].

11. **AGM arrangements.**

The date was confirmed as October 27th. **JM** reported that he had contacted all village organisations inviting them to nominate trustees. Notice of the AGM would be put on the main notice board and the website [**Action JM**] and on the village Facebook page and the electronic edition of Parish News [**Action FO'B**]. The accounts and the annual report would also be placed on the website [**Action JM**]. It was not felt necessary to have a power point presentation this year.

12. **WiFi.**

GR reported that the installation would begin on Monday the 4th October. The plan was to make WiFi available in as much of the building as possible and he expected the work to be completed by the 19th or 20th. A passcode would be needed to access the WiFi which will be changed every three months or so.

13. **Website update**

FO'B said that she had been through the website. The first page seemed OK. There was nothing on the events page at the moment and the management page needed updating. She would obtain some recent photos of events to show the hall set up for weddings and parties. She did not think that a

redesign was necessary. The website was functional and easy to navigate.
[Action FO'B].

14. Insurance renewal

JM was instructed to accept the recently received quote from Allied Westminster [Action JM]

15. A.O.B.

15.1 AH reported that the new waste bin for the playground was being delivered on Monday

15.2 Several trustees commented on the fact that the commercial waste bins were very full. **JM** said that he was certain that the last collection had taken place on time although at least 3 had been missed earlier in the year. He thought the suggestion that the bins had not been emptied because recycling items like bottles had been put into them was wrong as he was sure we would have been notified by LDC if that was the case. No-one had any evidence of parishioners or others using the bins as though they were a municipal waste disposal facility. It was agreed to monitor the situation.

16. Next meeting

The date of the next meeting was agreed as November 25th.

.....

.....
Signed as a true record

Dated