

BUCKLAND NEWTON VILLAGE HALL COMMITTEE

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held at the Village Hall on 6th May 2010 at 7.30 pm

ATTENDANCE

Nicki Barker [NB] (*in the chair*), Jeremy Collins [JC], Emma Holgate [EH], Jan Marpole [JM], Trevor Marpole [TM], Gill Nell [GN], Fran Parker [FP], Ian Scott [IS], Janet Shaw [JS], Sue Sulkin [SS], Brian Wells [BW], Keith Wright [KW].

1. APOLOGIES

None.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There was no declaration of interest by any member present.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 10TH SEPTEMBER AND 17TH NOVEMBER 2009

The Minutes for 10th September 2009 and 17th November 2009 were approved unanimously by those present at those meetings and signed by the Chair.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 10TH SEPTEMBER AND 17TH NOVEMBER 2009

Matters arising were held over until the next meeting.

5. FINANCIAL REPORT

Sue Sulkin reported as follows:

HSBC Account: £271.180

CAF Account: £24,864.72

The Village Hall had just broken even in the year ended 31st March 2009. £460 in the CAF Account is the Fete donation for treating the floor. There had been considerable expenditure on heating oil (£700 in February 2009, £900+ in April 2009 and two £300+ top-ups during the year. All bills to date were paid, but no further income was expected (apart from £100 for use for the General Election polling station) until August/September 2010. An electricity bill would be due in July 2010, plus monthly cleaning and gardening bills. Some interest from the CAF account could be used but according to the terms of the Lottery Grant and subsequent agreement by the Lottery Commission to VAT registration, the bulk of the CAF Account (approximately £23K) could only be used for capital projects. There was discussion as to whether these conditions applied in perpetuity.

Investigation was underway to change to a non-residential contract for electricity, which would give a reduced rate and save some money.

ACTION

Sue Sulkin noted that she was combining the roles of Treasurer, Bookings Secretary and Secretary and asked committee members to consider whether anyone was prepared to take on the role of Secretary (not Minute Secretary).

6. **FUTURE STRATEGY TO ENSURE FINANCIAL VIABILITY**

Nicki Barker introduced the discussion by outlining the uncertain economic and political situation which was likely to result in taxation and possibly council tax relief changes, in addition to fluctuations in utility costs, all of which could result in higher running costs for the Hall. Loss of council tax relief would amount to £600-£800 per annum. The Hall needed to operate on at least a break-even basis without recourse to the CAF account capital for running costs. This meant that costs would need to be tightly controlled and hiring charges reviewed.

Discussion of heating costs included questions as to whether the programmed heating times correctly corresponded to hall usage times, as it appeared that the hall was sometimes heated when not in use. A decision was made to investigate an alternative programmer for the heating. Users would be instructed in use of the programmer (if changed) and also asked to ensure that radiators were returned to standby settings at the end of each session.

TM

Jan Marpole offered to calculate the hourly running costs of the Hall, based on current financial and booking figures. This would provide a base 'cost recovery' figure for decisions on hiring charges.

JM

Cleaning of the Hall was discussed. No decisions were taken.

It was agreed that in view of the greatly increased cost of oil in recent months, a 'heating surcharge' would be applied to all bookings in the winter months (notionally from October to end of March). This was regarded as an equitable and transparent solution to the greatly increased heating costs. Users to be advised of this as soon as a figure can be decided.

There was discussion on ways of increasing bookings, in part by making the hall more attractive to hirers. It was generally agreed that the kitchen facilities were not ideally suited to wedding hirings. Brian Wells suggested relocating the kitchen to the current cloakroom/bar area and using the current kitchen as the bar/refreshments area - to be investigated further. Possible refurbishment of the kitchen was discussed. A full refurbishment might be expected to cost up to £10K and Nicki Barker said she would be unwilling to see such a large proportion of the CAF account used on one project. Fundraising would be needed to raise half of any cost, matched by drawdown from the CAF account.

BW

There was discussion as to whether a better return could be achieved on the money in the CAF account. No decision was reached.

Advertising in the Lydden Vale News was being considered (£45 for 1/8 page for 12 months). Nicki Barker would produce a poster for display in The Old Chapel Stores. It was suggested that brief hire charges and contact number for bookings should be displayed in the Hall's exterior notice board.

SS

It was agreed to consider production of a quality brochure (possibly A4 tri-fold) to advertise the hall. This could be distributed to bridal shops, tourist offices, local pubs without hiring facilities. Jeremy Collins undertook to produce a draft design.

JC

In a general discussion on hire charges, it was believed that the hall currently represented good value for money vis-à-vis similar venues. Ian Scott undertook to obtain hiring charges for comparable halls. A small annual increase in charges was also considered preferable to a larger occasional increase. It was generally believed that current users (with one possible commercial user, where there was an anomaly in charge per session) would not find it difficult to pay increased charges. Revised hire charges, using the information to be produced by Jan Marpole, to be agreed at the next committee meeting.

IS

All

7. **FUTURE OF THE PLAYGROUPE**

No decision had yet been reached on whether the Playgroup would be able to move onto the Buckland Newton School site. This could involve building or Portakabin facilities on the school site and there were both planning and funding issues. No decision was likely in the near future and a move was unlikely within eighteen months. The loss of income to the Village Hall would be approximately £1,000 per annum but there would be some heating and lighting savings.

8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING.**

It was provisionally agreed to change the date of the next committee meeting and the AGM to Thursday 3rd June (7.30 pm for the Committee Meeting, 8.00 pm for the AGM). Notices of the AGM would need to be posted up by 19th May.

The meeting closed at 9.38 pm.