

Minutes of the meeting of the Watton-at-Stone Community Hall Board of Trustees held in the Community Hall on Friday 31st May 2019

Present: Mr. John Meischke (Chairman) Mr. Stephen Block
 Mrs. Christine Dinnin Mr. David Stock
 The Clerk (Mrs. Jane Allsop)

1. **Apologies for absence:** None.

2. **Report on items resolved since Trustees meeting held on 23rd October 2018**

- **Kitchen** – the new kitchen was completed in December 2018.
- **Forever Active to Active East Herts** - Forever Active, which catered for the 50+ age group, came to an end on 31st October 2019. It was replaced by Active East Herts, which allows children from 8 years old upwards to take part in activities. The new scheme is no longer directly funded by EHDC, however there are funding opportunities and EHDC have already granted £340 towards tuition fees.
- **Roof repairs** - P J Roofing has replaced four broken roof- tiles and cleared out the gutters.
- **Play Area safety Surface** – Abacus replaced the safety surface under the rainbow multi play and slide. They extended the surface area to meet up seamlessly with the toddler area on one side and the supernova on the other, thus avoiding trip hazards.
- **White Board/projector screen** – purchased and installed in the meeting room.
- **Path round Community Hall** – Mark Blacktin levelled the uneven slabs.
- **Safe** – Fire safe in the plant room has been disposed of.
- **Poppies storage** - poppy paraphernalia, needed each year for the annual poppy collections, is now being stored in one of the loft spaces.
- **Shower heads** – have been cleaned and a broken showerhead repaired.
- **Annual emergency lighting and PAT testing** – completed by D. P. Electrics.
- **Youth problems** – there have been several incidents of vandalism to the external toilets as well as broken glass on the sportsfield. These incidents have been reported to the police.
- **EHDC - Rate relief form completed** – this gives the Community Hall 80% rate relief.
- **Cleaning contractors (Little Gems)** - contract renewed for cleaning on Mondays. The new contract expires on 19th February 2020. They also provided a copy of their current insurance certificate, copies of both are now on file.
- **Annual boiler and heating service** - James Turner Limited have carried out the annual boiler and heating service. They were also called out to repair a leaking union on the pressurized heating system in April and repair a vandalised toilet.
- **Fire Alarm** - The Fire alarm system developed a fault and required a new control cabinet. The system is now fully operational.

3. **Welcome 2 new trustees confirm paperwork done**

Mr. Ian Knight and Dr. Emma Waltham stood down as Trustees at the Annual Parish meeting of the Parish Council, held on 14th May and two new Trustees were elected.

Mr. Meischke welcomed new Trustees, Mr. Stephen Block and Mrs. Christine Dinnin and said that he and Mr. Stock looked forward to working with them.

The Clerk has updated the Trustees details on the Charity Commissions website.

4. **Bring new trustees up to date and discuss what's next and way forward**

Mr. Meischke said that the Parish Council gave the Trustees a mission to increase the usage of the Community Hall and improve its facilities so that it does not turn into ‘a white elephant’. Forever Active, now Active East Herts, has helped to increase the income and improvements have been made to the hall, including the installation of a new kitchen in December 2018.

Mr. Meischke asked the new Trustees to look at the Community Hall with a ‘fresh pairs of eyes’ to see if they can identify any improvements.

Action: S. Block/C. Dinnin

5. **Decoration where? inspect and who to decide?**

Mr. Meischke asked Mr. Block to look around the hall and identify any areas that need decorating or upgrading and asses if the work needs to be done straight away or if it can wait a bit longer.

He also asked him to look at condition of the tables to see if any need replacing.

Action: S. Block

It was agreed that the Community Hall will never be able to be self-sustainable as the repair costs of major items like windows, boilers and the roofs are too great. Reserves will need to be built up via the Parish Council’s annual grant or grants applied from external sources.

Mrs. Dinnin agreed to look at the china in the kitchen to see if there is enough and what condition it is in.

Action: C. Dinnin

6. Car park (planning, Gate, Parking fines)

Mr. Meischke said that if the adult facilities move from the sportsfield to another area in the village, the Community Hall Trustees will be looking to increase the size of the car parking facilities at the Community Hall.

The size of the car park is woefully insufficient for users of the hall. The situation is made worse by people using the car park because they cannot find anywhere else to park locally and not because they are using the hall. The builders at the old Horsa Hut site (playschool), are currently one of the worst offenders. Also, on Tuesday mornings some Ramblers use the car park and arrive before the Active East Herts sessions start each week, leaving little room for the Yoga class attendees. Mr. Meischke said that the Trustees need to find out from the planning department if they can increase the footprint of the car park.

Mr. Meischke said that four options are available to us, 1: to do nothing, 2: Fit a Gate, 3: Charge for parking, 4: Fine people for persistent breach of regulations. Mr Meischke has been made aware of a company that will fine repeated offenders who use the car park without hiring the facilities. He believes the charge to set this up is around £100. The Trustees will record the number plate details and the date and times the vehicle has been repeatedly parked in the Community Hall car park and give the details to the car fining company. The company will then put warning notices on the vehicle. If they are caught reoffending three times the company will take the vehicle owner to the small claims court and keep any fines that are awarded. The Trustees agreed that Mr. Meischke should investigate this further.

Action: J. Meischke

The Trustees to get someone to look at drawing up a new car parking plan.

Action: J. Meischke

7. Social media plan

The Trustees discussed Victoria Nightingale’s presentation and agreed that they should meet again with her but concentrate on the social media part of her plan.

Mr. Meischke to contact Victoria Nightingale to arrange a meeting in late Summer/early Autumn.

Action: J. Meischke

8. Hiring charges

The hiring charges have remained the same since the building opened in the mid-1990s, except for the Friday to Sunday Main Hall hiring rates which were reduced some years ago by £2 per hour to encourage use of the hall. However, in April 2016 the rates were increased again to be in-line with the Monday to Thursday rates. Also, the discount for paying 3 months in advance was reduced from 10% down to 5%.

The Community Hall is unique in this area and although the Trustees have investigated prices in other halls it is difficult to get an accurate hiring price comparison.

The Trustees discussed the current hiring charges and if they should increase them or not.

Recommendation: The Parish Council agrees that the hiring charges remain the same.

- A fitness instructor will be running outdoor fitness classes on the sportsfield twice a week from mid-June onwards. He will also have access to the hall’s toilet and changing room facilities, for a digressionary price of £10 per session.
- The Clerk said that she had become aware that one of the hirers is paying for 1¼ hours use of the Pavilion, at £10 per session, when he is using the facilities for 1½ hours. Also, he often cancels his sessions at very short notice when he is either away or has insufficient clients to run the class.

After discussion, the Trustees agreed that the Clerk should write to the hirer saying that it had come to the attention of the Trustees that he is not paying for the correct usage of the hall and will now be charged at £12 per session with immediate effect. In addition, he will be informed that any late cancellations, less than three days’ notice, will be charged at 50%. The Trustees also agreed that all regular hirers that have been paying weekly will now be charged on a monthly basis or offered the three-month option of having a 5% discount. Any paid for sessions that are cancelled with enough notice will be carried forward to the following month.

Action: J. Allsop

Although Mr. Stock is very happy to see that the War Memorial Hall and Methodist Hall are successful in securing many bookings, he suggested that we should ask ourselves why we cannot attract similar types of Hirer. i.e., What attracts them to/makes them choose the other Halls instead of us. Mrs. Dinnin said that when Pilates classes first started in the village, they were in the Community Hall. At that time there were no blinds in the Pavilion room and the ladies attending the class did not like the lack of privacy, so the class moved to the War Memorial Hall. It was agreed that we need to consider this point further.

9. Any other business

None.

The meeting closed at 1515.