

Biddenham Village Hall Chairman's Report – 2015

These past twelve months have seen the Management Committee maintain and improve the Hall with the aim of providing a good quality facility for the use of the local community.

Management Committee

The year started with 14 members and finished with 12 members. In May John Esam resigned as the Parish Council representative. The Parish Council has been unable to provide a representative. In September Zoe Hagger ceased to be on St James' PSA and therefore resigned. We are grateful to John and Zoe for their valued contribution. Tom Perry, the current Toddlers Representative, is also on St James' PSA and will temporarily represent both.

Looking forward to the coming year, we have 2 further resignations. Philippa Smith (Environmental Officer) has resigned due to other commitments. Philippa has been a very active member over the 9 years that she has been on the Committee and her presence will be missed. We thank Philippa for her commitment and contribution.

After last year's AGM Richard O'Quinn advised that he would stand down with effect from this AGM. We are grateful to Richard for giving this period of notice to allow good succession to be planned. Richard has served on the Committee for 13 years and played an active part in addition to his role as Secretary, including the raising of substantial grant funding. We thank Richard for his commitment and contribution.

We are pleased to report that Fiona Kraus put herself forward to be Secretary and stands for election in that position at the AGM. Fiona is one of the longest standing members of the Committee having held a number of roles, most recently the position of Recycling Officer. The number of Committee members starting the year will be 10, the lowest level for many years. In due course we hope to welcome a representative from the Parish Council and a new member representing St James' PSA is likely to be found later in 2016.

The Committee met on 6 occasions and on average 10 members were in attendance (77% of total membership).

Paper Recycling

Unfortunately the paper recycling scheme came to an end in April following the withdrawal of recycling credits by the Borough Council. This was regrettable given the substantial income this has provided for many years. The Committee is now considering how to make best use of the vacant store that was being used for the recycling scheme.

Alcohol licence

Since 2005, as part of the Hall's Premises Licence, the sale of Alcohol had been controlled through an Alcohol Licence with David Watson (the Technical Officer) being the "Premises Supervisor". Changes in the Licensing Law with regard to community buildings now allows for the role of the Premises Supervisor to be taken on by Management Committees. Accordingly we applied to Bedford Borough Council to make this change and this was approved with implementation from 10th September 2015.

Finance and usage

Finances continue to be well managed and we ended the year with a balance of £21,270, deposited as follows: NatWest: £10,414, Virgin Notice 8,651, Virgin Deposit £2,143, CAF £62.

Income was 8% up on the previous year however due to the necessary improvements and repairs to the Hall the year we ended with a deficit of £4,805 (2014 surplus was £5,350).

In line with previous years, the Committee proposes maintaining reserves at a level suitable for dealing with significant emergency repairs to the fabric of the Hall. Therefore at the end of the 2016 financial year the objective is for the level of reserves to be at least £12,000 plus the cost of major repairs and improvements planned for the forthcoming year.

Grant Funding

There was no grant funding or donations this year however a defibrillator was installed outside the Hall in March. Thanks go to the Fire Service and our Borough Councillors for the funding of this. Costs of running and maintaining the unit will be the responsibility of the Hall.

Health and Safety

No accidents were reported this year involving Village Hall equipment. The programme of regular inspections continued over the period and all the necessary repairs were completed.

Health and safety risks were reduced through the replacement of the gas cooker with an electric cooker and the replacement of the gas heaters with modern units with an electric fail safe switch.

Improvements

In January, a new oven and two separate hobs were installed and a defibrillator was installed outside the front door. In August, new gas heaters were installed, with additional work to supply electricity to the heaters control units. In addition, work to provide extra ventilation for the gas heaters to comply with modern safety standards, was completed. Additionally the kitchen was modernised, comprising a new floor, new and redesigned units and worktops, new lighting, extractor fans and a plinth heater. One sink has been removed, and hot water is now supplied by the boiler rather than by the old electric heaters. A new fridge and freezer have also been purchased. Users have been very complimentary about the changes.

Repairs and maintenance

There have been a number of repairs and replacements necessary to keep our equipment in good working order. It was not necessary to hold an annual maintenance weekend this year.

Plans for the future and concluding comments

Following on from a busy year of improvements we are not planning any major future works for the next 12 months.

The Management Committee would like reiterate it's thanks to Richard O'Quinn for his hard work and commitment as the secretary of the Biddenham Village Hall Committee. Knowing Richard he will be taking advantage of any appropriate village hall social event and be keeping an eye on how things progress. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Committee members and the members of the village, and the parish council for their support in helping with the smooth running of the Hall.

Philip Inness
Chairman, Biddenham Village Hall Committee, October 2015