

Biddenham Village Hall Chairman's Report – 2013

This is my third report as the Chairman of the Village Hall Committee. These past twelve months have been a period of maintenance and improvement and we have continued to invest in the hall with the aim of providing a good quality, well maintained facility for the use of the local community.

In particular:

- Bookings continue to be managed well with the burden on the Bookings Officer kept to a manageable level through the booking system on the website.
- Finances continue to be managed well by the Treasurer and control of costs key, with initiatives being adopted by the Treasurer, the Secretarial team and the Technical team.
- Regular maintenance and inspections are carried out by the Technical team, supported by all Committee members, to ensure the Hall remains fit for purpose.
- The performance of our recycling efforts is monitored regularly by the Recycling Officer and opportunities to promote the scheme are always acted upon.
- The role of Environmental Officer is working well, encouraging aspects of the environment to be considered as integral in the way the Hall is run. Furthermore an audit is carried out biannually.

Management committee

The year started and finished with 14 Committee Members, one fewer than the maximum number permitted. There were no changes in membership through the year.

During the previous year the Committee reduced the number of meetings from 6 to 4. This year a number of the Officers felt that the increased gap between meetings meant a reduction in continuity and it was agreed to go back to meeting 6 times per year. During the year, on average 10 members were in attendance (74% of total membership).

Committee business continues to be managed between meetings with the good use of email and sub-groups when necessary.

With the closure of Borneo's office in Bedford and the move of the Hall's legal documents to Shakespeares in Milton Keynes it was decided to look for a new legal adviser. The Committee thanks Paul Hillier of Hilliers HRW for securely storing the Hall's documents and being available should the Committee need any legal advice in the future.

During the year the Committee debated the role of the Management Committee and whether there was a case to expand its involvement within the village. On reflection the Committee concluded that the Constitution did not allow for an expanded role but that the Committee would communicate with villagers to encourage new uses of the Hall and would be open to requests for improvements or new equipment. A number of the improvements made during the year were prompted by this debate.

Finance and usage

Finances continue to be well managed and we ended the year with a balance of £20,726, deposited as follows: NatWest: £948, CAF: £62; Deposit account £19,716.

Income was down on the previous year due to lower hire receipts and fewer Saturday bookings particularly from hirers living outside the village. Paper recycling was lower due to phasing of payments but interest received was higher following the move to accounts with better rates.

The cost of the improvements and repairs to the hall, combined with the reduction in usage means that the year ended with a loss of £2,914 (2012 surplus was £7,411)

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 2014 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

The funds that were previously transferred from Biddenham United Charities (c£2.5k) were used to purchase and install the AV system. £400 was donated by the Biddenham Show Committee towards the project following a request from The Gardeners' Association. Combined the amounts covered most of the cost of the project.

Health and Safety

No accidents were reported this year involving Village Hall equipment. The programme of regular inspections continued over the period (including the monthly checks done by members of the committee), and all repairs required have been completed. A fire risk review was completed in December which resulted in minor additions to signage.

Improvements

This year saw major improvements with the hall's IT and AV infrastructure, something with which many of you will now be familiar. This included installing a ceiling mounted projector, a remote controlled ceiling mounted screen, two new speakers wired into the existing PA system, a TV aerial in the roof space and a free-view box enabling hirers to show photographs, DVDs, presentations and television programmes on the new screen. Internet, via password access Wi-Fi was also included in this upgrade.

Repairs and maintenance

The main expenditure this year was the redecoration of the interior of the building including the hall walls, the annex walls and ceilings, the beams, the entrance hall and the toilets. We have also replaced all the flexes of the pendant lights in the hall, and replaced the incandescent bulbs with low wattage bulbs, and replaced all the ceiling spotlights. This option was preferred to a more radical proposal to completely replace the lighting in the hall mentioned at the AGM last year, and retains the flexibility of the lighting required for all the different hirers.

A new fire-proof ventilation panel was put in the storeroom door to mitigate the problem with damp and as ever there have been a number of repairs and replacements necessary to keep our equipment in good working order.

Many thanks to those who helped at the annual maintenance weekend, when again we completed many tasks.

Plans for the future and concluding comments

Major projects being considered for the future include re-pointing the barn wall on Main Road, replacing the flooring in the entrance hall and upgrading the kitchen (last refurbished in 2003). The website is being improved, the work kindly being carried out by James Gardner at a very reasonable cost to the Hall. The aim is to have a user interface that is user friendly with greater flexibility to add to and improve the site. It is expected that the work will be completed in the coming year.

As the assets at the start of this coming year are above £20,000, improvements to the Hall are under consideration. As always the Committee welcomes ideas and suggestions from villagers and other hall users.

The job of chairman is the easiest job of all the committee members because of the commitment and professionalism of the committee members that actually do the work to run the hall. I would 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
November 2013