

Biddenham Village Hall Chairman's Report – 2014

As usual these past twelve months have been about maintenance and improvement with the aim of providing a good quality 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 costs controlled.
- Regular maintenance and inspections are carried out by the Technical team, supported by all Committee members, to ensure the Hall remains fit for purpose.
- Recycling efforts are 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 biennially.

Management committee

The year started and finished with 10 Officers on the Committee, the maximum number permitted under the Hall's Constitution. There were also 4 Committee Members representing village groups. During the year there were 2 changes - Sam Mahoney resigned as representative of the Toddlers Group and was replaced by Tom Perry; Debbie Higham resigned as representative of St James's PSA and was replaced by Zoe Hagger. At the July meeting the members of the Committee thanked Sam and Debbie for their valued contribution and welcomed Tom and Zoe.

The Committee met on 6 occasions and on average 11 members were in attendance (76% of total membership). Committee business continues to be managed between meetings with the good use of email and sub-groups when necessary.

We are grateful to Paul Hillier for continuing to securely store the Hall's documents and being available for legal advice should the need arise.

Finance and usage

Finances continue to be well managed and we ended the year with a balance of £26,076, deposited as follows: NatWest: £5,972, Virgin Notice 15,000, Virgin Instant £5,042 & CAF £62.

Income was pretty well the same as the previous year however due to fewer necessary improvements and repairs to the hall the year ended with a surplus of £5,350 (2013 deficit was £2,914). There was no grant funding this year.

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 2015 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.

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.

The five-year update of the risk review for the hall has commenced. The main risk is the use of gas for cooking and heating the hall. This is due to the age of the equipment installation and also to the failure of some of our users to read and/or adhere to the instructions. We therefore intend to replace the gas cooker with an electric one, and a number of options for heating the hall, which will significantly improve the overall safety of the hall, are being reviewed. We also intend to rewrite the user instructions to improve their clarity. The risk review and Health and Safety Policy will be fully updated once the planned improvements have been completed.

Improvements

The website was re-launched during the year with a more modern appearance and a content management system that is easier to use. The Committee thanks James Gardner who carried out the work at minimal cost to the hall. Additionally a 360 degree virtual tour was added to the website, and again thanks go to Simon Smith who completed this at a reduced cost.

A new hand-washer, with a proximity switch rather than a tap, has been fitted in the kitchen. New and improved hand dryers have been fitted in all the toilets.

Repairs and maintenance

There have been a number of repairs and replacements necessary to keep our equipment in good working order. These include replacing: the exterior flood light, one of the emergency exit signs, the lapel microphone for the PA system, and the heating thermostat. In addition the council has repaired the pavement around the car park exit.

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

Plans for the future and concluding comments

We have significant plans to update the Hall. These include:

- Redesigning the kitchen to bring it up to the standard of the rest of the hall. The walls will be recovered, the floor covering replaced and new units will be installed with the layout designed to increase both the work surface area and cupboard space. We are consulting users regarding the design.
- Reviewing alternative options for heating the hall and implementing the recommended solutions.

A quote for £5,500 for re-pointing the barn wall was obtained, way in excess of expectations. No further action is intended at this time as we have higher priorities for our reserves, eg replacing the cooker, heaters and upgrading the kitchen.

My job as chairman is made easy due to 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
October 2014