FROXFIELD VILLAGE HALL

Meeting of the Council of Management

24th April 2023 7pm

MINUTES

**Attendees:**

Kate Allen (Outgoing Chair)

Will Ismay (Treasurer)

Katherine Matcham (Secretary)

Angela Hiscock

Kevin Hiscock

Sara Greenaway

Jenna Samengo-Turner

Angela Botham

Dave Rymer

Viv Barnett

Robert Shepherd

**Apologies:**

Vickie Farrow

Sara Greenaway

Members of the public in attendance:

Fiona Gibbon

Joanna Farrell

Alex Bamberg

Susan Bamberg

Hebe Bamberg

Pheobe Hiscock

**Election of Chairman:**

Robert Shepherd was welcomed and appointed by the Trustees as the new Chair. This was proposed by Kate Allen and seconded by Angela Botham and Dave Rymer.

**Appointment of Treasurer:**

William Ismay was also welcomed and appointed by the Trustees as the new Treasurer. This was proposed by Kate Allen and seconded by Angela Botham and Phoebe Hiscock

**Appointment of Secretary:**

The Council appointed Katherine Matcham as Secretary, as an unpaid officer absent a Trustee to take on the role of Secretary.

**Volunteers**:

Angela Botham, Kate Allen and Phoebe Hiscock put themselves forward as volunteers to support the work of the Village Hall, which was gratefully accepted by the Council of Management.

**Report from the incoming Chair:**

The next chapter for the Village Hall is perhaps one of renewal. It’s over 20 years since the major lottery-funded extension was complete and there are signs of age, quite a few maintenance issues and improvements required, as well as a lot of potential if we can engage the community and raise the funds.

There are **2 key issues:** Revenues and Capital Requirements.

Our **revenues** are insufficient to cover our costs, which have been rising rapidly, resulting in a shortfall. In round terms, the annual costs are £**16k** and the revenues are only £**11k**, so at that rate it won’t take long to burn through our reserves and we would be facing the **loss** of the hall altogether.

The **Capital** **Requirements** are likely to be significant. We need to properly understand the current status of the fabric of the building and the systems in it. The electrical system has just had almost £6k worth of remedial works completed and has a clean bill of health from the 5-year inspection.

Sadly, the same can’t be said of the heating system, with an aging oil-fired boiler and control systems. We need to reduce our energy and associated bills, by improving the fabric, systems and insulation to make the building altogether more efficient and contribute to a lower running cost as well as making the hall more appealing to more users, to drive revenues.

We are about to embark on phase 2 of the supporting communities 2020 grant from EHDC. This will provide 2 accessible parking spaces and a path to the Jubilee entrance to the hall, including a new ramped entrance. The path will continue around the rear of the building improving the safe access for users of the pre-school Nursery. A planting bed will separate the path from the parking bays and a safety kerb will be installed, like the one at the front of the car park.

There have already been exercises to explore the opportunity for an extension and façade improvements to help the kerb appeal of the building. All these projects will require funds, so we need to step back and look at the whole, to prioritise works, identify revenue opportunities and fund-raising needs.

But for that to be successful, we need to have a **plan**; we need to know what we are trying to achieve, so we can be more proactive and less reactive. We must have a clear set of objectives to guide our decision-making and investments; a **vision** for what we want the hall to be. We can’t do that in isolation, so we must **engage** the community in that exercise. That’s where there is an opportunity to be more **joined up with the Parish Council** and other local organisations, to act together to support the community to flourish. Ultimately, I’m sure we all want to see the village hall thriving as a **sustainably successful,** **community facility**.

Key to that success will be the **role of volunteers and the trustees**. We need to make sure the Trustees know who they are and understand their **obligations**. It’s likely that trustees will require some **training**, so that they can exercise their duty of care. Some outside professional help will be required too.

That said, we also need to make volunteering and the role of a Trustee as painless as possible, with clarity of individual roles and decent systems in place for bookings, invoicing and accounting, as well as access control and security and general maintenance and stocking consumables, for example.

The **1937 Trust Deed** needs a review and an update and we need to get on top of the **Charity Commission’s** latest requirements for reporting. The administration of the Hall needs an overhaul and the review of the key documents, which takes place annually, may have to go a bit deeper this year.

We have recently joined the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) who provide access to information, guidance and other support services. This was free to join given the small size of the VH charity and will help us with access to trustee guidance and training, from risk assessments to charity banking arrangements and insurance.

We were recently successful with an application to **EHDC’s Community Climate Action Fund**, receiving an offer of £10k. However, the cost for the solar panels we wanted to put up and which we included in our application, was £20k. That was without battery storage, too, so we have some extra fund-raising to do and we still need to do some of the associated actions including removing halogen spotlights, improving the efficiency of the heating system with improved controls and insulating the main hall roof.

We are going to need more funds and enquiries have been made about the requirements of the Parish & Town Council Grants, with up to £30k available. There are also government funds available for the replacement of poil0-fired boilers. We will need someone looking at grants and we may be able to lean on the Parish Council who have someone fulfilling this role already and could pass this information on to us.

There is lots to do and lots of opportunity, but we need a co-ordinated plan and a set of committed and engaged trustees and volunteers, engaging the community, to ensure the Village Hall not only survives, but helps the community to thrive.

**Robert Shepherd**

**Any Other Business:**

Opportunities for driving increased revenue were put to the floor. Ideas included a fun run and the inclusion of a small workplace that could be rented out. The lack of internet service in the VH was noted and it was confirmed that this is being looked at by a volunteer but yet there was no knowledge of any progress having been made. Kate to follow up with volunteer It was suggested that Kate talk to Simeon Leiserach and Chris Phillips to see if they could help as they had helped with the local update of the internet to fibre optic.

The Village Fete was mentioned as both an important fund raiser opportunity, and a key event in the life and engagement of the community. This is due to take place in September. Date TBC. It was agreed that the VH should support the fete.

An issue was raised by Phoebe Hiscock regarding the previous problems when booking a funeral wake at the Village Hall. It was noted that these issues related to the safeguarding policy requirements for the pre-school who would be in the hall at the same time. The issue was satisfactorily resolved at the time, with measures that were put in place to allow the policy requirements to be satisfied and to host the wake at the same time, in separate spaces.

It was noted that funerals/wakes might be a revenue opportunity at the VH, as this has not been thought about or promoted before. This needs to be a joint initiative between the church and VH to promote the use of the VH for funeral wakes on suitable dates, avoiding the end of school collection or other bookings. This then brought the conversation onto the idea of the church and village hall working together to offer a wedding package, which has been discussed at previous meetings. This needs further discussion to understand the needs, including some refurbishment to improve the appearance of the hall and explore other local suppliers who could provide flowers, catering, etc for the wedding party and encourage use of the VH.

Parking at the VH was also brought up in reference to the phase 2 works due to go ahead over the summer holidays. The works will result in the loss of a few spaces created by users parking down the centre of the car park at the side, in between 2 rows of parked cars. It was noted that this situation had resulted in some near misses, as the space between these rows of parked cars is insufficient. It was confirmed that the new arrangement, while losing these ‘unofficial’ spaces, would be safer as the space available would be greater between the rows of parked cars. However, it was noted that it would be helpful to flag this with the School and the School Governors to alert parents that they should not park down the centre in any event.

It was also suggested that a public meeting takes place to discuss the future of the VH and how it can progress forward, serving the interests of the community but recognising that for it to survive, support from the community was also required. It was discussed that this should be a joint meeting with the PC and the PCC to put forward ideas and ask for ideas.

Next Meeting - 12th June 2023