

Hartlip Village Hall Management Committee (HVHMC)
AGM: 10 March 2022
Chair's Report

I would like to welcome everyone to this year's AGM for the presentation of HVHMC Report and Accounts to the inhabitants of the parish of Hartlip.

Should there be any matters you wish to raise, please do so under Any Other Business.

Hartlip Village Hall (HVH) is a registered charity and the Charity Trustees and HVHMC are responsible for managing the charity's assets, namely HVH, HVH Car Park and the hall's equipment, for the benefit of the charity and for no other purpose. They must ensure that the purposes of the charity as laid down in its Trust Deed are fulfilled and must obey Charity Law with particular attention to the Duties of Charity Trustees as laid down by the Charity Commission.

This means that casual latitude in decision making about the use of the charity's assets is not possible.

Committee Year 2021/22 has seen stability in committee members.

Paul Williams was appointed as Hartlip Parish Council (HPC) Representative in 2020.

I have served as Chair and Secretary.

I have continued as Booking Clerk seeking out and encouraging new Regular Hirers to trial activities to benefit the community. Carrying this role in addition to the very significant workload of Chair and Secretary removes the need for this to be a paid post as it had been in the past thus reducing the hall's financial outgoings.

Tracy Still was welcomed as Treasurer in December 2018 and has continued to hold that role during committee year 2021/22 working closely with me and becoming increasingly familiar with the requirements of the position.

The hall's **Charity Trustees** have played an active part in the management of the hall and are very much 'critical friends' to HVHMC.

Particular mention must be made of **Graham Addicott** who has given a great deal of time to supporting me in monitoring the hall and car park during the enforced closures due to Covid-19 in 2020/21. This monitoring is essential to

the responsible management of the Charity's assets and is a requirement of the hall's insurers during any period of closure. Thank you, Graham.

Lionel Robbins is Independent Financial Inspector to the hall and carried out the inspection of 2021 Finances on 11th January 2022.

Peter Blandon has continued to serve as a member of the support team in the capacity of IT Manager. Peter keeps the website up to date and also forwards booking enquiries onto me for action.

Graham Seymour has continued to serve as a member of the support team in the capacity of Technical Advisor. Graham carries out all the emergency lighting testing and keeps the necessary records up to date. This is an essential and onerous task.

Graham researches any new ideas which are of a technical nature and presents HVHMC with a report and guidance.

During this strange year with Covid-19 restrictions affecting the hall seriously Graham has supported me in monitoring the hall and car park during the enforced closures in 2020/21. The support he gives to me is greatly appreciated.

Jacqueline Shicluna has served as a member of the support team with responsibility for the running of Hartlip One Hundred Club.

Jacqueline was the committee member responsible for the establishment of Hartlip One Hundred Club.

HVHMC favours putting on an annual social event whenever possible to raise much needed funds for HVH but at a modest charge as a priority of this committee is to offer opportunities for the community to come together.

Jacqueline has organised annual Quiz Nights in recent years. No such events were possible in 2021 because of the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Paul White, serves as Maintenance Manager which is a large task covering day-to-day maintenance, supervision of large projects and supervision of all regular maintenance of equipment and services.

Much of Paul's work goes on behind the scenes. His contribution is huge, making significant financial savings for HVHMC which contributes to its ability to maintain modest hire fees which directly benefits hirers and supports the fulfilling of hall's charitable objects.

Each support member attends meetings if required and submits reports when necessary.

HVHMC is most grateful to them all.

The dedication, expertise, energy, time and determination of the whole HVHMC team has been immense during the last 7 years making an astounding range of crucial repairs and improvements to the hall possible without which the future of the hall was under serious threat.

The generosity of the team in giving an enormous amount of personal time to the charity has also assisted in enabling hire fees to be held at a very moderate level. This makes the activities available to residents at HVH inclusive to all.

Trina Davison joined the team in March 2020 as hall cleaner and ‘hit the ground running’ having been set some very challenging targets by me! I am very pleased to have her on board. Her hard work and reliability have impacted positively on the hall.

The demands upon HVHMC continue to be heavy and I am very grateful for the hard work and dedication of all members of the team.

Others have supported the hall and me personally during 2021/22 and I wish to record my thanks to:

- HVH’s Charity Trustees
- HPC in their role as Parish Council and as HVH Custodian Trustees
- County Councillor Mike Baldock for a valuable grant
- Borough Councillor Alan Horton for a valuable grant
- Borough Councillor Richard Palmer for a valuable grant
- Swale Borough Council for grant funding
- Charity Commission personnel for advice when needed

.....

2021/22 has been a year of much hard work and time investment for HVHMC. It has not been a year without challenge of various kinds.

An unexpected and highly significant challenge during 2020/21/22 has been the effect on the Charity of Covid-19 which has impacted on usage of the hall and hall income.

Further comment follows on these matters.

This committee, since its formation, has set itself ambitious targets and once again achieved all of them and more during this committee year.

Not only has the strategic and skilful management of recent years enabled the charity to weather the storm of Covid-19 during 2020/21/22, but it has also been possible to continue the works identified and planned at the start of its tenure to repair, renovate and improve to the Charity’s premises. The

establishment of a challenging and essential Development Programme was crucial to the securing of the future of the charity.

I will outline some of the work done in my main report but so much has been achieved that it is impossible to cover all in that report. I have therefore, as throughout my Chairmanship, produced a bullet point appendix to my report which summarises all that has been done and which you can peruse at your leisure.

It is recommended that residents visit the website and view the Chair's Reports and Appendices for the years 2015 to 2022 in order to appreciate the huge amount achieved during those years by the team. Hartlip Village Hall is now in a much better and now secure financial, maintenance and usage position.

HVHMC work undertaken this year falls under the following broad headings:

1. Finance
2. Systems and Policies: review and development
3. Maintenance/H&S
4. Hirer recruitment/provision of services
5. Legal matters

Finance

Grants have been applied for and obtained.

Grants today tend to be match funded and so HVHMC must ensure that it manages its finances so that it has the financial resources to enable applications to be submitted. If HVHMC cannot make the required contributions, grants cannot be applied for.

- County Councillor Mike Baldock: £390
- Borough Councillor Alan Horton: £500
- Borough Councillor Richard Palmer: £500
- Swale Borough Council: £19050.85
- Swale Borough Council: £7575.14 (this figure will be received when the work it is contributing to is completed and paid for by HVHMC. HVHMC will then claim the sum allocated)

These funds have been supplemented and, in some cases significantly so, by investment by HVHMC to enable a range of projects to be planned. These projects are outlined later in my report.

HVH Funds:

An unexpected and highly significant challenge during the period 2020/22 was the effect on the Charity of Covid-19. Three Lockdowns and strict restrictions between them has meant that HVH has had to remain closed to both Regular

and Occasional Hirers for many weeks. During periods when able to open, it has not been possible to allow all groups back for regular activities because of vulnerability issues in their membership. Opening for occasional bookings, e.g. parties, was not been possible at all until August 2021. Clearly, such a situation can impact seriously on the finances of a small charity such as HVH.

Residents who have shown interest in HVH will recall that the present committee inherited a hall in a poor financial position. This committee has worked tirelessly to improve this situation including the building and maintenance of a contingency fund which is expected of any responsible charity.

Had this not been done, there is a very real danger that the hall would have become wholly unviable due to the pandemic with closure more likely than not.

Hard work and financial expertise have been invested for the last seven years to rationalise and make fees fair across the board.

Rigorous and regular analysis of income and outgoings, grant sourcing, efforts to increase hirings and the work mentioned earlier by committee and support team members has made it possible to maintain annual receipts at a similar level to that aimed for and achieved by this HVHMC first in 2015 i.e. 38% or more higher than 2014.

The major works identified as urgently needed in 2015 and somewhat daunting at the time have been prioritised and faced with determination. They have been costly projects but responsible financial management has made massive progress in this area possible. Work is still to be done.

Booking and Fees Sub-Committee (BFSC) continues to work towards establishing and maintaining a fair and even playing field for hirers and security for the hall into the future.

Strong management enabled fees to be kept at rates set for 2017 during 2018 and 2019. A minimal increase was introduced from January 2020 and these fees were maintained during 2021 and will be maintained during 2022 in an endeavour to support hirers affected during the pandemic. This will not be easy for HVHMC as the hall, like everyone, is feeling the effects of significantly rising bills.

Contingency Fund: 2017/18 saw the committee fulfil its intention to add to the Contingency Fund which it established in 2015/16 to give security to the hall facility and hirers. This fund continued to be held strong during 2021.

Fundraising: Hartlip One Hundred Club, established in 2017, was impacted upon by Covid-19 and members agreed to the suspension of the club for 2020 with funds being held over to 2021. It is now up and running again.

Systems and Policies: Review and Development

Terms and Conditions document has been reviewed and updated. It is available on the website.

All Booking Forms have been reviewed and updated to ensure that they capture necessary information efficiently, provide a strong paper trail for the official financial inspection and support the management of hires.

Invoicing of Regular Hirers is carried out annually for efficiency for hirers and HVHMC and to provide the evidence for financial inspection.

Website review continues. Some changes have been made. More will follow and include policies as appropriate.

The activities page, annual fee details and Terms and Conditions document have been updated.

A One Hundred Club page is provided.

Finance Report: the new system introduced several years ago to improve efficiency and to ensure that committee members and Trustees can be active in understanding and tracking progress has been embedded.

Policies: there is an expectation today that organisations such as this establish key policies. One of the Charity Trustees, Graham Addicott, has undertaken the gradual drafting of policies which are brought to the committee for discussion, modification if necessary and ratification. This programme will continue in the future.

Maintenance and H&S

Progress through the rolling Development Plan has been excellent and detail is provided in the appendix to this report.

HVHMC has a policy of using local labour where possible.

Works this year include:

- All required servicing has, as usual, been kept up to date
- All emergency lighting tests run and outcomes recorded with remedial work carried out as necessary
- HVH Risk Assessment/H&S Assessment has undergone annual review
- Covid-19 demanded Risk Assessment be done and Covid-secure procedures be put in place for any activities permitted to return to HVH between Lockdowns. This, by necessity, involved my meeting with hirers to ensure that these procedures were fully implemented. Such meetings obviously followed the Government guidelines for safe conduct.

- Major works, as planned and prepared for including funding allocation during committee year 2020/21, have been carried out during 2021/2022.

These include:

- * Main Hall re-roofed.
- * Main Hall ceiling grid cleaned and renovated and new tiles fitted.
- * Main Hall panel lights replaced with LED panels.
- * Main entrance door sanded and re-treated.
- * All window handles/catches and locks replaced as previous committee provided no keys.
- * Gutters, downpipes, gullies and external drains cleaner and repaired as necessary.
- * Emergency lighting: units which failed 3-hour test replaced
- * Replacement Car Park sign to be bigger, clearer and reflective. Old one installed on west fence.
- * Post and rail fence installed behind most of Craiglea garden after a boundary issue. Remaining fence to be installed when hedge cut back.
- * Yew Tree Cottage residents written to regarding fir trees overhanging Meeting Room and roof. No response and so Tree Officer approached for permission for HVHMC to cut back. This was granted together with an exemption granted regarding future work.
- * New hedge on boundary of Yew Tree Cottage blocking HVHMC southern access strip and so cut back.
- * Merryweather contract for fire extinguishers not renewed. BK Fire appointed.
- * HPC has been asked to replace the dog bin which HVHMC permit to be stationed in HVH Car park. One which is bigger, ground-standing and more acceptable in design requested.
- * Piano required costly repair and had become unsteady/unsafe. Condemned and disposed of.
- * School Room bar unhygienic and unsafe to move. Condemned and disposed of.
- * Funding in place for decoration of Main Hall but not stage as this needs to be a separate project to include lighting, attention to flooring etc.
- * Funding in place for sanding and re-treating of Main Hall floor.

Planning and financial preparation are in hand for further major works during 2022/23.

- Problems of unauthorised use of HVH car park had continued during 2021/22 and responsible and necessary action has been taken. The car park is not a public car park. It is private land managed and financed by HVHMC as part of Hartlip Village Hall Charity. Unauthorised parking is trespass.
- Some requests to use the car park have been received by organisations and have been refused for reasons fully explained and documented including in The Forum.
- Unauthorised parking, if left unchecked, is one of the biggest threats if not the biggest threat to the sustainability of the Charity and its assets into the future.
- Inconvenience to authorised users, H&S of authorised users, safeguarding, security of the hall and nearby residents, abuse of HVHMC members are among the many impacts involved.
- It must be remembered that HVH is a charity and must adhere to the purposes of the Trust Deed and to Charity Commission Law.
- As such all HVH assets (hall, car park and equipment) are to be used to facilitate the fulfilment of the purposes of the charity and nothing else. The car park is therefore specifically and solely for users when attending the hall and is a crucial resource to the recruitment and retention of classes and activities.

HVHMC allows Allotment Holders to park in its car park **if** space permits when, and only when, tending their allotment and for no other reason whatsoever.

This is not a right and the concession may be withdrawn at any time.

This privilege is never transferrable to a third party.

This is a regularly reviewable arrangement and will not continue as/when additional hiring of the hall takes place or if it is abused by allotment holders or causes adverse effects of any sort on the Charity or hall users. Regular review will continue.

It must also be remembered that the access drive from The Street to Hartlip Village Hall Car Park is in private ownership.

Hartlip Village Hall Management Committee has a legal right of vehicular easement over the drive to enable hirers to access to the hall.

Hartlip residents have no such legal right of vehicular easement over the private drive and no right to park in the car park for personal reasons.

Unauthorised parking in recent years has led to loss of some hirers

providing activities for residents thus losing opportunities for residents. It has also caused the loss of vital income to the tune of four figures p.a. for the Charity.

Very real dangers of accident or fatality were being caused.

Should unauthorised parking continue to be an issue, the matter will be considered further with appropriate action taken to protect the charity and authorised users.

HPC Representative has proposed and is taking forward investigating the installation of a CCTV camera system to cover HVH Car Park to address unauthorised parking and other undesirable activities which have been experienced.

Recruitment of Hirers/provision of services

This was actively focused on again during committee year 2020/21 and 2021/22 but was inevitably affected by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

A number of new activities trialled at the start of 2020 and others were due to trial but Lockdowns have prevented that. Some were with a view to all-year slots, some with a view to blocks at intervals.

As 2022 commences some new hirers will trial.

It is sincerely hoped that, in due course, some or all of the potential new providers of activities for the village will be able to embed at HVH.

As previously reported, HVHMC's in years past, closed HVH during school holidays which amounted to the hall being closed for 13 weeks or 25% of the year.

This committee was concerned about this waste of the resource in terms of the Charity fulfilling its purpose and also from a financial point of view.

This time has and is being targeted to increase hall usage and income.

New Regular Hirers are encouraged to be 'all year round' rather than 'term-time only'.

This extended opening has become standard for most activities.

This provides a better service to residents and other users.

This level of additional booking makes a much heavier demand on the Booking Clerk than the old system did.

It also relies heavily upon the car park and the availability of this facility is often a deal breaker for hirers.

Occasional hirings sadly had to be suspended due to the height of the pandemic.

HVHMC remains committed to engaging with the community of Hartlip and providing opportunities for the community to come together where possible. Christmas Eve 2019 saw the hall host Hartlip Sings Christmas for Hartlip residents. This was the fifth year of this free event. This is a collaborative event organised by Hartlip Community Hub for Hartlip Parish Council, HVHMC and the Chapel. It is a very popular event. HVHMC was disappointed that this event could not take place in 2020 or 2021 due to the pandemic.

Legal matters

HVHMC has engaged the services of a legal practice with expert experience in Charity Law for a number of crucial reasons.

For many years some residents have experienced confusion regarding the status of Hartlip Village Hall and have not understood the rules of Charity Law under which it must be managed. This has, on occasions, caused difficulties and, on occasions, some unhelpful unpleasantness.

The spirit of the Trust Deed is fundamental to the hall's management but in 1969 (52 years ago) the then HVHMC, fully supported by the HPC of the time and interested residents who attended a public meeting, registered the hall as a charity and this decision was and is of serious relevance as it means that the hall must be managed as a charity taking full account of Charity Law.

A number of matters have concerned the current HVHMC as needing to be resolved for the protection of the charity going forward, hence the seeking of expert legal advice.

Matters being dealt with include:

1. All previous HVHMC's have failed to register the land and so the current HVHMC lawyer has submitted that application to the Land Registry.
2. Upon becoming a charity, it would follow that the Official Custodian Trustee, who has no possible conflicts of interest, would be appointed as independent Custodian Trustee to the charity. This was not done but is now in hand.
3. Several unfortunate incidents have been experienced regarding the land boundaries of the hall and its car park and these have been referred for legal advice. That legal advice is being implemented to remove/prevent incursions onto the Charity's land.
4. Abuse of the car park with the problems that brings.

So, 2021 was another strange year for HVHMC.

It has been demanding in different ways with good use made of the enforced closure time to push forward with the renovation, upgrade and general improvement of the Charity's facilities.

I hope that we are able to look forward to full resumption of business and, if possible, expansion of activities during 2022/23.

Barbara Addicott
Chair of Hartlip Village Hall Management Committee
10 March 2022