

**Hartlip Village Hall Management Committee (HVHMC)**  
**AGM: 09 March 2023**  
**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.

It is also crucial that HVHMC is consistent in its management with no variation in the application of policies and terms and conditions of hire between hirers. Policy decisions should be and are made in a fully informed way with the interests of the charity front and centre at all times.

Committee Year 2022/23 has seen stability in committee members and other personnel in the main.

**Paul Williams** was appointed as Hartlip Parish Council (HPC) Representative in 2020. He resigned from HPC at the end of 2021 but continued researching the CCTV project he had undertaken, to assist HVHMC into 2022. His place is to be taken by Melanie Rose.

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 is hugely time consuming. Its benefit to the Charity is that it removes the need for this to be a paid post as it had been in the past thus reducing the hall's financial outgoings significantly and enabling fees to be more modest and so inclusive.

**Tracy Still** was welcomed as Treasurer in December 2018 and has continued to hold that role during committee year 2022/23 working closely with me and increasing understanding of 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 2020/21/22 and during periods when I have been subjected to medical surgery. 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 2022 Finances on 10th January 2023.

**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 at the present time is undertaking a root and branch examination of the website's functionality, presentation and content. This is a big task and will inevitably take a considerable time to achieve the positive outcome we want.

He forwards booking enquiries onto me for action and takes seriously the filtering out of inappropriate entries on the system.

Peter is thanked by all team members for his expertise and time investment for the benefit of the Charity.

**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.

Graham always gives 'over and beyond' to the Charity.

The support he gives to me is greatly appreciated.

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

Jacqueline researched the concept, presented the idea to the Parish in 2016, arranged the first licence to start draws in January 2017 and advertised this to the parish. The first members joined immediately and others started to follow. HPC members contributed positively by delivering membership forms to every house in the whole parish.

At this point Hartlip Church PCC announced to HVHMC that it intended to set up a club also.

This obviously would have been an inappropriate way forward – a small parish could not possibly sustain two healthy clubs.

In a spirit of cooperation HVHMC invited the Church to join them in what would be a collaborative Hundred Club Project. They accepted.

Jacqueline remained in charge of all the official and in-house administration keeping excellent records of members, draws, handling the Monthly Return to SBC, dealing with all payments and bank matters and contributing to HVH Audit.

Jacqueline, HVHMC members and HPC worked to recruit members and were joined by a representative of the PCC in this task – her efforts were very much appreciated.

The Covid Pandemic impacted significantly on the club effectively over a period of three years and Jacqueline managed all arrangements necessary for the club during that time. This meant managing funds held/rescheduling draws and much more and all this single-handedly.

In 2020 and 2021 the HPC Representative on HVHMC developed some strong ideas for recruitment and increasing turnover. He requested to join the Hundred Club team but the Church representative was clear that she preferred to stick as things were. It was therefore concerning in late 2022 to be informed that the PCC representative wished to withdraw from the club and that PCC wished to end its part in this collaboration.

HVHMC indicated that it would be discussing the way forward for the club at its March meeting in 2023.

It was therefore a surprise to read in the March 2023 Forum that the Church had set up a club of its own.

Clearly this action renders Hartlip One Hundred Club redundant as a small parish cannot sustain two such clubs. It also removes one of HVH Charity's income streams which is unfortunate especially in the current economic climate. It may impact on fees for residents and others.

Jacqueline Shicluna is thanked for her tremendous efforts to set up the mechanics for a Hundred Club and her thorough and professional management of it since 2016. The Club has made valuable contributions to HVH and St Michael's Church during that time.

Residents who have supported the club are sincerely thanked.

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 during the lengthy Covid-19 Pandemic period.

**Paul White**, has served 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 has gone on behind the scenes. His contribution has been huge, making significant financial savings for HVHMC which has contributed to its ability to maintain modest hire fees which has directly benefitted 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 all its supporters.

**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 very positively on the hall and have contributed to the impression given to potential hirers and to their comfort when on site.

**Julian Davison** attends to grounds maintenance matters and, during committee year 2022/23 has dealt with some sensitive work in a most appropriate way.

The dedication, expertise, energy, time and determination of the whole HVHMC team has been immense during the last 8 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.

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 2022/23 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 valuable grants
- Borough Councillor Alan Horton for a valuable grant
- Borough Councillor Richard Palmer for a valuable grant

- QFT
- Charity Commission personnel for advice when needed
- The Charity's expert lawyer for support and advice on a number of difficult matters

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2022/23 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 was 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 2023 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. It is now a Charity which is sustainable into the future.

**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 does not have the financial resources to make the required contributions, grants cannot be applied for.

- County Councillor Mike Baldock: £1710
- Borough Councillor Alan Horton: £275
- Borough Councillor Richard Palmer: £500
- County Councillor Mike Baldock: £1500
- QFT: £1000
- County Councillor Mike Baldock: £3234

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 - 2022 was the effect on the Charity of Covid-19. Three Lockdowns and strict restrictions between them meant that HVH had to remain closed to both Regular and Occasional Hirers for many weeks. During periods when able to open, it was 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 possible at all until August 2021. By 2022, most surviving Regular Hirers had returned and Occasional Hirings gradually built. Sadly some Regular Hirers were unable to weather the Covid storm.

Clearly, such a situation can impact seriously on the finances of a small charity such as HVH with that impact felt for a long time.

Residents who have shown interest in HVH Charity over the years will recall that the present committee inherited a hall in a very poor financial position. This committee has worked tirelessly to improve that 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.

Shrewd management has enabled the contingency fund to be added to which is vital given the possible austerity ahead with major energy cost increases and serious drop in any funding availability. HVHMC aims to ensure that the charity is able to weather any storms coming down the road.

Hard work and financial expertise have been invested for the last 8 years to rationalise and make fees fair across the board thus supporting opportunities for local residents.

Rigorous and regular (monthly) analysis of income and outgoings, grant sourcing and matching, 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 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 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 2022 in an endeavour to support hirers affected during the pandemic. A minimal rise in all fees was made in January 2023.

**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. The establishment of a strong contingency fund is an action of strong financial management and crucial for a small charity with no Trust Fund to tap into. This fund continued to be held strong during 2021 and very careful management allowed it to be increased in 2022 as mentioned and for reasons given early. This provides some security if external financial conditions become more difficult and gives back-up should further major works be needed which is always possible in a building of such age.

**Fundraising:** Hartlip One Hundred Club, established in 2016, was impacted upon by Covid-19 and members agreed to the suspension of the club for 2020 with funds being held over to 2021. Thanks to Jacqueline Shicluna and HVHMC it was successfully restarted part way through 2021. This club and HVHMC funding stream are now ended for reasons explained earlier. HVHMC will consider alternatives which do not adversely impact on other organisations in the parish which would be most unfair.

### **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.

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

More will follow as the previously described expert work of Peter Blandon progresses.

**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 and works well.

**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. Records of actions are retained and will help should another pandemic situation arise.
- Major works, as planned and prepared for including funding allocation during committee year 2021/22, have been carried out during 2022/2023.



These include:

- \* Main Hall parapet repaired, repointed and sealed.
- \* Gutters, downpipes, gullies and external drains cleaned and repaired as necessary.
- \* Emergency lighting: units which failed 3-hour test replaced
- \* Failing hedge between the east wall of School Room and south corner of Craiglea garage removed and remaining post and rail fence installed to complete the fence marking HVH boundary with Craiglea.
- \* Yew Tree Cottage residents had been written to regarding fir trees standing in a Conservation Area and over-hanging Meeting Room and roof in December 2021. No response received and so the Tree Officer was approached for approval for HVHMC to cut back. This was granted together with an exemption granted regarding future work. Work carried out.
- \* The new hedge on boundary of Yew Tree Cottage began blocking HVHMC southern access strip and so cut back.
- \* A mysterious new padlock had been installed on HVH gate to HVH access strip beside kitchen. No communication had been made with HVHMC regarding this and no keys provided to access land which is HVH's. Padlock removed and replaced to re-establish rightful access.
- \* Short run of post and rail fence installed to mark boundary of HVH's 4' of land (maintenance strip) to south of kitchen with Yew Tree Cottage and running south.
- \* Boundary dispute with Sanquhar dealt with to retrieve land belonging to the charity.
- \* Terms of permission to use HVH private car park by neighbour for occasional turning only clarified after legal advice. Copy letters on file.
- \* Merryweather contract for fire extinguishers has not been renewed as HVHMC dissatisfied with service and charges. BK Fire have been appointed. Service exemplary and charges much more favourable.
- \* HPC had been asked to arrange replacement of the dog bin which HVHMC had permitted to be stationed in HVH Car park. After some considerable time SBC produced a suitable replacement which is now situated beside the footpath through the allotments.

- \* Funding was put in place in 2021 for decoration of Main Hall but not stage as this needs to be a separate project to include lighting, attention to flooring etc. Works completed 2022.
- \* Funding was put in place in 2021 for repair, sanding and re-treating of Main Hall floor. Works completed 2022.
- \* School Room and lobby floors stripped, repaired and covered with a non-slip, robust floor covering.
- \* Stage floor stripped of filthy, damaged chipboard which had been installed after an arson attempt some decades ago.  
Stage floor and steps repaired, sanded and re-stained
- \* Unexpected maintenance included the need to replace the water tank in the School Room which developed a leak and further work to the main roof parapet.

Planning and financial preparation are in hand for further major works during 2023/24.

- Problems of unauthorised use of HVH car park had continued during 2021/22 and responsible and necessary action has been taken. Expert legal advice sought.

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. A Charity's assets are to be used to operate the Charity and fulfil its charitable purposes only.

Records on file.

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. The availability of and safety of use is of far greater relevance than in years past.

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, to Charity Law and other relevant laws.

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 their 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.

HPC Allotment Agreement specifies the terms for allotment hirers.

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 had proposed and has been 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. Efforts resumed in 2022 with some new hirers trialling.

It is sincerely hoped that, in due course, some or all of the new activity providers will 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 many 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.

HVHMC remains committed to engaging with the community of Hartlip and providing opportunities for the community to come together where possible.

This must be strictly within the 'rules' which HVHMC must obey and the duty of HVHMC to the Charity must come first.

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 during to the pandemic.

The occasions that Hartlip Community Hub requests to book the hall, if it is available, are strictly under the Hall's Terms and Conditions, including fee structure.

Hartlip Community Hub (on behalf of HPC) organised and manned the Queen Elizabeth the Second's Platinum Jubilee Beacon Lighting Ceremony on the allotment complete with bagpipes and a Loyal Toast. This was specifically and solely for residents of the Parish of Hartlip and was very well attended. Some unpleasantness arose when some gate-crashers arrived, some in cars, demanding entry. These were non-residents some of whom who were a less than pleasant. They were invited to leave.

### **Legal matters**

In 2021 HVHMC 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 (54 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 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, 2022 was another demanding year for HVHMC.

I hope that we are able to look forward to undisturbed opening going forward and, if possible, further expansion of activities which benefit the public during 2023/24.

Barbara Addicott  
Chair of Hartlip Village Hall Management Committee  
09 March 2023