

Orwell Village Hall Management Committee

Despite these strange and unsettling times work continues to maintain and even improve the village hall in anticipation of the happy day when it can re-open.

At the Committee's 'virtual' AGM on 12 May a number of key decisions were taken.

First and most important our Chairman David Titchmarsh stepped down from that role. Unfortunately, David was unable to join the meeting; however the Committee was anxious to place on record its sincere thanks to David for his considerable contribution to village hall life over many years and to send him and Pat every good wish for the future.

Our appeal for a volunteer to step into the Chairman's role has yielded fruit. On 12 May we welcomed Ashley Ives as our new Chairman and we look forward to working with him as we steer the hall through the next phase of its existence.

Acting on a request from the wider Committee, quotes have been obtained to have the hall redecorated and approval to award the contract was given on 12 May. The decorator is anxious to complete the work whilst the hall is closed and it is probable that by the time this Bulletin hits your doormat the work will have at least started. Our overarching aim is to brighten and freshen the interior and we hope that once hirers can enter the hall again, they will be delighted with the result.

We would like to place on record our grateful thanks to the Parish Council which has kindly agreed to make a grant to cover the full cost of these works. This was particularly welcome, since the hall's primary source of revenue, booking fees, has evaporated since April and currently there is no knowing how long this situation will continue.

On another positive note, last month we were encouraged by SCDC to apply for a central Government grant aimed at "supporting small businesses and businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors". Apparently, village halls such as ours are included in that classification. We were delighted to receive the maximum grant possible. This will go a long way towards replacing lost revenue and might even help fund additional improvements post lockdown, for example to the current lighting arrangements.

Eagle eyed residents engaged in a permitted act of exercise might have noticed a new pole with a 'gizmo' on top, fixed to the side of the hall. This is to provide a mobile phone service, plus Wi-Fi, to the building. (An earlier attempt to have BT install a service was unsuccessful as the engineer was unable to complete the task for technical reasons and the earliest return date BT could give was in late June). It is still possible that the Parish Council will need to use the hall as a co-ordination centre for the village's response to the Covid-19 crisis and for that reason some form of phone provision plus Wi-Fi will be essential.

The pole and device are an interim measure, pending the eventual installation of a permanent service by BT. They have been installed at the request and the expense of the Parish Council and will be removed when no longer needed. We were pleased to be able to work together with the Parish Council to arrive at this solution but we look forward to a permanent

replacement as soon as possible. As has been said before, a tangible, future benefit of this situation is that all users of the hall will now be able to enjoy Wi-Fi – something many have been calling for from some time.

You may notice the new logo appearing alongside our Bulletin articles from now on. Trustee and maintenance lead Barry Sharman designed this and the AGM was pleased to adopt it on 12 May. It represents the village hall supporting and surrounding the lives and activities of the people of the village and we hope it will help reinforce the central position of the hall in the life of the community.

Returning to the AGM, as well as the Chairman, all other officer posts were up for re-election on 12 May and the results were as follows:

(Chairman – Ashley Ives)

Vice-chairman – Derek Skipper (no change)

Treasurer – Mark Collins (no change)

Secretary – Andrew Pulham (no change)

AND FINALLY...

In the spirit of the brief issued by our editors in respect of this Covid-19 edition of the Bulletin, we end with a picture of the embroidery hanging proudly in the village hall, celebrating the millennium in Orwell. A memory of happier times to which we all hope to return as soon as possible.

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