

Orwell Village Hall Management Committee

At its meeting on 14 January 2020 the Orwell Village Hall Management Committee (OVHMC) agreed to increase hire charges by an average of 10% from 1 April - the first increase for several years. The additional income likely to be generated by the increased charges is approximately £800 per annum. Whilst this increase may disappoint some users, it is clear that our charges have fallen below those levied by nearby halls, whilst our operating costs continue to rise. For example, at the same meeting there was a generally held consensus that the hall would benefit from a complete redecoration and a costed proposal will be put to the Committee at its AGM on 30 April. Projects such as this, which user groups are anxious to see happen, have to be paid for and it is perhaps the main beneficiaries – i.e. the hirers – who should make the lion's share of the contribution. Another significant repair that will fall due later in the spring is to the guttering, much of which has become brittle and will need to be replaced. Our beautiful hall is ageing and the battle to keep it in its current, excellent condition is a constant one.

At the same meeting a revised Conditions of Hire document was agreed by the Committee. Requirements for the clearing away and disposal of rubbish post-hire have been made clearer, more specific payment terms have been introduced and greater discretion has been given to officers to require a returnable deposit for party-type bookings, to be held against the hirer leaving the hall in the same condition as they found it.

Thanks to the industry of Barry Sharman in particular, considerable inroads have been made into a lengthy list of maintenance requirements, some of which have been awaiting attention for some time. We appreciate repairs perhaps don't seem to take place as quickly as some hirers would wish; however the need for speed has to be tempered by a requirement to secure value for money. Colleagues will also appreciate that the inspections and repairs are either being undertaken or commissioned by volunteers, who have to fit in such tasks around the 'day job'.

Behind the scenes your Secretary has been getting to grips with administrative tasks such as satisfying the requirements of the Charity Commission and working with the hall's insurers to ensure the building and its users are appropriately covered. Those who wish to take a more active role in the governance of the hall on behalf of their club or society will have noticed that they are now registered with the Charity Commission as a Trustee, which gives them voting rights at all Committee meetings. Others who wish to attend Committee meetings are welcome, but will not have voting rights unless they are recorded as a Trustee, representing one or more of the village clubs, societies or institutions that use the hall.

Serving as an officer on the Orwell Village Hall Management Committee continues to be rewarding (and just occasionally frustrating). It is appreciated that most users of the hall don't wish to – and indeed shouldn't have to – worry about whether the guttering is secure or the hall is properly registered with the Charity Commission. That is what your officers are for. Users care far more about whether there is a clean and dry tea towel in the kitchen or a supply of rubbish sacks to help with the clear-up after an event. This is perfectly understandable. There has been the occasional 'glitch' in these more domestic areas as we adjust to new ways

of working and a new apportionment of responsibilities. Your officers are working to resolve these issues. We commit to taking on board all feedback and doing our best to ensure the hall is a fit and welcoming facility for many years to come.

And finally!

For many months now the call has gone out for a volunteer to replace David Titchmarsh, who will be standing down as Chairman of the OVHMC at the April AGM. No one has yet expressed a willingness to put their head above the parapet. Whilst your Treasurer and Secretary are able to absorb the functions of that role for a limited period, this is not advisable or sustainable in the longer term. If you would consider serving as Chairman from April, please contact the Secretary as per the details below.

Andrew Pulham, Secretary

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