

Orwell Village Hall Management Committee



As I write this the village hall has been closed for four months; however on the positive side this has given us an opportunity to repair and upgrade the hall in anticipation of its eventual reopening.

The redecoration mentioned in the June edition of the Bulletin has been completed and in line with the wishes of the Committee the lighting has been augmented and improved, including a transition to low energy LED units. No longer will members of the Table Tennis Club be able to blame poor lighting when they miss a shot.

On 4 July we were pleased to host an open afternoon for trustees and this was followed by a meeting of the Management Committee on 22 July. The response to the refurbishment has been universally positive and we now look forward to regular and occasional users being able to enjoy the facilities as circumstances allow.

At the 22 July meeting the Committee approved the next steps in the refurbishment programme:

- The lobby area and toilets, including the front doors, will be redecorated.
- The wooden boxes at the front of the stage will be painted.

Also agreed were the next steps in a programme of essential and planned maintenance:

- The sealed window units that have 'blown' and therefore remain permanently fogged, will be replaced.
- The side fire exit external ramp will be repaired.
- Defective guttering will be replaced.

In line with requests from users, the hall now enjoys mobile phone and Wi-Fi internet connectivity. Details will be published in the hall and on the website at www.orwellvillagehall.com. (BT has twice attended and twice failed to install a landline to the hall; therefore we will continue with the current arrangements indefinitely).

We remain grateful to the Parish Council for its substantial grant towards the cost of the redecoration and for underwriting the cost of the mobile phone booster/Wi-Fi installation. Thanks to this *and* a central Government grant the hall's finances remain sound, although it will be important to revive our main income stream, lettings fees, as soon as is practicable.

Also on 22 July, the Committee discussed ways in which the hall can be kept in its current condition for as long as possible. It was agreed that users will not be permitted to put up notices other than on the notice boards provided. We would be grateful if all hirers could honour and if necessary, enforce this rule.

The Committee agreed also that the small room to the rear of the hall will effectively become a civic room and gallery, to which the photographs and paintings that previously adorned the main hall will be relocated. This will become a fitting space in which to honour notable figures from Orwell's past as well as the artistic abilities of its current residents.

Turning to the issue of the hall's re-opening, in taking decisions in this area we have sought always to follow Government instructions, plus guidance issued by our insurers and the Health and Safety Executive. Guidance issued by their governing bodies can also be helpful when working with individual clubs and societies to manage their return. With all this in place and working collaboratively with users it is apparent that, subject to appropriate safeguards being observed, limited use is now possible.

The arrangements that must operate for the foreseeable future are too many and detailed for this article. They will be communicated to hirers and updated as necessary on the village hall website.

At the time of writing the *principle* changes hirers may experience include:

- A limit of thirty concurrent users in the main hall and six in the committee room.
- The use of a hand sanitizing station in the foyer.
- A requirement for each event organiser to prepare and lodge with us a simple risk assessment governing their event. (Guidance and a useful template can be found on the village hall website and regular hirers need only go through this process once).
- A requirement for the event organiser to compile and retain for 21 days, a contact tracing form in case attendees need to be contacted at a later date. (The form will be provided in the hall).
- A requirement for hirers to undertake a wipe-down of the surfaces they have touched, such as door handles and taps, at the end of their hire. (Materials will be supplied).
- The kitchen remains out of bounds until further notice.

The rules and guidelines will be kept under review and for this reason anyone considering booking the hall is encouraged to first check the website at www.orwellvillagehall.com. We will update this as and when the relevant authorities issue fresh advice.

Throughout the lockdown and at the two July meetings of the Committee, one message in particular has rung out loud and clear. The village hall is a much-loved institution which has been sorely missed. We all look forward to the day when it is buzzing with life again and we hope that the improvements we have been able to undertake during the 'dark' months help ensure the hall retains its central role in the life of the village for many years to come.

Andrew Pulham

Secretary, OVHMC

www.orwellvillagehall.com