



## MINUTES

**Meeting:** PARISH HALL AT                    **Date:** 7 December 2017                    **Time:** 7.15 PM  
THORNWOOD COMMON  
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

**Venue:** PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON, EPPING, ESSEX

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Prior to the start of the Meeting, the Principal Financial Officer held a Fire Evacuation Test, following which the meeting commenced at 7.25pm

**PRESENT: Committee Members (7)** Cllr R Spearman (Chairman), Mrs S Hawkins (Vice Chairman), Mrs J Abbott, P Hebden, B Cooper, T Sawyer, Mrs I Smith

**Also in Attendance (2)**

Joanna Tyler – Meeting Clerk  
Susan De Luca – Clerk to the Council

**Members of the Public (1)**

**PH17.049 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (5)**

*NOTED*, apologies for absence had been received from Cllr B Clegg, Mrs Davis, Mrs Foster, Mrs Shelley and Mr Drane

**PH17.050 OTHER ABSENCES (0)**

**PH17.051 MINUTES**

Members *APPROVED* as a correct record the Minutes of this Committee Meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017.

**PH17.052 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None declared.

**PH17.053 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions from Members of the public.

**PH17.054 HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE**

**a) Visual Check of Fire Exit route in extension**

The Caretaker confirmed that a visual check had been undertaken prior to the start of the meeting and the fire exit route was found to be clear. However, the Caretaker reported that earlier in the week he had found that a door ramp and chair trolley had been left in the exit route. Mr Cooper informed Members that he had left them there.

The Caretaker stated that a number of extra chairs were stacked in the extension and he asked the Committee whether or not they were still required. The hall has 150 chairs in total, of mixed design. Mrs Smith stated that Thornwood Seniors group use a maximum of 120

chairs. The Clerk to the Council stated that she would need to check the maximum numbers for the hall, seated and standing. Members discussed the possibility of replacing all of the chairs for padded ones. The Caretaker suggested that the existing chairs could be sold to raise funds towards new ones. Mr Sawyer asked the Clerk if she knew where North Weald Village Hall had purchased their chairs from. The Clerk stated that she didn't. The Caretaker suggested that the Committee may wish to consider asking their groups to fundraise for new chairs. The Clerk stated that there was currently £800 set aside from this year's budget to purchase new chairs. It was agreed at last year's budget/precept meeting that the chairs would be purchased on a rolling basis of 20 per year. The Clerk to the Council asked the Meeting Clerk to advise the Principal Financial Officer of the discussion, as she was preparing the paperwork for this year's meeting. The Chairman asked the Clerk to the Council if Hastingwood Village Hall required any chairs. The Clerk stated that she would make some enquiries.

**b) Pest Control**

Members **NOTED** that at the previous Committee Meeting, the Clerk to the Council had been asked to contact the contractor who had attended the hall in the Summer to undertake pest control visits. The contractor had verbally quoted the following costs to carry out monthly checks at the hall:-

- £30.00 per month to carry out internal checks only
- £40.00 per month to carry out internal and external checks and to provide bait boxes to be sited around the perimeter of the building.

The Clerk to the Council informed Members that she had asked the Principal Financial Officer to set aside £500.00 in the budget specifically for pest control. The Chairman stated that he believed it would be best to have both internal and external checks carried out and asked if the Committee agreed. The Clerk to the Council stated that this would cover the hall for a year and then the situation could be reviewed. Following discussion, all Members **AGREED** that internal and external checks should be carried out, as per the quotation verbally provided to the Clerk.

**c) Fire Exit / Electrical Testing Report**

The Clerk to the Council reported that, following the previous Committee Meeting, she had gone back to Epping Electrical, however, she was not too happy about the options given with regard to the fire exit lights. The Clerk was advised that if external lights were fitted above the fire exits, they would need to be on permanently. The Clerk reported that she had contacted Epping Town Council and had been put in touch with their electrical contractor. Arrangements were made for the contractor to meet with the Caretaker on 5<sup>th</sup> December. Following inspection of the hall, the contractor had advised that any external lights would not need to be on a timer. The lights would be of such low density that they would not interfere with any residents neighbouring the hall. The contractor was aware that the street lights located in the hall car park shared the same power supply as the hall, therefore external fire exit lights would be required at each exit door. The Clerk stated that she hoped to have a quote for the works in time for the Parish Council Budget/Precept meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> December. The Chairman

asked the Clerk to confirm that if the electricity supply is cut, the emergency lighting would come on automatically if this new system was installed. The Clerk confirmed that it would, explaining that it would be a completely different system to what is presently in the hall and that it would be compatible with what the fire service mentioned in their report. The Clerk stated that the contractor would also be providing a quote for the works mentioned in the electrical testing report, reiterating that the hall must be compliant. The Clerk stated that the quote will go to the Parish Council before it is reported to the Management Committee.

#### **PH17.055 DAMAGE TO HALL PREMISES**

Members **NOTED** that the Clerk to the Council had received a report from the Caretaker of damage that had occurred to one of the doors in the Men's toilets, following a party which had been held on Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2017 (a photo depicting the damaged door was attached to the agenda). The Clerk to the Council had written to the hall hirer advising that the Good Conduct Deposit of £150.00 would be withheld, as per the Booking Terms and Conditions. The Clerk had received an email from the hall hirer in response, regarding the cashing of the Deposit, the contents of which were read to the Management Committee at the meeting.

The Caretaker informed Members that when he inspected the hall and advised the hall hirer of the damage, the hall hirer stated that she thought the door was already damaged. The Caretaker advised the hall hirer that the damage had occurred during the party. The Caretaker stated that it was a "typical teenage party". On the Sunday morning, the Caretaker said that he found an empty bottle of alcohol in the Disabled Toilet, together with half a dozen small gas canisters.

The hall hirer has been informed that the Parish Council's maintenance contractor is to carry out the necessary repairs and that a refund of the difference would be given if the repairs amount to less than £150.00. Should the cost of the repairs be more, an invoice for the difference would be raised and sent to the hall hirer.

A copy of the Booking Terms and Conditions was attached to the Agenda. Members **NOTED** that the Good Conduct Deposit is currently set at £150.00 (or £250.00 if alcohol is consumed on the premises) and were asked to consider if it should be increased. The Caretaker stated that he believed the amount set is out of date and proposed that it should be raised to £250.00 before 6pm and £500.00 after 6pm, adding that the cost of repairs would be far more than the deposit. The Clerk to the Council stated that when she first started as Clerk some 25 years ago, the deposit system was changed and increased to £500.00. The current two tier system was introduced around 2002/3. The Clerk stated that a tradesman would charge at least £200 per day without any material charges.

The Clerk to the Council suggested that, although she would like deposits taken in cash, she did not want the Booking Secretary to take on the responsibility for handling this and suggested that the deposit could be taken either by BACS payment direct to the Parish Council's bank account, or by cheque, at least two weeks beforehand. The deposit would be returned to the hirer after the event. The Clerk to the Council stated that she would like the Committee to consider the Caretaker's proposal.

Following lengthy discussion, all Members **AGREED** that the Goodwill Deposit would be increased as follows:-

- 9am to 6pm       £250.00
- 6pm to midnight £500.00

The Booking Terms and Conditions would be amended to include the following:-

*A cheque or BACS payment will be required at least two weeks prior to the date of the hall hire. If the hall is hired less than two weeks prior to the date, the hall hirer will be required to visit the Parish Office to pay the deposit in cash.*

#### **PH17.056 REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO THE HALL/CAR PARK**

##### **a) Replacement of Heaters**

Members **NOTED** that the four faulty heaters in the hall were replaced on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The Caretaker was in attendance.

##### **b) Alarm System**

Members **NOTED** that arrangements were made for an engineer from Baron's Security to attend and install a Wireless Receiver and PIR to replace the damaged cable on Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> November at 2pm. Unfortunately, the engineer was delayed and the appointment subsequently cancelled. The Meeting Clerk informed Members that an appointment had been rescheduled for Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018, during the hall shutdown period. Baron's have requested that they make arrangements for their engineer to also carry out the annual maintenance check on the same date. Members **NOTED** that the Caretaker will be in attendance.

##### **c) Leak – Kitchen Sink**

Members **NOTED** that the Clerk to the Council had made arrangements for the Parish Council's maintenance contractor to carry out repairs to the waste pipe under the sink and to change the washers on the taps, following a report of a leak from the Caretaker.

Members **NOTED** that there is a pinhole in the sink and that this now requires replacement. The Clerk to the Council informed Members that the Parish Council's maintenance contractor had been asked to investigate whether he can source a sink as it is of an unusual size.

#### **PH17.057 REGULAR HALL HIRERS**

Members **NOTED** that the Principal Financial Officer had requested that Regular Hall Hirers provide a copy of each groups Public Liability Insurance Certificate. Mr Cooper stated that he had sent a copy to the Booking Secretary earlier in the year. Mrs Smith stated that Thornwood Seniors make a payment for the Parish Hall's Public Liability Insurance for hall hirers. The Meeting Clerk was asked to contact Mrs Shelley and Mrs Foster with regard to their particular groups insurance certificates.

The Principal Financial Officer had also requested details of which groups hire storage

cupboards. The Meeting Clerk was asked to contact the Booking Secretary for confirmation.

#### **PH17.058 CAR PARK**

##### **a) Request for use of Car Park for Thornwood Village Open Garden Event Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2018 – 11am to 4pm**

Members *NOTED* that, following a formal request to the Parish Council, Councillors had agreed to grant permission for visitors to the Thornwood Village Open Garden Event to have use of the Parish Hall Car Park. The Parish Council had been advised that the event is to be in aid of St Clare's Hospice. The Booking Secretary confirmed that the hall was not required that day.

##### **b) Unauthorised Parking**

The Chairman asked Mr Sawyer to update the Committee regarding unauthorised parking in the hall car park. Mr Sawyer reported that an allotment holder had informed him that there was a total of 17 cars parked in the car park this morning. When Mr Sawyer visited the hall, he witnessed one owner leaving his vehicle and walk towards the industrial estate. The Caretaker informed the Committee that he had reported 3 cars that had been left in the car park on the 18<sup>th</sup> November, two of the cars were still parked on the 26<sup>th</sup> November and one was still parked on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December. The final car left the car park today. Both the Caretaker and Mr Sawyer stated that they had put notices on the car windscreens. The Chairman asked the Clerk to the Council if a sticker could be stuck onto any unauthorised vehicles. The Clerk expressed concern that complaints could be received regarding damage that may be incurred when removing the sticker.

The Committee discussed the number of spaces allocated to Jonen's and Clearwater Care. Mrs Hawkins stated that both companies between them should only be using 7 spaces. The Clerk to the Council stated that she had been thinking about a solution to the problem and suggested that the Committee may wish to consider making arrangements for height restrictive, key coded barriers to be put in place. However, this would be a very costly solution. Consideration would also need to be given to people visiting the play area. The Clerk expressed concern that complaints could be received from local residents who could say that by installing barriers, this could result in more problems with parking in Weald Hall Lane and Duck Lane.

The Clerk to the Council stated that if the Committee agreed to instal barriers, regular hall hirers and allotment holders would have to be informed of the key code, as would those hiring the hall on a one-off basis. Mr Sawyer expressed concern about Jonen's using more spaces. The Clerk to the Council stated that the Parish Council's auditor may decide that the spaces are not hired out, adding that she would know more following the auditor's visit next year. Mrs Smith stated that, with regard to the play area, many people who use it are local residents who walk. The Clerk to the Council reported that she had received a telephone call from a resident concerned about parking in Duck Lane, in particular seeing people taking suitcases out of one car and leaving in a second. Mr Sawyer also confirmed that he had also witnessed this happening.

The Clerk to the Council stated that the Committee would need to make a decision regarding the parking, however, the Parish Council may need to make a decision regarding the barriers because of the cost involved. The Clerk said that the Committee could leave the decision in abeyance until the next meeting in February. In the meantime, the Clerk suggested the Committee may wish to consider making arrangements to hire a security company to police the car park for a month. The Chairman asked the Clerk to the Council to investigate the cost. Following discussion, Members agreed that the Clerk to the Council should also investigate the cost of barriers and whether or not planning permission would be required.

Mr Sawyer mentioned the damaged drain cover at the entrance to the car park. The Clerk to the Council confirmed that this had been reported a number of times to Essex County Council Highways by the Parish Council Office. Mrs Hawkins stated that she would also report it via Epping Forest District Council. The Clerk to the Council suggested that Mr Sawyer, with the assistance of the Chairman, take a photo of the drain and send to Essex County Council.

#### **PH17.059 BUDGET/PRECEPT ITEMS**

The Clerk to the Council confirmed that the Principal Financial Officer had the following items listed for the Budget/Precept Meeting:-

- New curtains
- Replace entrance doors
- Padded chairs
- Replace garages

Mrs Smith reported that the caterer employed for the Seniors Christmas Party had complained about two plates not working properly on the cooker. The Clerk to the Council confirmed that this would be investigated. Mrs Smith also reported that the caterer had mentioned the back door, advising that there was no key. The caterer had informed Mrs Smith that, by law, there should be easy access to a key to unlock the door in an emergency. The Caretaker advised that there is a back door given out with the regular hall hirers keys. The Clerk to the Council suggested that the key should be marked and that hall hirers need to unlock the door for the duration of the hire session. Mr Sawyer suggested hanging a key by the door. Mr Cooper expressed concern that someone could easily break in. Mr Sawyer expressed concern that hall hirers may forget to lock the door.

The Meeting Clerk expressed concern that people hiring the hall for single sessions may not be aware that they needed to unlock the kitchen door and that the booking terms and conditions would need to be amended accordingly. The Booking Secretary stated that the door is very awkward to lock. The Clerk to the Council stated that the Committee may need to look at installing a new door, one that can be unlocked from the outside, but opens automatically from the inside.

#### **PH17.060 CLERKS UPDATE AND COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

The Meeting Clerk reported that Mrs Davis had advised that the total sum raised at the Christmas Quiz Night was £328.00, proceeds of which are to be donated to

St Clare's Hospice.

**PH17.061 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Nothing to report.

**PH17.062 OTHER REPORTS**

**a) Regular Hall Hirers**

- Mums and Tots – no report.
- Flower Club – no report.
- Harlow Bowmen – Mr Cooper stated that he had given a copy of the insurance liability certificate to the Booking Secretary in January. The Booking Secretary stated that she would check.
- Thornwood Seniors – Mrs Smith confirmed that the liability insurance is purchased via the Parish Hall. The Clerk to the Council stated that she would check this with the Principal Financial Officer.

**b) Booking Secretary Report**

The Booking Secretary reported that November had been a busy month, with regular bookings and a quiz night in aid of St Clare's Hospice which was a great success. We have had quite a few children's parties and there are some in December. Blossoms Nursery had their third Christmas play. The Flower Club had their Christmas lunch, and the Seniors had theirs today. On the 16<sup>th</sup> we have carols and lighting up the Christmas lights. On the 17<sup>th</sup> is our social Christmas lunch. Christmas Day has 80 for Christmas lunch and the organiser will be inviting friends at the end of the meal for a tea and small concert, she is very pleased and has also booked for next Christmas. Fitness lady has stopped for a while, one or two people complained about the noise. Bookings coming in for next year starting on 7<sup>th</sup> January for a child's party.

The Chairman asked what the dates were for closing down. The Meeting Clerk confirmed that it had previously been agreed that the hall would close on 21<sup>st</sup> December until 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018. The Clerk to the Council stated that she had agreed the booking for the 7<sup>th</sup> January, following a telephone call from the Booking Secretary. The Chairman stated that he was looking to carry out some painting in the hall during the shutdown period.

**c) Caretakers Report**

The Caretaker reported that someone appeared to be dumping household rubbish next to the bin in the corner of the field. Following discussion, the Meeting Clerk was asked to laminate signs provided by Epping Forest District Council and send to the Caretaker for placing on the bins and notice boards.

**d) Financial**

Members **NOTED** that a financial report would be given at the next Committee Meeting, following the Parish Council's Budget/Precept Meeting which is to be held on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

The Clerk to the Council reported that an Internal Audit had been carried out on

29<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and that the auditor had looked in detail at the Parish Hall bookings under a review of income. The Clerk read out the auditor's comments and Members **NOTED** the auditor's recommendations as follows:-

*Conclusions and recommendations*

*We consider that scope exists for some improvements in the existing Thornwood Hall booking procedures, as detailed above, with the following recommendations arising. We shall undertake further work at our final visit, including our year on year analysis of income across the various headings, which will be used to add focus to future years' reviews.*

- R1. Where "free" hires of the Thornwood hall are provided, the Committee should ideally consider and give formal approval, with the minute reference identified in the booking diary.*
- R2. The two apparent instances where no booking form is held and no fees appear to have been recovered should be examined further and the position clarified and / or evidence provided of appropriate settlement of fees due.*
- R3. Consideration should be given to the acquisition of a suitable bookings software package capable of generating invoices and providing an effective debt control system.*
- R4. If R3 is not pursued, improved controls should be implemented with formal invoices raised affording a clearer audit trail between the booking and recovery of income due.*

The Clerk to the Council stated that in order to comply with the recommendations, the Booking Secretary will be required to clearly record the following:-

- When the Parish Council hires the hall, the reason needs to be clearly recorded in the booking diary.
- If the Committee agree a reduced fee for a charitable event, this needs to be minuted and the minute reference recorded in the booking diary against the booking.
- All diary entries must record the reason for the booking and the fee paid.

**PH17.063 OTHER URGENT BUSINESS** – none reported.

Meeting closed: 8.40pm

Signed .....

Chairman

Date .....