

**Eversley Village Hall Annual General Meeting**  
**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2023**  
**Draft Minutes**

Attendees:

Martin Clark	Chair
Niell Becker	Treasurer
Kim Russell	Bookings Secretary

Susan Hughes, David Hughes, Pat Bedale, Liz Batup, David Batup, Edward Dixon, Liz Perry, Andrew Miller, Natasha Singlelee, Wendy Lewis-Nelson, Philip Todd, Abbie Bell, Sarah Roberts, Paul Roberts, Kelly Smith, Alison Bedford, Zoe Charlton, Lucy Jones, Dianne Kirk, Rachel Halfhide, Fiona Dixon, Damion Bell, Natalie Andrews, Christine Andrews, Margeaux Uys, Victoria Collard, Nick Randall, Sandra Miller, David Marsden, Stephanie Warner, Claudia Horwood, Melissa Morris, Katy Duobic, Rebecca Sayers, Kim Ditchburn, Mike Baldwin, Malcolm Benjamin

**1. Apologies for absence**

Jane Pickup

**Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes from the previous AGM of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022 were accepted and approved.

**2. Chairs Report**

From very early on in the Chair's report questions were asked and comments made.

The majority of questions/comments and responses where it was possible to respond, as on a number of occasions people were talking at the same time at different areas in the hall, are captured below.

- A point was raised that it was never explained that Eversley Village Hall as a charity had lost money due to supporting Autumn Cottage.  
The response from the Trustees was that this point was more in line with the Treasurer's report when the figures would be shown making it easier to explain. This was followed by a brief explanation that the hall had been forced to increase prices due to energy cost increases and that legal advice had also been that a charity can not subsidise a commercial business which is historically what has happened.
- It was stated that once the EVH Committee became aware that Autumn Cottage had become a limited company a meeting was called for 13<sup>th</sup> September and Autumn Cottage were advised that their contract would finish on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2022.  
The response from Autumn Cottage was that they were told a new contract would be offered.
- The original Fuller Associates survey report from 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2022 was part shown on screen which included the details about the safety glass in the internal doors.  
Points were made by Autumn Cottage that there was safety glass in the doors.  
The Trustees confirmed that one set were verified as having safety glass and the other had a film over them which would not pass regulations and needed to be changed.

- Further points were made by the Trustees with regard to the survey findings and the historic structural issue of the hall, they advised that the insurers had been informed and legal advice had been sought. The Trustees stressed their concern for health and safety, their personal liability and how difficult it was to make a decision when to close the hall. The Trustees went on to clarify that they were instrumental in helping Autumn Cottage with their negotiations with the church when no one else as far as the committee were aware were prepared to step in and help accommodate them. There were a number of responses from the room to the contrary on this latter point.
- The Trustees were asked why they did not call an EGM for users and the community as per Article 15 in the constitution. It was declared by another person that they had the full constitution and a further statement was made that during the hand over from the outgoing Committee to the current Committee all documentation, including a copy of the full constitution had been scanned and emailed over to the Treasurer as well as adding to Dropbox. The response was that the current Committee do not have a full copy of the constitution, lawyers had been asked to help and could not obtain a full copy to date. The Trustees advised that it is their option to close the hall which is what was decided for H&S reasons.
- It was stated that on the Charities Commission website, Autumn Cottage are the reason the hall survived during Covid.
- A point was made that the Trustees were at fault for the underpayment from Autumn Cottage. The Trustee response was that this was correct as it was an historic issue and that a business should be paying a commercial rate to hire the hall.
- It was further stated by Autumn Cottage that an amount had been agreed for a new contract. This point was clarified by the Trustees that it has not been said they can not have a new contract however the constitution needs to be changed to give more flexibility on the contract that can be offered. This would allow the current obstacles to be unstitched working in reverse order, however this was not the place to be discussing these issues and should be a conversation with the EVH Committee and Autumn Cottage.
- The Committee were asked how long had they known about the structural issues as children's safety is the responsibility of the Trustees.
- It was stated by Autumn Cottage that the Committee would not share the survey reports and had they been able to see them they would have closed had they know the extent of the problems. A further point from Autumn Cottage was to ask why could the hall not be closed in parts and worked on. It was explained that it was the Trustees decision when to close and how.
- A point was raised as to whether the Committee are planning to make the survey information public. A further statement made was that when a survey took place the tradesperson walking around stated that "you would have to thump the floor hard" to cause a problem. The reports were again requested, further input was that it appeared to be a vendetta against Autumn Cottage and Autumn Cottage stated that they felt "pushed out". There was also an accusation that a past Committee member's emails sent to the current Trustees were ignored during the early hand over days. The response to all the above, which were directed at the Trustees in rapid succession so could not be answered individually, was that this was not a personal issue and any

point raised in the presentation was for clarification. This was followed by a statement that clearly help was needed from the village community.

- A number of requests were made throughout the meeting to see the surveys, the question was asked again.

The response was the slides and minutes would be sent out to everyone.

This response was picked up on and it was stated that this did not address the point regarding the sharing of the surveys and a request was made to know when this would take place.

At this point DH offered to collate all the information and forward to everyone who had left their details on the log in sheet.

- The question was asked whether Autumn Cottage would be reinstated in the hall.
- Numerous questions were asked regarding the car park; why can't the car park be reopened, why was it locked, why were people not advised in advance and why, if it is a building site, is the front car park still open.

The Trustees response was that the area is a building site and after seeking legal advice the Committee were advised to close the car park for health and safety reasons. It was further explained that the front car park does not fall under the village hall's remit and is therefore a separate entity.

There were further concerns and upset over the closing and the Treasurer agreed to contact the insurers again – **action NB to contact the insurers**

- It was stated that in November at a meeting the Trustees agreed they would address the issue of sharing the reports which did not happen. Further on this point it was stated that the biggest problem is the lack of transparency and insufficient communication on what has and is happening. The car park issue was raised again with the suggestion of a disclaimer notice being displayed. It was further emphasized that the parents and children are being put at risk as there is not enough parking. The Trustees again agreed to have a discussion with the insurers and discuss a non liability sign as an option which could be sourced – **action NB as above**
- At this point there was a request from the hall to move matters on as the time was passing for other matters to be discussed.

### 3. Treasurer's Report

As with the Chair's report, questions and comments began very early into the section.

- A question was asked how the figures were calculated.  
The **Treasurer's** response was that the income is looked at by line of business, functions, regulars users, childcare and the share of the total costs of the hall between them based on the hours each uses as a % of total hours. This is a simple approach used widely in these circumstances, where we don't need a sophisticated method of doing this.
- It was stated that the previous pre school was subsidized.  
This was acknowledged with a response that if this hadn't occurred then there would be more money available to have carried out work required.
- The Trustees were asked what fundraising has been done.  
The response was that money was coming from regular and private hirers with numbers growing.  
This was met with the comment that better management was required for a community asset.

- The question of reserve funds was raised and the fact that Autumn Cottage using and paying for the hall in Covid times was what kept it afloat.
- This led to mention of available grants and previous fundraisers by people over the years.
- It was stated that Autumn Cottage have asked for a contract, it hasn't been given and it appears the current Committee are not doing anything  
The response was that there are only 3/4 people now and help is definitely needed.
- It was stated that if the costs for Autumn Cottage to hire the hall are increased then they will need to pass the costs on to the families.  
The response from the Trustees was that a charity can not subsidise a commercial business.
- The Trustees were asked what regular hirers costs are and will they be changing.  
The Treasurer advised that these costs will be assessed once the cost base is in place especially for electricity when the fixed deal expires, unfortunately there is not an option to search for deals at this point.
- Autumn Cottage advised that at £2500 per month the cost to hire the hall is already too expensive and had any thought been given to what would happen if they did not return.  
The Treasurer responded that regular users are paying commercial rates and are at the limit of where prices can go up to.  
Further response from the Trustees was that prior to the structural issues both parties had been close to an agreement. There is no vendetta and people are at the AGM in support of Autumn Cottage. He went on to explain that the hall needs to be repaired, the constitution changed and then all restored on a fair contract.
- The Trustees were asked if someone wanted to hire the hall for 30 hours a week what would the cost be.  
The response was that it is £15 or £30 per hour as appropriate.  
The follow up was that the Trustees should not keep describing the rate Autumn Cottages pay as discounted as they are a regular booking and there should be one figure and this should be published on the website.  
The Trustees advise that the rate for Autumn Cottage is not published as this is a business matter which should be a private agreement.

At this point a return to the Chair to continue was planned, however there were still numerous questions that people wanted to ask, therefore this part of the presentation was partly lost and both Trustees were questioned further.

- The question of insurers responsibility on costs for the structural matters was raised again.  
The Trustees responded that the insurers have refused to cover any of the structural issues.
- The Trustees were asked why the hall could not be part used as work was carried out.  
The response was that due to the numerous areas that need attention, flat roof, asbestos, the porous brick walls, floor concerns that this would not work. Once exploratory work was completed then a considered opinion could be given. Dates were advised for when both the roof and floor exploratory work would take place, over the next two weeks.
- Discussion ensued regarding the input that people in the village could have with regard to repairs etc.

- The locking of the car park was again raised and a statement made that someone from the village could supply Harris fencing the following day.
- The Trustees were asked how often surveys are carried out on the hall. The response from the Trustees was that the last survey was 2016 which there is no record of on Dropbox. They went on to say that a survey would not be a regular requirement, however due to the maintenance check carried out towards the end of last year and the concern over the lintels on the annexe a survey was booked to evaluate the hall as a whole.
- A question was asked about how many surveys had been carried out and how much were the Committee spending on these each time. The Committee advise that the original broad brush survey was chargeable, the follow up from points from this needed two other surveys with subsequent quotes and from there other trades people asked to quote, a total of around 8 different people involved.
- It was stated that people in the village could do the work and would have it done in a month if someone was managing it. The Committee responded there are many different areas of work needed which require different trades people, the example given being that the company who do the fogging for insect infestation do not cut the hole in the floor which is needed and not all trades who will cut the hole in the floor can replace the double layer hall floor adequately. This is why numerous people have been asked for advice so the best solution can be found.
- It was stated that the Chair did not appear to care about the current situation. The response was that he did care very much. The Trustees advised that they would stay in situ in their current roles with the exception of JP who had advised a number of months ago that she would be resigning. The Management Committee stood down with a view to staying on if voted in. This left a role for a Trustee which could be voted on by any groups listed earlier in the slide and of which a number are still around. The response was a vote of no confidence in the Trustees. The Chair in particular due to the fact he is rarely in the county and always busy with work. The Chair responded that it could be a challenge however he took on the role as there was no one else available to do so at the time.
- The structure of the Management Committee versus the Trustees was then discussed and how people could be voted onto either. The need for continuity of responsibility was highlighted as was the thought from people present that the current Trustees would stand down at the AGM. The Trustees not standing down was challenged further to a point it was stated that the community don't trust or support the current Chair.
- PT stated that the Trustees had not approached the groups with voting ability one month prior to the AGM and that it should be noted that EPC were appointing Ed Dixon to be Chair. He went on to commend the current Trustees for their hard work and time spent and it was suggested they should stay and work slowly towards a new constitution that can be adopted. The final point made by PT was to state that we all want the same thing, a good working village hall for everyone who wants to use it. The Trustees responded that this was a good proposal as the role taken in the beginning was not one they wanted, it had developed over time into what it is now. Further comment from the Trustees was that there had been no intention of staying beyond tenure which would be the end of 2023 and that once the constitution was sorted the tenure would be considered to be ended.

- The Trustees were asked if it is normal to fill in a form to join a committee. The Trustees advised that this is a normal procedure, which could include DBS and CCJ judgement checks. The forms would be collected with a deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> February and roles discussed after that date.
- The question was again raised as to when the Trustees would step down. The response again was they don't, it was just JP and KR who had as of the meeting. With KR agreeing to re stand subject to votes.
- At one point earlier there had been a loose discussion regarding Andrew Miller joining the committee, this was confirmed at this point and he was nominated by ML on behalf of the WI. There was a mention of AM becoming Treasurer. It was pointed out that this would be a conflict of interest when Autumn Cottage move back into the hall.
- An EGM date was discussed, ED was asked to suggest a date in around a months time. The 26<sup>th</sup> February was given.

The meeting ended with a level of uncertainty at 9:15pm.