The meeting was chaired by the Committee Chairman Martyn Robinson.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Claire Stratton, June Watkins, Jenny Morisetti, Claire Stratton, Vincent & Turly Bower, Sarah & Julian Panton, Stephanie Ledger and Judy Veness. 14 people were present.

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the 2022 AGM had been posted on the village website and a link circulated to the village email list and in advance. There were no matters arising. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Tony Crocker and approved unanimously by the meeting.

1. Appointment of Committee

**New Committee**

The following were appointed unopposed to the committee for the coming year, proposed by Tony Crocker and seconded by Wendy Robinson:

* Martyn Robinson (Chairman)
* Colin Tully (Vice-Chairman)
* Tim Ledger (Treasurer)
* Steve Veness (Secretary)
* Sarah Marks (Booking Secretary)
* June Watkins
* Martin Sandercombe (co-opted)
* Elspeth Scott (representative appointed by the PCC)

1. Treasurer's Report

Tim Ledger presented the Treasurer’s report for 2022/23 financial year:

* + Total funds held by the Village Hall Trust at the end of the year amounted to £16,307.24.
  + Of this total, £9,189.24 should be seen as representing a ‘rainy’ day’ or capital fund for major repairs or improvements to the building; £7,188.00 should be regarded as the accrued cushion to support running costs.
  + The capital fund has been derived largely from previous government Covid grants and also from a generous bequest of £5,000 from the estate of the late Gordon Ralph, who was a major supporter of the hall over many years.
  + Running costs, particularly electricity costs, have increased markedly over recent years and in the financial year under discussion costs exceeded revenue by £344.61.
  + The Treasurer explained that he will be looking at options, including an alternative energy provider, to reduce the unit cost the Hall is paying per kWh. Because the Hall is not a domestic property it has not benefited from the energy price cap and is paying a rate many times greater than the current domestic rate.
  + The rate paid by hirers for electricity via the slot meter (for the overhead heaters) is thought to be far below the cost to the Hall. This will be reviewed, and potentially increased to reduce the Hall losses on that supply.
  + The Treasurer will also review our insurance to see if cheaper insurer can be found.
  + The Treasurer thanked Martin Sandercombe, for auditing the accounts and for providing guidance on the treatment of capital versus revenue funds.
  + In conclusion, although the finances remain healthy on paper we do have a gap with the ongoing running costs which needs to be addressed.

Acceptance of the financial report was proposed by Tony Croker, seconded by the Steve Beck and approved by the meeting unanimously.

1. Chairman’s Report

The Chairman provided the following report:

The Hall remains the sole public focal point for meetings and events in the village and as such is vital for our community. In the past year it has been used for village Jubilee and Coronation celebrations, numerous well-supported Pop-up Pub nights, the annual village Quiz, as a support facility for the Open Gardens, as well as providing a venue for regular village activities such as tai chi and yoga.

The committee has continued to promote continuous improvement of the Hall facility and in the past year new tables had been purchased and lagging of the water pipes has been substantially improved. More recently, although not in the year under discussion, the ceiling ‘clouds’ have been added to improve the hall acoustics and it is planned to fit a handrail to the outside steps this coming autumn.

The Chairman thanked the Treasurer for his comments on the running costs and noted that heating costs formed the bulk of our running expenses. This matter was discussed at last year’s AGM, since when a number of actions have taken place:

* The night storage heaters have been switched off for most of the winter with no ill-effects to the fabric of the building. One instance of the pipes freezing was encountered during the December cold snap but fortunately with long-term no ill-effects. To prevent a repetition additional lagging and the installation of additional stop-cocks was undertaken in May.
* A quotation was obtained by Jenny Morisetti for the installation of solar panels and battery storage. Unfortunately it did not seem likely that the £13,800 cost would achieve a worthwhile payback for the hall, unoccupied as it is for large periods.

The Chairman proposed to continue with the approach of not switching the night storage heaters on, due to the cost of electricity. Not using the storage heaters would additionally give the Treasurer the option of securing a cheaper day rate for electricity if we move away from Economy 7.

In conclusion, the Chairman noted that there were so many people who helped keep the hall running that it was not possible to thank everyone individually but he did wish to mention the Booking Secretary, Sarah Marks, for her excellent work managing the bookings and hall cleaning rota and dealing with hirer queries.

1. Any Other Business

**Local causes.**

Marion Mills noted that she and others in the village were unhappy that the profits from the Open Gardens went to the The Vale Pantry, Sturminster Newton Food Bank. She stated that she thought the funds raised should have gone to the Village Hall or other more local cause, e.g. clearing footpaths.

In response the Chairman noted the following:

* He had advised the Open Gardens organiser that the Hall really did not need the funds, having healthy bank balances as we have seen from the Treasurer’s report.
* The Open Gardens was not run by the Village Hall committee but independently, so the committee had no control over how the profits were distributed. He did however believe that The Vale Pantry was a very worthy local cause.
* Those who opened their gardens discussed and agreed in advance the distribution of any profits.
* Regarding the specific proposal of clearing footpaths, he believed that is the responsibility of the Parish or Country Council and not something the Village Hall should be funding.

The Secretary noted that the constitution of the Village Hall Trust, as registered with the Charity Commission, does not allow the committee to donate funds to causes or purposes not directly related to the Village Hall. Since the Open Gardens event was organised and run independently of the Hall, the organisers had the right to disburse the profits as they wished of course.

In conclusion, the Chairmen noted Mrs. Mills’ concerns however, and committed to bearing such views in mind should a future opportunity to influence fund-raising occur.

**Parish Council updates**

Although unable to make the meeting, committee member and Chair of the Parish Council, June Watkins, provided the following updates:

* Branscombe kennels are putting up a sound barrier fence in October to reduce the noise nuisance.
* The Parish Council has paid for the clearing of the footpath through Duncliffe Wood to the south to Stour Row, and also the two footpath exits onto Green Lane. They will endeavour to keep them clear from now on. If there any other footpath issues please let June know.
* In response to the 20mph speed limit suggestion, June had 10 replies, three against and five in favour, with two neutral. As there appears to be limited interest in the possibility of a 20mph limit June will report back to the Parish Council that at this time we will not apply for it.
* The church renovations will re-start in the autumn – concerns about bats have held up work recently.

The meeting ended at 19:46pm.

Appendix – Financial statement

