



## Audlem Public Hall Committee Meeting – 18/10/2023

### Meeting Minutes

#### 1 Welcome

Stuart Furber (Chair), Derek Winskill, Adrian Farrow, Lorna Matthews, Rachael Hodgkins, Joanna Allman, Cheryl Cottrell, John Tilling, Kate Down, Richard Furber, Robert Collins.

#### 2 Apologies

Ben Preston, Chris Tipper, Tracey Humphries, Gemma Farrealey, Tony Richardson

#### 3 Minutes of AGM 2022

SF summarising last year's minutes, noting that the committee secretary Jan Morgan stepped down, and noting that Treasurer, John Tilling agreed to stay on. SF summarised that the minutes were an accurate reflection of the meeting, proposed by AF, seconded by DW.

#### 4 Chairpersons Report

SF delighted with the progress we have made as a committee over the past 12 months. At the 2022 AGM we gained a number of excellent new committee members, which was much needed as so much had fallen onto fewer people. We were fortunate to retain the experience and Hall knowledge of those previous committee members who agreed to stay on.

SF commenting that it has been his first year as Chair, and he was also new to the committee. Forming a new team takes time, SF feels like we are now in a place where responsibilities and individuals strengths are clearer. The committee is in a strong position and moving forward in a positive direction. We have been without a Secretary for much of the year, but SF is pleased to now have this important committee role in place with Rachael having joined us over the Summer.

We have made really good progress on some important topics over the past year, some of which are in the background and not yet overly visible to the public or our user groups. Our Charity status has been in need of review, and a new direction required on what to do with the old Caretakers Flat - Adrian will talk more about both of those as we move through the agenda.

In the background, RC has been leading the charge on a new electronic diary management system – with much support from LM in moving bookings across from the old paper diary process. This is in active use for LM to manage bookings and the committee have visibility, in the coming months we will be launching it to be publicly accessible – bookings will still be via LM, but the system will bring greater visibility of when the different rooms in the hall are in use, and provide more details about our user groups (should they wish to share them). The system is being developed to enable smoother back office processes, such as invoicing to our users.

The gym continues to go from strength to strength, under the management of JA and her team of helpers. The Hall Finances are in good shape, enabling us to make sensible investment choices in some of the hall facilities. The broken stairlift up to the snooker room took longer to resolve than we would have wanted, but SF is pleased to share that a replacement chair is now in place and in working order.

Usage of the general hall facilities is around it's highest level in recent times, with new sports, fitness and social groups – while our existing contract users continue with their repeat bookings.

The Hall took advantage of a Social Franchise grant from Cheshire East, which enables us to offer some free hours room hire to new and not-for-profit community groups – uptake on this has been slow, it has been advertised, but it does take time to set up such new groups. Due to the nature of the grant, this cannot be used towards existing bookings or hire for businesses. We welcome enquiries where new groups may be interested to explore this further.

Finally, The Management Committee has published on Audlem Online our response to the Cheshire East car park charging proposal – researched and prepared by AF. We would encourage all our user groups to respond to the consultation.

## **5 Treasurers Report**

JT noting that this AGM is for the financial year 2022 and suggesting that ideally the AGM should be held earlier in the year (Mar/Apr) in line with the fiscal year.

JT has provided a 5 year Summary appended herewith.

- a) Years 2020 and 2021 carry the mark of Covid 19. All hiring fees went down drastically, grants were provided by Cheshire East over that time.
- b) JT wished to highlight that hire fees have bounced right back up since then and shared a positive outlook in this respect, noting that gym fees are consistently high too.
- c) Other hire income has increased, partly due to LM's work.
- d) Expenditure has increased due to payment for cleaning and maintenance. The Cleaner is paid approx £12k-£13k per year and the caretaker £3k-£4k.
- e) There has also been a loss of flat income, plus expenditure on its change of use application.
- f) JT noting that the 2022 Insurance Claim Grant increased reserves significantly.
- g) 2023 is projected to show a £10k surplus. No significant facilities expenditure this year, with the exception of replacing the stairlift.
- h) JT anticipating that the Hall will need to plan future expenditure for works to the floor and also the drains.
- i) JT also noting that hire fees have not been increased for 10 years and a review is due here.

JT summarised his report in that the financial side of things is going well, but the Committee is asked to keep under watch potential increases in expenditure. JT also acknowledged that there was a big increase in management requirements for all of the facilities since the annexe was completed.

## **6 Health & Safety Update**

SF reporting that there was one reportable incident in the hall over the year, where a badminton player received an injury, but that it was due to fall and no fault of the facilities.

## **7 Charitable Status Update**

AF saying that one of the first things he was asked to look at was the charitable structure. The hall has 2 charities – both called Audlem Public Hall Charity. The first was set up in 1989 and the second, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, set up in 2014. Both charities have their own sets of trustees but only 2 people are trustees of both charities.

The second charity was set up because it was a condition of part of the initial funding for the Annexe project that the charity was one of the new-style CIOs. Save for receiving that funding, the CIP has been pretty much dormant ever since and the business of the Public Hall and Annexe has carried on under the original charity.

The Charities Commission has made it clear that we should only have one charity and AF's task is to sort that out.

There are a number of practical advantages to the Public Hall and Annexe being run by the more modern CIO charity and the Trustees and Management Committee resolved to transfer all the assets and business of the original charity to the modern CIO. That process began in January this year building on groundwork done by Roger Millns in the summer of last year. We have instructed a specialist charity solicitor to deal with it and after some initial delays, we are hopeful that the transfer will be completed very shortly.

Once it has been done, we will be inviting members of the community to come forward to serve as Trustees. There can be up to 8 elected Trustees, who serve in 3-year cycles, alongside nominated Trustees from the 3 parishes of Audlem, Buerton and Hankelow.

It's not intended that the Trustees get involved in the day to day management of the Public Hall and Annexe, but they do have an important role ensuring that the Hall and Annexe work for the public benefit, that it is accountable and its resources are managed responsibly, that it complies with its constitution and the law, that as Trustees, they act with reasonable skill and care in the best interests of the Charity. In effect, the Trustees act like a board of executives for the charity.

It is AF's hope that a diverse board of Trustees would help and guide the Management Committee during the course of the next few months. AF invited Committee members to put themselves forward or invite anyone thought to be suitable to please let SF or any of the other Committee members know.

## **8 The Flat – Change of Use Application**

AF reminding everyone of the situation as at last year's AGM – recalling TR's presentation on the Flat, which has been vacant since the summer of last year. TR had told us that just to bring the flat up to the then required insulation standards would cost something in the region of £30,000.

A working group was established to assess the viability of the flat as a dwelling for rent, but in truth, when the management committee looked around the flat, the general consensus was that it was in too poor a condition to be considered habitable. Estimates for the work (other than insulation) to bring it up to habitable standards were almost impossible to get from local trades and the prospect of empty property council tax has begun to loom.

Against that background and because the Hall and Annexe has an increasing problem of lack of storage for equipment and other items, the management committee decided to apply for planning permission to change the formal use of the flat so as to incorporate the space into the Public Hall itself.

If we had simply gone ahead and used the rooms for storage, abandoning the idea of renovating the flat for rental, we would still have the liability to pay Council Tax on that part of the building. The

rest of the building benefits from an exemption from council tax and rates and the expectation is that formally changing the use category of the flat will enable it to have a similar benefit.

The change of use application has been prepared and submitted, supported by a detailed report from local estate agents Baker Wynne & Wilson, which confirmed that the flat would need very considerable investment to bring it to any sort of habitable standard and even then, it would not be a particularly attractive prospect as a rental property. Our thanks go to John Baker, who generously provided us with his professional opinion in that report.

Audlem and Buerton Parish Councils both considered the application before it was submitted and expressed their support, for which we are grateful. The plan was publicised on AOL.

The deadline for any objections or submissions is today. AF has checked the Cheshire East planning portal this evening and, subject to any submissions which have been uploaded but not yet appeared on the website, there have been no objections and we hope that the planning authority will make its final decision in early November.

## **9 APH Management Committee**

- a) Resignations, TR notified the Committee at the 2022 AGM of his intention to stay on in his role for a further 12 months and now wishes to step down. SF noting that TR joined the Committee just under 10 years ago, the first 7 years service was working with the Annexe project, and the last 2.5 years in a key role, being facilities and health & safety officer to the Hall. SF saying a big thank you to TR.
- b) SF not aware of any further resignations.
- c) Election of officers:-
  - i) Chair – SF stated that he would be happy to continue. SF proposed as chair by CC, seconded by JT. No other nominations and SF was re-elected unopposed.
  - ii) Vice Chair – SF indicating the importance of having a vice chair role, but points out that this is not to be mistaken as an automatic succession to Chair. SF proposed AF to fill the Vice Chair role, this was seconded by JA. AF happy to take on the role and there were no further nominations.
  - iii) Treasurer – RF proposed JT, seconded by AF. JT said he was happy to be re-elected and there were no other nominations.
  - iv) Secretary - SF proposes RH, seconded by JA. RH happy to be elected and there were no further nominations.
  - v) Facilities – RF proposed DW & CC to be elected in a shared role, this was seconded by LM. Both DW & CC are happy to be elected.
  - vi) Health, Safety & Compliance – AF (regulatory compliance, plus H&S aspects that TR previously did) SF proposed AF, and this was seconded by CC. AF happy to be elected.
- d) Nominations for new committee members – Only committee members present. SF noted that one potential gap we have on the committee is someone to take on responsibility for Funding / Grant Applications.

## **10 Questions/Commentary from the Audience**

- a) JA wished to provide a Gym update:-
  - i. the gym currently has 164 active members.

- ii. JA said that since opening (2017), fees have never been increased. They are currently £125 pa / £12 per month. Students at home are charged £9 per month, and student away are charged £7 per month.
  - iii. The gym is open from 6.30am – 9pm, 365 days per year. More help welcome.
  - iv. Last fob issued this evening was number 625.
- b) JA also sharing that the commentary received relating to the cleanliness of the gym and changing rooms are very complimentary, LM adds positive feedback and says that the cleaners are also helping with kitchen cleaning too. It is felt that the cleanliness of the Hall is helping to promote the facilities.

Meeting closed formally by SF, with the Minutes to be published.

R. Hodgkins  
23/10/2023

The next committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 7.30pm in the Small Hall.