

# Wickhambrook Memorial Social Centre

## Minutes of the MSC Trustees' Meeting on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2012 in the Pavilion lounge

### PLEASE NOTE:

- DATES FOR ADDITIONAL FUTURE MEETINGS AND
- THREE IMPORTANT TOPICS.
  1. The widening of democratic MSC representation within the village
  2. The problem of adequate MSC management support and the likely closure of the hall
  3. The lease document in preparation for leasing the play area land to the Parish Council.

The meeting opened at 7.30pm.

### Present:

As Trustees:

|   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Julia Walker (Parish Council) Chairperson.      | Jackie Medley (Badminton Group).     |
| Michael Medcalf (Horticultural Soc and URC).    | Gladys Alexander (Day Club)          |
| Stan Bates (Bowls Club).                        | Jim Fieldsend (Wickhambrook Players) |
| David Turner (Methodist Church & Vice Chairman) | Jim Field (Tennis Club)              |
| Alan Lightley (Carpet Bowls)                    | Keith Warnock (U17 Football Club)    |
| Dorothy Anderson (History Society)              |                                      |

As Management Committee:

Barbara Merritt (Treasurer)  
Steve Taylor (Secretary & Booking Manager)

### Apologies were received from:

Jackie Fieldsend (WI),  
Snowy Addison (Snooker Club)

### Minutes of the previous meeting (2<sup>nd</sup> July 2012) and Matters Arising

Keith was welcomed to this his first meeting of the MSC Trustees as the Representative Trustee for Wickhambrook Football Club.

Other matters are dealt with within the agenda.

### Formal Reports

Chairman: Progress on the current projects, principally the Main Hall redecoration and upgrade which is almost complete, hot water for the Pavilion toilets, safety measures in the storeroom, tree surgery and external paving was detailed to the meeting.

Treasurer: The current bank balance stands at £35,417. Substantial invoices are expected in connection with the refurbishment and upgrade work.

Secretary: There was little correspondence of note to report, as confirmed by a quick scan of the correspondence file.

Booking Manager: Hire fees forwarded to the Treasurer since the previous Trustee meeting, total £2,370, with bookings running at normal levels for this time of year.

The roles of Booking Manger and Secretary will need to be filled at the November 5<sup>th</sup> AGM. This impending problem led to extended discussion. A major campaign of posters, flyers, Scene article, What's-On supplement and personal enquiries is to be mounted to find recruits for the management committee. It was made clear by several Trustees that, unwelcome as it is, the situation should be made quite clear that if no-one from the village is prepared to undertake simple roles to help run the hall, the hall will close (not 'may close' was emphasised) on and from 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012. This topic continued under a later agenda item.

### Brief reports on current activities

Main Hall. Nearing completion, with the pelmet lighting installed earlier that day. Some minor paint jobs have been highlighted to complete the redecoration. There have been no adverse comments regarding the removal of the old shelving, in fact most comments have been favourable, stating that the hall looks tidier.

Kitchen upgrade. This remains a project which it is hoped will start next year. To give as many people as possible the opportunity to contribute to a new layout and fit-out, a scaled blank floor plan has been drawn and multiple copies made for as wide a distribution as possible. Copies were handed to everyone present with the explanation that as many copies as might be needed could be supplied for club members and anyone else.

Storeroom layout. This has been changed to facilitate the safe storage of the banqueting tables. A safety barrier post, or maybe two posts, are to be installed. For the new kitchen layout, it is suggested that the wide hall brooms might be stored conveniently to hand in the storeroom in the space alongside the management committee's admin filing cabinet.

Stage Clearance. This is ongoing. Much scrap wood has been removed. Old tins of paint have been stacked to one side ready for disposal. Some of the old Christmas decorations have been disposed of, with some set aside for the Day Club. The remaining decorations will be stored under the stage after a further clearout. The Farfisa organ removed from under the stage has been disposed of as an appreciation for a working day in the Main Hall by a contractor on August Bank Holiday. The Players have set matters in motion to remove the scenery stored against the back wall.

Ash Trees. Following the recent recommendation by Acacia Tree Surgery, the two roadside trees are to be felled to ground level. This will be done by local contractor David King. Keith referred to a tree with branches overhanging the football pitch and it was agreed that the branches will be identified and action taken, probably by David King, to cut them back or remove them.

### **Proposal to extend the democratic involvement in MSC affairs**

This was a wholly new topic for the Trustees to discuss. David presented the idea that relying on MSC management by Representative Trustees drawn from local clubs and organisations, representatives whose primary, or only, interests lay in other community activities, no longer provided a committee particularly interested in, or individually and personally actively involved in, running the village hall. The Trustees are, understandably, mainly, or wholly, interested in pursuing and running other community activities, and are not committed to running the MSC on a day-to-day basis.

The creation of a separate, and subordinate, management committee, supported by co-opted volunteers, had for some years solved the problem by providing a pool of enthusiasts who were wholly committed to the hall. However, in recent years this management committee had been reducing in numbers and today has not a single truly independent volunteer. Working within the limited circle of the club representatives has not reached out to the wider community and has failed to attract volunteers for several years.

Something radical needs to be done, and the idea being presented was that an active Trustees Committee should be set up to replace the existing Trustee Representatives, and should be manned by people willing to run a village hall as their primary, perhaps their only, village commitment. The first suggestion was that this committee, formed from public meetings, should comprise 12 people and not need to co-opt others. This number was later increased to 15. The essential point was made that the present representatives would not be excluded, but could stand as elected committee members, just as anyone else could, especially as they have an interest in the wellbeing of, and the effective ongoing management of, the hall, but they would need to be MSC committee members strictly for the purpose of contributing to actively running the hall and not merely representing, protecting, or speaking for, the interests of one narrow group. This proposal would allow village-wide democratic representation in the hall's management.

The meeting was assured that all members of the new Trustees Committee would have the same responsibilities as at present, and that any claims against the Trustees Committee would be covered by the hall's insurance. This is an important point and it would be investigated to ensure that it is explicit and clearly understood.

The Charity Commissioners have confirmed that this proposed change in the hall's management is not a problem and can be set in place by the existing Trustees.

The matter of the hall's future management was thrown into sharp focus for everyone by the fact that unless there were people prepared to undertake at least the Secretary and Booking Manager roles at and after the November AGM, the hall would close, and be left with no-one in Wickhambrook authorised to re-open it.

It was Proposed by Alan Lightley, Seconded by Jim Fieldsend, and agreed unanimously, that the management committee should progress the calling of a Special Meeting (at this point the words 'Emergency Meeting' were used), in order to bring the urgency of the matter to the attention of the whole village. The meeting is to be held on **Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2012** (hopefully in the Main Hall) and publicised as widely as possible using 'shock tactic' wording to make the message clear and unambiguous that the future management of the hall would be open to anyone and everyone and, that without adequate village support, the hall would close in November. Posters, with a clear simple message, placed around the village, plus Scene articles, What's-On supplements and word-of-mouth publicity should all be employed to get the urgent message to as many people as possible. To progress this matter expeditiously, a management committee meeting is to be held on **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012**.

The conclusion from the discussion was that the management of the hall shall be extended to the whole village and not limited to representatives from selected clubs, organisations and activities.

**A.O.B.**

1. A question was raised regarding the oil-fired central heating. Is it working after the power-down during the refurbishment? This is to be ascertained by the Secretary.
2. Barbara presented a quoted price for the renewal of the Main Hall corner settle cushions. At £570 this was significantly lower than a quote from outside the village. On a Proposal from Jim Field, Seconded by Steve Taylor, it was agreed unanimously to renew the cushions using the materials selected by Barbara and the £570 quote from Yvonne Whitehead.
3. On a question from Keith, it was agreed that Steve would try to find storage space on stage, so as to clear much clutter from the referee's changing area, provided this football kit could be easily removed from the stage for the duration of stage activities.
4. Dog fouling has reached unacceptable levels again. This has also been noted by the Parish Council on the 6 Acres, and especially by the Football Club members who are again having to routinely clear the pitch of dog mess before each game. This has been the subject of discussions within the MSC management committee over many years, ever since the ban on dogs on the MSC recreation area was rendered ineffective when the 6 Acres was opened to dog 'exercisers'. With cricket no longer requiring the enlarged recreation field created by the conjoining of the MSC recreation field with the Parish Council's 6 Acres by the removal of the boundary hedge and ditch, the proposal has been raised that the physical boundary between the two areas be restored so as to allow the MSC field to once again be a totally dog free area while remaining open for children's safe recreation (the only such place in Wickhambrook), and for the Wickhambrook football pitch to meet the standards required. While the practicality of effectively re-enclosing the MSC land is being looked into, additional notices are to be displayed regarding dogs on MSC land. It is realised that previous notices were deliberately destroyed, and that proper gated enclosure of the land may be the only solution.
5. Land lease to the Parish Council. The meeting was interested to be shown an artists 'visualisation' drawing of the play equipment to be installed. The earlier question of a 'Zip Wire' was mentioned but not discussed. To move ahead of the usual timetabled committee meetings a copy of the draft lease had been circulated within the management committee for individuals to have a preliminary review and to make initial comments. This circulation was not completed in time for a report to this meeting on individuals' comments. The responses will now be listed and distributed within the management committee, along with individual copies of the draft lease to allow further consideration and input to the document. This is being done out of committee to avoid the delays inherent in waiting from one meeting to the next to arrive at a consensus. It was not discussed at what level (management committee or Trustees) the final draft would be approved, but it was noted that there will be meetings of the Trustees on 15<sup>th</sup> October and on 5<sup>th</sup> November at which this approval could be agenda'd. There was concern that the solicitor (Carrie March) has indicated an increase of £450 in the costs to progress the matter which has become increasingly complicated as she explained at the recent meeting with her, compared with the indications given at the first meeting with her earlier in the summer. This additional cost, coupled with the suggestion that the Parish Council might not wish to meet any increase in costs was a concern. However, with assurances given by Julia (as Representative Trustee for the Parish Council) that the Council would meet their share of the costs it was proposed by Jim Field, Seconded by Alan Lightley, and approved by all present that a) a ceiling figure of £600 expenditure by the MSC be placed on the legal fees and b) the matter is to be progressed as quickly as possible.

**Next meetings**

Management committee meetings: **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> October**, or much earlier if that can be arranged, to progress the matters of:

- a) the campaign for publicising the Special (Emergency) Public Meeting on **Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2012** and
- b) the management committee's approval of the terms of the land lease document.

Trustees meetings: This will also be the Special (Emergency) Public Meeting on **Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2012** and then the **AGM on Monday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2012**.

The venues to be the Pavilion lounge, except the Special (Emergency) Public Meeting on **Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October** which may be held in the Main Hall (Youth Club allowing).

The meeting closed at 9.32pm

Signed .....

Date .....