

Booking Manager's report to the 2008 AGM

Circuit Training James 'Fitness' has moved across to the WI hall due to low numbers making it impossible to pay the MSC hire fee. An invoice for October has been raised.

Farmers Market credit account. This stands at £82 in debit. The debt is due to be paid off by the delivery of £82-worth of compost for the existing and proposed new hedging. A matter of concern.

Level of hirings and fees collected. Hirings are higher this year than last. This cannot be easily quantified or presented as an analysed summary, but the booking diary is noticeably more full than last year. This year we had to decline a request for the Tuesday evenings for Ballroom Dance classes.

Hire fees paid during period 2007 AGM to 2008 AGM.

Total hire fees paid to the Booking Manager during this period: £13,887.19. Not all hire fees were paid directly to the Booking Manager, so this year the above figure cannot be reconciled with the booking diary. In future, because as cash is handled, it would be prudent to audit the Booking manager's accounts.

Hire forms and Conditions of Hire. These are sent out to weekend and other significant casual hirers. A copy of the now very comprehensive Hire Conditions is on permanent display on the foyer notice board. The £500 'damages bond' has not caused any insurmountable problems for hirers. The damages bonds (sometimes referred to as 'insurance bonds') are forwarded to the Treasurer for banking. Once it is confirmed that the hall is undamaged, refunds are made as soon as practical.

Rubbish. To deal with the growing problem of rubbish created by weekend hirings and to meet the terms of our P.E.Licence, the Hire Conditions now include the requirement for hirers to remove any rubbish created by their hiring (eg waste food, paper plates, party paraphernalia, scrapped decorations etc). We require that the hall must be left in the condition in which it is found on entry.

Foyer notice board. Following the foyer redecoration, this is currently being re-vamped. Copies or originals of all formal licences are permanently displayed. Permits such as Temporary Event Notices (TENs) are displayed for the appropriate period. Minutes of MSC meetings are also posted. The notice board is available for anyone to use, and is tidied up periodically to keep it relevant. There has been no repetition of the incident of the inflammatory and discriminatory notice which was posted earlier this year. Our P.E. Licence forbids this. An additional external notice board is planned for posters etc.

New Year's Eve. A temporary extension to the alcohol licence to 1am on 1st January 2009 has been granted. To avoid the chore of raising a TEN every year, a permanent change to our Public Entertainment Licence has been applied for. It is likely that this will be granted.

200 seated audiences – Public Entertainment Licence (P.E.L.) conditions. At present we are limited to 150 close-seated audiences unless the toilets in the Pavilion are made available to members of the audience (P.E.L. Annex 2, para 96). With the gents toilet upgrade largely completed, a permanent change to our P.E. Licence to re-allow 200 seated audiences has been applied for. This will probably entail a site review by the Borough (P.E.L. Embedded Restrictions para. 11). This change to 200 close-seated audience is critical for future panto, Body Rock, Wickhambrook School and other stage productions involving children because, due to the Child Protection laws (P.E.L. Annex 2, para 16), the Pavilion cannot be made accessible to un-licensed adults during shows. In a nutshell – the next move is to increase the permitted audience size from 150 to 200. A restriction on audience size to 150 would lose the Players between £2,000 and £2,500 per panto season.

MSC Public Entertainment Licence (No. SEBC/LN/000001757)

A review of our adherence to the licence terms is due. This may impact on future project priorities.

Pay Bars. These are operating well. The bar operation is relatively clean and hassle-free compared with that of a few years ago, and is not creating major problems for the hall administration. The concessions for the panto and Country Fayre bars to be run 'in-house' have been reviewed with Chris Gray and are agreed again for 2009. There has been good liaison with the MSC management and excellent co-operation with wedding reception hirers with the provision of table wines, drinks-on-entry etc. Appreciative comments have been made about the bar service by some (but not all) weekend

hirers. Chris Gray has installed a second cooler and added bar pipework to supply a third beer-head. Statutory signs will be made permanent fixtures when the servery area is redecorated.

Various matters...

There has been much activity during the year, most of which has already been reported to the Trustees. To bring a few things up to date:

The bar servery upgrade is nearing completion. The final task is to design, specify and fit spot lighting to the back of the upgraded canopy. That will be a separate project, with formal quotes/estimates when the specification is written.

Sundry woodwork and cabling has been completed in the Club Room and the Pavilion lounge.

Re-instating the stage sound system is well progressed using voluntary labour and mainly donated equipment and components. The replacement stage-sound reinforcement loudspeakers have been installed. At some time we may have to consider the installation of a 'hearing loop'. It may become a legal requirement (if it isn't already), but as no-one has asked for that particular facility it is not being proposed at present. It does not feature in our P.E. Licence. Rack space has been allowed for it.

The whole area of the flat roof has been cleaned. No leaks can be seen, but there has certainly been standing water and that has been finding a way in. However, with the gulleys and downpipes cleared, (an annual job – ideally twice each year) there should be no standing water – until the next major leaf-fall. During this work the accessible pitched roof gutters have been cleared of debris and the pitched roof has been confirmed as having an underfelt. The gale-loosened roof tiles are being re-fixed by Mick Wiseman and Barry Pasque. This will require tower scaffolding at some cost.

This is all 'invisible' and sometimes very expensive maintenance work. So it is to the credit of those clubs who, while seeing only 'the same old hall which is always there' and are understandably unaware of the high costs of providing a fully functional, safe, dry, heated, lit, insured and expensively maintained building which meets all the regulations regarding monthly assessments and safety checks necessary for public access and lettings, nevertheless pay fully (and more or less willingly), for their hirings. Which sadly brings this year's report to a close on a less happy, and rather difficult, note.

Hiring discrepancies. Due to holidays, sickness, bad weather and suchlike it is impractical to expect clubs to forecast their exact uses of the premises for forthcoming weeks and months with sufficient accuracy to allow hire charges to be levied in advance. Consequently, charging for weekday hirers can only be done 'in arrear'. Also, while it might be thought that the actual dates and times of hirings could be monitored by the management committee, to ensure that everyone pays their fair share of the costs, it is quite impossible to 'police' all hirings, every day of the week, in order to check on arrival times, departure times and the rooms actually used. Therefore, unless there is any reason to believe otherwise, the 'dates and times' lists presented by the clubs after their hirings, are taken on trust. And here, thanks must go to the clubs which provide detailed and honest information by note, letter and email so that correct invoices can be raised. Unfortunately it has been discovered recently that one club has not been admitting to their use of a room nor paying the hiring fees due. This matter was dealt with and apparently settled some years ago, but the practice has clearly started again and may have been happening for some time. Being now aware of it has placed me in some personal difficulty. My choices are: a) Ignore it and continue to accept incorrect payments, which would make me complicit in this practice: b) Leave the problem, and the role of Booking Manager, to someone else: c) Bring the matter to the attention of the Trustees for a formal ruling so that hirings can only take place within fair and clearly stated conditions laid down by the Trustees. Course 'c)' is obviously the best.

In order to be fair to those clubs who do make their full contribution to the high maintenance and running costs of the premises, all clubs (with the exception of those paying agreed annual fees) should be asked to provide a correct statement, in arrear, of the dates and times of their hirings. These can be at monthly, quarterly or any interval convenient to individual clubs, provided they show their complete occupation times for every chargeable room used. This is not an unreasonable requirement, and I acknowledge that all clubs, except one, already do provide that information. MSC invoices then show the correct hire fee to cover the actual hirings. This should now apply to all weekday hirers. Without it, the cost of running the hall falls unfairly on those clubs which do admit to their full use of the hall, and the enthusiasm for voluntary work and fund-raising to keep the hire costs down will be lost.

By this report I request that this matter be discussed at this AGM. If it is agreed by the Trustees that date/time listing, based on honest and complete recording and reporting, is to be applied to all clubs, that decision should be Minuted and be a condition both of key holding and of hiring the MSC.

Report ends.