

MINUTES OF THE A.G.M. OF
THE MERRY BELLS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY, 8TH MAY 2014,
IN THE COFFEE ROOM AT 7.30PM

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| PRESENT: | Mr M Carr | Chairman | Elected |
| | Miss M M Stanley | | Elected |
| | Mrs P Howard | | Elected |
| | Mrs J Carr | | Wheatley Parish Council rep. |
| | Mr S Buckingham | | Village Produce Assc. |
| | Mr C Sprent | | Wheatley Society Rep. |
| | Mrs J Slade | | Wh. Women's Institute Rep. |
| | Mr T Blightman | Hon. Treasurer | Co-opted |
| | Mrs V Taylor | Secretary | Co-opted |

And about forty members of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
None

2. TO AGREE MINUTES OF A.G.M. MEETING HELD ON 9TH MAY 2013

The Minutes were agreed as a true record.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were still no pictures on the walls in the Coffee Room, despite suggestions that the schools would provide some. It was explained that no pictures had yet been provided by the schools but the subject would be discussed again at the next Committee Meeting

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman gave out copies of his report which was received with thanks. A copy will be attached to these Minutes.

A question was asked as to when the hire rates had last been increased. Mr Blightman said they had not been increased since 2011. The questioner stated they had never been asked to pay more than £3 per hour for the Coffee Room but now they being asked to pay £6 per hour Mrs Carr said the Committee was now trying to be fair to all users of the rooms and charge the correct amount to everybody. Much discussion followed about whether as a Community Building preferential rates should be given to those groups who serve the community; it was the Committee's view that it is difficult to define which groups should be eligible for preferential rates and the policy was now to charge all users the same rate in the interests of fairness.

Again a question was asked why rates had been increased. Mr Blightman repeated that the hiring charges had not been raised but there had been an increase in the rent charged to the tenants of the offices on the first floor, each of whom have their own separate agreement. This includes the Archive Group, who some felt should not have to pay a "commercial rate" for their office; it was explained that even after the rent increase the charge was still well below a "commercial rate" i.e. if the office was rented out to a business the charge would be considerably higher. It was also noted the Parish Council paid for their rent

A member of the public asked why had Weightwatchers stopped using the facility. Mrs Carr explained that she had asked them to pay their hiring charges in advance, in common with other users of the Hall, but Weightwatchers had said they would not do that and would move elsewhere.

The Committee was asked if it met with its users before implementing changes to its terms and conditions, and whether there was a forum for communication with users. Mr Carr said there was a representative of many of the community groups on the Committee who had an equal say. On the recent change to ask users to pay in advance, all regular users had been consulted. In response to a further question it was confirmed that if someone pays in advance and subsequently cancels their booking, a refund is possible. The Committee were also looking at an online booking system, through which it may be possible to charge a deposit at time of booking and the balance closer to the actual booking date.

A question was asked about the feasibility of there being a dishwasher in the kitchen; Mr Carr said it was not practical but that hot water is available

5. TO RECEIVE THE EXAMINED ACCOUNTS

Copies of the examined accounts were available. Mr Blightman explained that these accounts, had been examined and agreed by Mr R Minty and subsequently presented to The Merry Bells Management Committee who had agreed them, when they were signed by the Chairman, Mr Michael Carr, and himself as Hon. Treasurer. They were now presented to those present for approval.

A proposal to approve the Examined Accounts was made and was carried following a vote in which 10 voted in favour and 1 against.

6. HON TREASURER'S REPORT

Copies of Mr Blightman's report were available. A question was raised about the expenditure on the toilets and their level of use. Mr Blightman could not answer about the use but did note that the water bills had reduced considerably since their installation.

A question was asked about the £89000 in reserves – how was this comprised and why was so much being held? Mr Blightman said that £61,000 of the reserve was in the current account and he would provide a breakdown of the reserves. It mainly comes from the leases negotiated over the years with the County for the Library and the Police for the Stable Block and is spent on the upkeep of the building as per the Agreement, whilst the running costs come from the casual lettings for which economic charges have to be made to cover the ever increasing running cost of the building. A member of the public asked if the Committee were planning to commission another structural survey as had been done several years earlier to determine what repairs were needed. Mr Blightman said it would be looked into as would an energy efficiency audit to see if improvements could be made and reduce heating costs.

7 TO ELECT UP TO FIVE MEMBERS TO THE COMMITTEE

Nominations for election to the Committee were sought and as there were more than 5 nominations a request was made that voting slips be prepared and provided. There followed a great deal of discussion as no provision had been made for this eventuality but voting could be done by a show of hands. In the ensuing confusion nominations were proposed and withdrawn until at length it was proposed that Mr Blightman should be co-opted as Treasurer and Mrs Taylor co-opted as Secretary; this left 5 people

standing for election: Mr Carr, Mrs Blake, Miss Stanley, Mrs Ledwith, and Mrs Gregory. As there can be up to 5 members on the Committee they were all duly elected. It was asked to be minuted that the process at the next AGM should be more organised.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A member of the public raised the issue of Crumbs Coffee Shop not being allowed to put out tables on the forecourt of the Merry Bells; word had gone round the village that the Management Committee were refusing permission and consequently a petition had been drawn up and signed by many villagers. Mr Carr explained that no decision had yet been taken and it was necessary to consult with the Parish Clerk, whose office is very close to where the tables would be, and to make sure any insurance issues are clarified. If these matters could be resolved, a charge for the use of the forecourt would be agreed as in the previous year.

The Committee were also asked to give consideration to accepting reduced charges for certain users.

It was also requested that the next AGM should be held in a more appropriate room with adequate seating, lighting and temperature control.