**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF**

**THE MERRY BELLS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**HELD ON 5TH MAY 2022**

**7 P.M. IN THE MAIN HALL**

**Present:** Mr T. Blightman Mrs J. Slade

Mr D. Harverson Mrs F. Fox

Mr J. Morrison Mrs S. Cox

Mr I. Germain

4 members of the public.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Dr. J. Guy

Mr I. McGregor

Mrs L.Tully

Mrs M. Watson

1. **Agree the Minutes of the last AGM**

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

1. **Matters arising from the Minutes**

There were no matters arising.

1. **Chairmans Report**

**TB** read the attached report for the year ending 31st December 2021. **TB** thanked the committee for all the support during his first year as Chairman.

1. **To Receive the Examined Accounts**
2. **The Treasurers Report**.

**(IG)** presented the accounts and gave his report (attached**)**

**IG** Also thanked the committee and TB for all the support he has been given during his first year as treasurer.

1. **To Elect Five Members to the committee (as per Trust Deed)**

4 candidates stood for election and so no vote was needed. Tim Blightman, John Guy, Ian Germain and Ian McGregor were duly elected. David Harverson, after several years stepped down from the committee**.**

1. **Any other relevant business**

Amember of the public enquired about the revaluing of the property. **TB** hoped to have some guidanceon this in the coming year. The question of the sound system was addressed. **(DH)** although retired from the committee has kindly offered to continue with investigating the best possible outcome of a complicated system.

**MH** enquired about the costing of the refurbishment of the upstairs of theStable Block. **TB** advised that this was going ahead and some costing would be available in the near future.

Ideas were floated with regard to promoting the Merry Bells.

Several suggestions were given which would hopefully be investigated.

**TB** said at the present time bookings were quite healthy, although some classes had left because the hall was not big enough for them or the leader had moved away.

The excellent cleaning of the Merry Bells was noted.

**The Meeting Ended at 7.40 pm**

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MERRY BELLS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MAY 5th 2022

I am pleased to present my report for the year ended 31st December 2021.

Firstly, I would like to pay tribute to my predecessor, Mary Blake, who after over 50 years of service to The Merry Bells stood down from the Committee. We are deeply indebted to all she has done for the smooth running of the building.

As with the previous year, 2021 was severely impacted by the pandemic. We were closed completely from the start of the year until 12th April, at which point children’s classes could recommence, and we became fully open from 17th May. So we were fully closed for just over 100 days compared to 200 days the year before.

As well as not having any hirers for this time, we continued to offer a discount to those of our tenants who could only make limited use of their office space during this time and so there was a significant impact on our finances but again helped by government grants, as the Treasurer will report shortly.

Having lost 2 tenants at the end of 2020, we undertook some major refurbishment of the Stable Block and of the vacant office before new tenants moved in to each of them in April. We also began to think about what could be done with the upstairs of the Stable Block and commissioned a survey to see what structural work may be necessary. We are still considering options for its use and therefore what work is required.

We have completed work on ensuring there is an emergency escape route from the first floor of the building through the Library, previously not possible at times when the Library was closed. We have also been working through various issues raised by a Fire Risk Assessment we had commissioned at the end of 2020.

We had to renegotiate our energy supply contract in May and secured a 3-year fixed price on our gas and electricity which is currently shielding us from price rises.

We continue to encourage the use of the forecourt as a meeting place and have ensured litter bins are available to stop an accumulation of litter in the area.

Long-stay parking in the car park continues to be a problem, limiting the number of spaces available for the intended short stay purposes, with the consequent potential loss of income not only to The Merry Bells as hirers are deterred from using our facilities but also to local shops and services.

Maintenance of the building and land around is ongoing; we have had to do work on the forecourt and in the car park as well as internal repairs to ensure The Merry Bells continues to offer an attractive and functional venue for a wide range of activities.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the committee for having given so much of their time during another difficult year and helping to ensure we kept The Merry Bells both Covid-safe and open!

Tim Blightman

Chairman

5th May 2022

Treasurer’s Report to the Annual General Meeting of the Trustees of the Merry Bells Village Hall on Thursday 5th May 2022.

The Annual Accounts of the Merry Bells Village Hall for the year ended 31 December 20201 have been reviewed by Mr Bob Minty FCA and he is satisfied that they comply with current accounting requirements. The Financial Statements were approved by the Management Committee on 7 April and signed by the Chairman -Tim Blightman, the Treasurer – Ian Germain and subsequently by the examiner – Bob Minty. They are now presented to the Trustees and the residents of Wheatley for acceptance.

As the Chairman’s report has indicated, the impact of Covid-19 on finances continued to be significant, although the continued availability of Government grants to alleviate the situation helped greatly, there was a final result of a deficit compared with a surplus in 2020.

Excluding the grants, income for the year was £31,877, which was a small increase of £2,144 over the previous year. As there were shorter periods of closure this total increase was mainly due to hirings, increasing from £4,247 to £7,033. Rental income remained at just under £25,000 in 2021, with a combination of continued discounts given to tenants during the pandemic (2020-21) and the Stable Block being vacated near the end of 2020 remained the same, with a small decrease of £392.

However, due to a considerable increase of £20,731 in Total Expenditure from £24,922 to £45,653, this was the main reason for the change from a surplus of £14,811 to a deficit of £3,869. The main reason for the increases in expenditure was due to an increase of £17,021 from £2,838 to £19,859 in exceptional repairs and renewals. This significant increase was due to the refurbishment of the stable block after the departure of Thames Valley Police and making it available for a new tenant. There was in place an agreement with new tenants, Identity Hair and therefore these 'exceptional repairs' were considered as an investment for the future, which has resulted in these costs being recovered within the next three years.

The committee also decided to take advantage of the 'quiet periods' due to Covid, to carry out other premises costs and fire protection, with minimal disruption for those hiring and renting. In addition there was an increase in legal and professional costs due to a survey carried out on the upstairs of the stable block for a potential future tenancy and an increase of Covid related expenses due to being open for longer periods compared to 2020 and the need for added protection measures.

Despite the deficit in 2021, cash in hand and at bank on December 31st 2021 remains very healthy at £106,474, a decrease from £112,105. As stated in the ‘Notes to the Accounts’, depreciation is calculated using the 10% straight line policy for Property Improvements and the 20% reducing balance for Equipment.

I wish to record my sincere thanks to Tim Blightman for his continued support with the accounts and to Bob Minty who has once again given freely of his time, expertise and guidance in the compilation of these financial statements for 2021.

Due to the impact of Covid on the past two years re hirings, we have prepared an annual budget, with a 'break-even' of £10,000 of hirings, we are now using quarterly management accounts to monitor the overall performance.

Ian Germain

Hon. Treasurer

5 May 2022