

THE MERRY BELLS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
FOR THURSDAY 5th MARCH 2026 6pm AT THE MERRY BELLS COFFEE ROOM

Present:

Richard Barrett (vice chair and Parish Council rep) RB

Toby Newman (co-opted trustee) TN

Adrian Coates (co-opted trustee) AC

John Morrison (Gardening Club rep) JM

Faye Fox (Coffee morning and senior citizens rep) FF

Judy Barrett (Scouts and Guides rep) JB

Caroline Sheriff (Wheatley Society rep) CS

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Ian Germain, (acting chair and treasurer) sent his apologies

2. TO AGREE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 5TH FEBRUARY 2026

Agreed unanimously and approved for website

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THOSE MINUTES

- Update on being incorporated (TN)
TN spoke to charities commission – recommendation is to become a CIO. Quite complex with lots of work to be done as need to check for covenants, form new CIO then transfer assets over.
Aim is to have a vote on principle in doing this at AGM
 - ⇒ RB to contact solicitors about becoming CIO.
 - ⇒ RB to add vote in principle to AGM agenda

- Grit box (RB)
Parish council has found one for us and RB has sourced one and put it next to cycle stores
 - ⇒ RB & TN to move grit in (ideally this weekend as it will weight it down and prevent it being ‘borrowed’)

- Handyman to fix curtains and take on other work (AC)
AC has found someone possible, but needs to check with them regarding insurance etc
 - ⇒ AC to follow up

RB & JB have asked David at Wheatley Estates to see whether he would take it on as a managed property but haven’t heard back yet

 - ⇒ RB to follow up

- Removal of rubbish in backyard (AC)
In the past, would hire a van and take to tip. Chairs used to belong to Michael Heaton, who gave them to Brewin.
 - ⇒ RB to speak to Louis (Brewin) to say either he stores them or TN will speak to Windmill.

- ⇒ RB to take fridge and bike to tip.
- ⇒ RB to speak to Parish council about signs and rubbish in black bins.
- New locks.
Waiting on IG to check insurance policy to find out about door locks and ensuring we are covered for the current lock and will be covered for the new lock
- ⇒ Awaiting IG

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

IG was absent to give detailed report, but he had emailed RB and reported that all is on target and there are no unexpected issues.

5. MAINTENANCE UPDATE (AC)

- Flickering light was fixed.
- Cleaners have issue with refilling soap box – AC has sorted
- Outside telecoms box – cover has fallen off
 - ⇒ AC to investigate
- SSE replacing meter on Monday at 13:30 – AC to speak to IG to rearrange when hall is free and someone is in. Batteries not yet in use because need new meter.
UPDATE: SSE now doing meter 27th March 13:30.
 - ⇒ AC to attend
 - ⇒ RB to ensure hall is booked out and notify offices
- Heating in coffee room.
RB arranged a visit by Comley and Collier who are a larger company. They suggested that we need to review the whole heating / hot water set up in the light of solar panels, batteries and green technology. They also commented that the heating to the offices seems to be permanently on and relies on office users manually turning rads down/off. Gas bill does seem very high. Agreed that we start to plan for this (sourcing grants as appropriate) and that in the interim we should go with electric radiators and rewire in coffee room. Need to ensure that electric radiators have some sort of thermostat/timer to ensure they are not accidentally left on.
 - ⇒ IG to inform committee of Taylor's quote for electric radiators and ensure it has provision for timers/thermostatic control. Agree by email to proceed if it seems reasonable.
 - ⇒ JB to investigate remote Wi-Fi radiator valves for offices (and maybe kitchens/annex) which we can use to ensure office rads are not left on all the time.
 - ⇒ RB to arrange to get radiator in cleaner's cupboard disconnected.

6. IT UPDATE

- JB has set up central file store (using Microsoft SharePoint who provide free charity accounts) for documents and accounts. Should be easier to reconcile payments with bookings and ensure that all bookings are invoiced and paid for.
 - ⇒ All to contact JB if they would like access

7. CAR PARK UPDATE inc. Correspondence

All running smoothly. Identity Hair had mistakenly told clients that times have gone up to 3 hours, and RB has requested cancellation of a ticket because of this.

- IG to ensure that newsletter article mentions that it is PROVISIONALLY PLANNED for end March, but THIS IS NOT CONFIRMED UNTIL THE SIGNS HAVE CHANGED TO SAY 3 HOURS.

8. GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

Nothing significant

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AGM

- Agreed AGM 23rd April 2026 7:00pm
Agreed we would follow previous agenda plus add in CIO formation and commercial rentals
Agreed we would have management committee meeting directly after to elect chair.
- ⇒ RB to talk to Lucy Collinson about WI rep
- ⇒ TN to write to Alexander Stanier (Shotover estate) to confirm we can have their permission for commercial representation.
- ⇒ RB to add commercial rental to agenda
- ⇒ RB to add formation of CIO in principle to agenda
- ⇒ RB to check that IG is writing chairman's report (as it is for last year) and treasurer's report.
- ⇒ IG to ensure notice is in March/April Parish News
- ⇒ TN to prepare car park info should we get any questions at AGM; TN will act as spokesperson on this matter.
- ⇒ IG to ensure Chairman's report to acknowledges former committee (IG to check with Tim whether he wants to be publicly and personally thanked)
- ⇒ RB to put agenda out for AGM on external noticeboard 2 weeks before.

Office updates

Parish Office has no active lease – Ian is sorting.

- IG to continue arranging lease

Office 3 occupant has passed away. Lease ran out in Jan. Executor is clearing office. Somerville College are coming in next week to clear out. Will be available for rental soon

- RB to include on next committee meeting agenda.

Health and Safety discussion

- Fire alarms are regularly checked. Propose monthly health and safety rota to ensure that everything is in order and pick up on anything that might be broken / faulty.
 - ⇒ JB to do checklist and arrange rota
 - ⇒ AC to check PAT tests on electrical equipment
- Asbestos – a discussion took place about whether there is any asbestos in the building. No-one was aware of asbestos surveys or asbestos log.
 - ⇒ RB to check with Tim whether one has ever been done and if not, to contact AC to arrange survey
- Ladder use – when a fuse had tripped recently, the hirers got a ladder out of the cupboard and went up the ladder to reset it. There is no insurance to do this

- ⇒ JB to do sign to go on ladder cupboard to say 'Property of Merry Bells. Equipment to be used by authorised personnel only' or something similar.

Fees

JB has done some modelling based on last year's bookings. On first look, it seems that if we increase parties and commercial rates from £15/hour to £17/hour, we could decrease the rate for non-profit local clubs/societies to £8/hour and still have the same income.

This was agreed in principle as it is very much in line with the charitable objectives of the Merry Bells and also in line with what other halls in the area do.

- ⇒ JB to circulate figures for review.
- ⇒ RB to add fee review to next committee agenda

Cleaning overheads

Rental income barely covers cleaning costs. A discussion followed about the frequency of cleaning (currently 10 hours/week, with 2 hours every weekday morning regardless of how heavily the hall has been used)

- ⇒ RB to meet with cleaners and discuss current schedule.

Storage

Concern was raised about the health and safety issue of the tables being stacked all together at the end of the hall, and the fact that having everything stacked openly is leading to other items (e.g. foam mats) being left by regular users in that area. JB suggested we look at cupboards (c.f. the URC hall) which just take 6 tables each – would mean they are stored neatly and safely.

RB mentioned that he had found earlier notes regarding buying new tables and chairs, but it appeared that it was never followed though (maybe due to covid...)

JB mentioned that the large cupboard next to the ladder cupboard in the corridor seems to be very full of miscellaneous items – possibly Wheatley Archives, Parish Council, miscellaneous board games and boxes of random equipment. It was believed by other committee members that Wheatley Archives just had the cupboard under the stairs, so it was a bit of a mystery to whom all the items belong.

- ⇒ RB to talk to parish council about what is theirs in that cupboard and to suggest they store it in Parish Office, and to talk to Tim about history of the cupboard contents.
- ⇒ JB to get quotes for having cupboards like URC built
- ⇒ RB to investigate replacing tables and chairs (and possible grant to fund)

The meeting finished at 7:15

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: TBC 23rd April, then none in May.