As trustees, we must always be mindful that our charitable objective is to ensure the functioning and availability of the village hall for inhabitants' recreational & leisure activities.

THE MERRY BELLS MANGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

THURSDAY 2nd JULY 6.00pm in Coffee Room

AS TRUSTEES OF THE VILLAGE HALL DO WE:

- act within your powers
- act in good faith and only in the interests of the charity
- make sure you are sufficiently informed
- take account of all relevant factors
- ignore any irrelevant factors
- manage conflicts of interest
- make decisions that are within the range of decisions that a reasonable trustee body could make

Present

- Richard Barrett CHAIR (parish council representative) RB
- Ian Germain TREASURER (elected member) IG
- Fay Fox (coffee mornings and the elderly representative) FF
- John Morrison (gardening/produce association representative) JM
- Judy Barrett SECRETARY (guides and scouts representative) JB
- Stephanie Cox (WI representative) SC
- Michele Gregory (co-opted member) MG

Minutes recorded by: Judy Barrett (JB)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & CONFIRMATION THAT MEETING IS QUORATE*
   Apologies received from Caroline Sheriff (CS) - bookings secretary and Wheatley Society representative and Toby Newman (TN) – vice chair, elected member
   At least 4 trustees were present, so the meeting was declared quorate.
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
   FF, RB declared their interest as parish councillors - Wheatley Parish Council (WPC) rent their office from the Merry Bells
3. PROPOSAL FROM PARISH COUNCIL REGARDING STORAGE IN THE CAR PARK
   WPC (Alison Sercombe, Chair and Lucy Collinson, assistant clerk) presented proposal for a garage in the car park. The Parish Council are utilising temporary storage solutions (for maintenance equipment and fuel) and need a more permanent arrangement. They are on the waiting list for a unit at old London Road. They have been using the Lock Up, but this is not appropriate use of a listed building. They would also need access to electricity – the proposal is for temporary ready-made cycle store with in-built electricity. Width 7ft 4", length 10ft 11", Height 6ft 8". A secure electrical feed (at Parish Council's cost) would be needed from the Stables (Identity Hair) – Identity Hair have confirmed they are happy with this. Would also want security camera.

*at least 4 trustees present

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The following questions were raised:

Would a party wall agreement be needed? AS responded that WPC would check the legalities of this at their cost.

Is it definitely permitted development? AS agreed that WPC would obtain formal confirmation of this/necessary permissions from SODC at WPC's cost

Were other locations considered? AS responded that it is not permitted in the memorial garden and that neither Church Road Rec nor St Mary's Churchyard/garden have electricity.

Who would cover any additional insurance costs for storing fuel/equipment? AS responded that WPC would cover these costs, in addition to an additional sum for renting the space.

There were no further questions, so the committee voted on the proposal (RB & FF abstained from the vote)

The remaining committee members voted unanimously in favour of the proposal

- **Action RB to confirm decision in email to Parish Council, cc'ing committee**
- **Action JB to add to decisions log**

4. ANY URGENT MATTERS ARISING

   None

5. TO AGREE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 4th JUNE 2026

   One correction - Section 7. IG doing fire alarm testing not JM.

   - **Action JB to correct minutes**

6. BOOKINGS UPDATE

   - CS had emailed prior to the meeting to ask about reviewing deposits. It was agreed that all Friday/Saturday party bookings would automatically require a £200 deposit.
     - **Action JB to update website and terms and conditions**
   - JB reported that, compared with last year, bookings for the main hall were slightly up and that bookings for the coffee room were slightly down.
   - There is potential long-term booking for coffee room – CS is communicating with them
   - Following the damage to the coffee room fan during a party, the possibility of locking the coffee room (with a keysafe for the key) was discussed – will continue to monitor this

7. PREMISES UPDATE

   - Facilities management (TN)
     - **Action TN to update committee by email**
   - Forecourt update (RB)

     RB has been in correspondence with users, met with Andy Cooper & Louis Greenleaves. Plan to apply for council grant for them.
     - **Action RB to agree layout of chairs and approach WPC for grant**

     Smoking – the committee agreed to put signs up saying no smoking.
     - **Action RB to source signs and arrange for them to be put up**

     One of the flowerbed walls is sloping because of tree.
     - **Action RB to contact Tim O'Connor for survey and advice**
   - Maintenance issues (All)

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- **Action FF to chase up potential maintenance**

- Battery usage (CS)
  RB & CS met with Jon Gower from battery company – in progress. CS looking at tariffs
- Office 3 (IG)
  IG has met with David from Wheatley Estates. Small private office £570 pcm.
  Office 4 rental discussed. Will increase by 3.85% wef September.
  - **Action RB to email LC**
- Safeguarding
  The committee discussed their duty to safeguard young/vulnerable users of the Merry Bells. It was agreed that JB would act as designated safeguarding officer and would look at drafting a safeguarding policy
  - **Action JB to draft safeguarding policy to circulate**

8. IT UPDATE
   - Lock fitting -a new lock is planned to enable all hall/coffee room users to access via keypad code. Regular users will be given a permanent code valid for their booking days/times; one off users will be given a temporary code valid for their booking date and times only. Office users will be given a permanent code and the intercom will still work for them. The existing keycard system will become obsolete so Wheatley Estates will no longer need to hold a key.
     Key installation has been booked for August 13th – JB and RB will both attend to ensure correct functioning and will be on call until the end of August should any issues arrive. This should allow all systems to be in place by the time September regular bookings restart.
     JB will liaise with CS re informing bookers of new process, once it is all in place.
     It was agreed that the next newsletter article would refer to the new code system, but would not put any dates in as we want to be sure it works before telling everyone
9. FINANCE UPDATE
   - Electricity costs (CS)
     CS has been working with utility aid. Keen we move from SSE as customer service is poor.
   - Broadband renewal (RB)
     RB has spoken to BT. Have offered us double current speed at lower price. Will be switched onto OpenReach full fibre
     - **Action RB to continue to liaise with BT/Openreach re full fibre installation**

     RB meeting with David Harverson to work out how everything is working. Trying to find out who fitted broadband, ring cameras
     - **Action RB to continue to investigate installation of broadband and ring cameras**
   - Insurance renewal (JB)

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£2.2K agreed. JB to email insurers and ask them to forward invoice asap to IG

- **Action JB to forward invoice to IG for payment**

- Financial status

  IG circulated latest accounts which showed there were no major issues. The committee confirmed that the charity's aim should not be to make a profit, but to ensure that there are sufficient funds for 12 months running costs plus any anticipated major expenditure, alongside a contingency fund for unexpected maintenance

  Cleaning was discussed – MG & RB meeting with cleaners at Merry Bells in office.

  - **Action RB/MG to review cleaning rotas and costs**

10. CAR PARK UPDATE (RB)

    RB is to respond to ongoing objections and suggestions from a handful of residents. One overnight ticket was issued incorrectly. RB has written v strong letter.

    Weeds in car park – WPC will clear and charge us

    - **Action RB to consult with WPC to weed car park**

11. ACTIONS OUTSTANDING NOT ALREADY COVERED (RB)

    Action 66 – roles/responsibilities. SC will take on paying in cash and cheques

    - **Action IG to hand over to SC**

    Action 75 – coffee room electric heater cost and installation. £1250+VAT was approved

    - **Action IG to arrange installation**

    Actions 60, 63, 65, 67, 68, 70, 72, 74 , 81, 85, 86 were all reported as complete.

    All other actions ongoing

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (All)

    - Identity Hair would like to fit air conditioning. It was agreed in principle by the committee, but Identity Hair will need to approach SODC to confirm planning requirements planning and cover all costs.
    - FF has phone while RB is away in July/August
    - The involvement of other village organisations was discussed – the committee can vote on whether to include other village organisations so if anyone has any proposals, please bring them to a committee meeting
    - The website content was discussed
      - **Action SC to go through website in detail and email JB with any errors/discrepancies**

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: THURSDAY 3rd SEPTEMBER 6pm COFFEE ROOM

*at least 4 trustees present