

Silchester Village Hall Board of Managing Trustees.

Chairman's Report, 2011 -2012

Last November saw the first set of elections under the new terms of Governance adopted by the Annual General Meeting, when new Trustees were elected. As we will be electing a number of new Trustees in a few minutes, permit me to give you a resume of the membership of the current Board.

Valerie Hyde and Stuart Sinclair, both former Trustees, stood for election last year and brought invaluable experience and continuity to the new team. The other Trustees that were elected at that meeting were Shellie Dunham, Theresa Philpott, Kathryn McCrohan, Andrew Chandler, Ashley Watson, John Durrant, Terry Price, Neil Smithers and myself as Chairman. Richard Lerner agreed to continue as Treasurer only until a successor could be found as he was moving to the West Country, and we were delighted that Eamon McCardle subsequently agreed to be co-opted both as a Trustee and as Treasurer.

The Trustees co-opted Sue Pragnell as a Trustee specifically to represent and provide a link to the Parish Council. Ashley Watson kindly agreed to take on the role of Secretary.

Unfortunately, Terry Price felt that he had to resign in January due to health issues, and we all wish him well. Neil Smithers has also resigned during the year due to the pressure of other commitments, and of course Valerie Hyde's death deprives us all of her no-nonsense advice and many years of experience as a Trustee.

Stuart Sinclair has advised me that it is his wish to resign at this Annual General Meeting, and we thank him for his unstinting help and advice, and will miss his sage input and many years of experience.

John Durrant has also advised me that he wishes to resign at this meeting, and we thank him too for his contribution.

The new governance document provides for up to 12 Trustees, and also stipulates that each trustee may only serve for 3 years without offering him or herself for re-election. Further, at the Annual General Meetings for 2012 and 2013, the greater of either one third of the total, or three Trustees have to resign but can offer themselves for re-election. There will in fact be four vacancies, and so there is no need for any of the remaining trustees to resign and offer themselves for re-election this year.

Having talked about the Trustees, I must thank both Vivienne Hartshorn and Geoff Willmot for their hard work during the year. Vivienne continues to manage the bookings with her usual efficiency, and Geoff looks after the fabric of the building, keeping it clean and tidy. The Managing Trustees thank them both for their continued support and hard work.

One of the first tasks facing the Trustees was to consider the plans for extending and improving the Village Hall, in order that we can offer the sort of facilities expected in this day and age. The previous trustees had worked hard to produce a scheme, but since the commencement of that process, the economy has gone into recession, and funding such an ambitious scheme was considered to be

impractical. Accordingly the Trustees re-visited a scheme drawn up by Scott Dyer previously and with minor modifications the scheme was approved at a Special General Meeting held in July this year. That same meeting approved the sale of the land currently leased to the owners of "Woodrow", Mr and Mrs Michael Earl, and an offer has been accepted from Mr and Mrs Earl, subject to contract. We are currently awaiting fee quotations for the legal work, having complied with the requirements of the Charities Act in regard to professional valuation advice.

The sale proceeds will go a long way towards paying for the proposed extension and improvements, but there is still a shortfall to be met. To this end the Trustees have applied for grant funding from a number of sources, and have met with some success. However, we will still need to raise funds from private donors, and any contributions will be very gratefully received. We will shortly be implementing a new fund raising drive.

The work towards the redevelopment project has not however detracted from the routine management of the Village Hall. Unfortunately the Trustees had to increase the hire charges at the beginning of the year, as there had been no increase for several years. We remain very competitive in relation to nearby Village Halls, though it must be said that some offer better ancillary facilities than we are currently able to offer. This will be put right with the completion of the extension and refurbishment work.

Several people went on a fire prevention course earlier in the year, and one of the Trustees went to a fund raising seminar. Both proved very useful, giving valuable pointers.

The Village Hall continues to be well used, mainly by groups who use it on a regular basis during term time. Cherry Trees Nursery use the Hall every day during the week, and the Guides, Brownies and Rainbows meet once a week during term time. In addition, there are Dance Classes, Pilates and Zumba for the more energetic amongst us, and there is the Tuesday Group for Toddlers, and the Phoenix group for - well, let's just say they were toddlers once!

We have had no significant private party bookings for some time now, and the Trustees would very much like to encourage villagers - and indeed those from nearby - to start using the Hall again for private parties. Hopefully the new kitchen facilities we intend providing will attract more users.

There remains much to be done, but the Trustees have made a good start and have assumed what to many were unfamiliar roles, discharging them well and conscientiously. Valerie Hyde's close involvement will be missed, and Stuart Sinclair's retirement after so many years is well deserved. His help in the last year has been invaluable, and I thank him personally and indeed on behalf of all the Trustees.

We have four vacancies for Trustees, and would encourage anyone who feels that they have something to offer, and the time and energy to devote, to stand for election later in the meeting. We would particularly welcome any of the younger inhabitants of the village and who live in the Area of Benefit, to come forward with new ideas and proposals for how the Village Hall might be funded and used for the benefit of all in Silchester. It is a precious asset; we have a duty to look after it and hand it on to the next generation in a good state of repair, and offering modern facilities that fulfill the needs of its users. That is my objective as Chairman, and indeed is the objective of all the Trustees.

Jonathan Murdock

Chairman - Silchester Village Hall Managing Trustees.

26th November 2012