



Audlem Public Hall Committee Meeting – 16/10/2024

Meeting Minutes

1 Welcome

Stuart Furber, Adrian Farrow, Rachael Hodgkins, Robert Collins, Lorna Matthews, Ben Preston, Peter Stone, Cheryl Cottrell, Richard Furber, Phillip Baker plus guests/members of the public

2 Apologies

John Tilling, Derek Winskill, Chris Tipper, Joanna Allman, Russel Black, Kevin Mort

3 Minutes of AGM October 2023

SF had shared the published Minutes of last year's AGM both with the Committee, but also with members of the Public. SF proposed these to be a true and accurate reflection of the meeting, this was seconded by RC. No clarification was sought on any points.

4 Chairpersons Report

SF shared that he was pleased that our committee is continuing to work so well together, to move things forward in the best interests of the hall and our users.

SF summarised that it is now 2 years since we formed a new committee, he believes we have the key responsibilities covered and are making good progress in addressing some of the key initiatives for the Hall. SF thanks all committee members, who voluntarily give time, and for their continued support.

A point of note is that the new calendar system is available to members of the public, bringing much improved visibility of what is happening in the hall. This is part of a revamped website with updated content. There is also the facility for our user groups to publish key information about what they do, how to contact them and other such key information. SF encourages all our users groups to review the information available about them, and to contact us for any content updates. SF passes on huge thanks to Robert Collins for all his work on this, making visibility of our facilities and "what's on" at the hall much more accessible.

SF makes a special mention and thanks also to Derek Winskill ("Dez") who has taken the lead on facilities since Tony's planned retirement from the committee this time last year. With the support of our caretaker, Iain Findlay, Dez has achieved so much in the last 12 month - much of what they do are the kind of things that go unnoticed, until they aren't as expected and then become very noticeable, and typically are fundamental to the day to day running of the hall. So much of what Dez organises also contributes to the Health & Safety side of things, which Adrian will update on shortly.

SF updates of two longer running but important topics that are continuing to make positive progress – Adrian will update the meeting shortly about the Hall Charity status, and the latest on the changes we are making with the old Caretaker's Flat. SF passes his thanks to Adrian for his tenacious pursuit of progress, in the face of typically slow third-party organisations, with these fundamental issues that the hall has been facing for some time.

SF comments that it is so pleasing to see the level of usage in the hall, across all age groups and many different types of activities. There is something in the hall now every evening of the week, in addition to the regular daytime users that we have and special event hire. We had some new

community groups formed, taking advantage of the Social Franchise grant for 20 hours free room hire, with French Conversation and Community Table Tennis groups continuing to use the hall.

SF updates that the gym continues to have good membership numbers and contributes well to keeping the Hall Finances in good shape. Pre-empting the Treasurers report a little, we have planned for and are expecting to make a small loss in 2024 as we have upped the spending on capital projects. As we move forward with investing sensibly in our facilities and building maintenance, and with the general inflationary pressures of the past few years, in the longer term we may need to review our hire fees – neither of which have been increased for many years.

Finally, SF welcomes any feedback from our user groups – either this evening in the Questions agenda item, separately after the meeting or by follow up contact.

5 Treasurers Report

SF reports for Treasurer John Tilling, who has provided the following information:

The Hall finances for 2023 were very healthy, and showed a significant increase in reserves during the year, from £74,000 to £87,000.

This is partly due to a strong income stream (even after the fact that there was no income from the Flat), a well-controlled expenditure stream, and the fact that only about £7,000 was spent on capital items.

The result was that total reserves grew from £74,000 to £87,000.

The table shows a very summarised version of the overall figures.

This very positive performance is unlikely to be repeated in 2024, not least because a number of bits of equipment have had to be repaired or replaced, and a considerable cost has been incurred in work on the Flat to make it suitable to be included in the main fabric of the Hall.

2023 Funding

Income		
	Gym	£20,000
	Contract users	£33,000
	Casual hirings	£7,000
	Fundraising and Donations	£3,000
	Total	£63,000
Expenditure		
	Cleaning	£16,000
	Maintenance	£7,000
	Insurance	£3,000
	Utilities	£10,000
	Miscellaneous	£3,000
	Total	£39,000
Funds		
	Bfwd	£74,000
	(-) Expenditure left over from 2022	£4,000

	(+) Income during 2023	£63,000
	(-) Expenditure in 2023	£39,000
	(-) Capital and F+F spending	£7,000
	Cfwd	£87,000

AF and SF explain that a lot of the income for the hall comes primarily from the hiring of all the different rooms, all of which wouldn't be possible if it weren't for Lorna's excellent organisation and management of the different calendars. SF passes our thanks to Lorna for her hard work.

6 Health, Safety & Compliance Update

AF reports he is pleased to be able to report that there have been no reported incidents of injury during the last year. AF explains that some incidents have been logged – such as giving first aid to a person injured on the Cheshire Street Car Park and the ambulance service attending to give assistance to a member of the ADCA team who experienced a medical issue because they happened on or in the vicinity of the Hall, although these events did not arise as part of the operation of the Public Hall itself.

AF adds that other actions taken have including the installation of the protective foam to the pillar in the Main Hall, a replacement of the Stair Lift to the Snooker Room, adjustments of the fire doors to ensure smoke reduction, the removal of one of the round benches from under the veranda at the rear of the Annexe and positioning of the remaining two benches to ensure that the fire exit is not blocked. AF shares that the removed bench was donated to the Turnpike Field.

AF reports that Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans have been completed for 2 gym members and an Emergency Evacuation Plan has been implemented for the Snooker and Committee Rooms to ensure that those less mobile can exit the building safely.

AF further updates:-

- i. The Fire Alarm system has been formally tested and regular testing of the system is undertaken by Dez and Iain.
- ii. We have recently had a Fire Service safety inspection with no significant issues raised.
- iii. The lift in the Annexe is back in operation, having been serviced and the only issue is a technical one relating to the emergency phone in the lift which appears to have been disconnected during a recent telecoms upgrade, but that issue is in hand.
- iv. Asbestos was found in the kitchen walls during the work on the Flat and the asbestos was tested and safely removed by specialist contractors. The same inspector tested the ceiling of the balcony to confirm that there is no asbestos present to enable the necessary repairs can be carried out.
- v. The process of updating the contents of the first aid kits in the Hall and Annexe is underway.

AF adds that all of this is demonstrative of appropriate dealings and thanks to all Hall and Annexe users for their safe use of the building this year.

In terms of Compliance matters, AF updates as follows:-

- i. The Hall has up to date Music Licence, Premises Licence, Lottery Licence.
- ii. A new Safeguarding Policy has been prepared and implemented, AF passing his thanks to JA for her work on this.
- iii. The Management Committee has made two formal submissions to Cheshire East in response to consultations on the implementation of charges on the Cheshire Street car park and to the recent proposed variation of the Off-Street Parking Order to extend the charges to evenings and Sundays. The proposal is detrimental to the users of the Hall and would serve to disincentive to come to the community hall. By making these submissions, the Committee hope to gain any concessions available.

7 Charitable Status Update

AF reports and updates the current and up to date position of the application to register the new Charitable Incorporated Organisation, as follows:-

- i. This has been a long and painfully slow process. Our solicitor has accepted that there have been a number of delays at his end, but I am very pleased to be able to report that we are now on the brink of achieving the transfer from the original unincorporated Charity to the Charitable Incorporated Organisation which will take over the Hall and Annexe.
- ii. Final drafts of the Novation Agreement (the document which transfers the benefit and obligation of the money received from the BLF for the construction of the Annexe) and the Vesting Deed (which is the document formally transferring all of the assets and liabilities of the unincorporated Charity to the CIO) were received yesterday (15th October 2024). AF expects to receive the documents ready for signature within the next few days. These, together with the Novation Letter which is the agreement between the CIO and the BLF is also ready for signature.
- iii. Once those documents have been signed, we can then begin to operate under the CIO and the original unincorporated charity can be dissolved.
- iv. The structure of the CIO will enable us to operate much more smoothly and very importantly, the CIO, rather than individual Trustees, will be able to enter into contracts, etc.
- v. The Trustees of the CIO are presently John Tilling, Janet Morgan, Monique Hollinshead and Adrian Farrow. Roger Millns stepped down as a Trustee during the early part of this year. AF records our thanks on behalf of the Management Committee to Roger for his guidance and help as a Trustee over the years.
- vi. Once the CIO is fully operating, the Management Committee will seek nominations for additional and new Trustees.

8 The Flat – Change of Use Update

AF updates and reports on the current and up to date position of our application to change the use of the Flat from a residential dwelling to becoming an integral part of Audlem Public Hall, as follows:

- i. Our application was granted by Cheshire East on 8th November 2023.
- ii. The application to remove the Flat from the Council Tax Register and to have it rated as part of the Public Hall (which benefits from a concessionary 100% business rate discount) was submitted shortly afterwards to Cheshire East, who referred it to the Valuation Office in December 2023.
- iii. Despite chasing progress on a number of occasions and resorting to the complaints procedure, the Valuation Officer finally came back to me in about April 2024 to say that he was not satisfied that the Flat was not still a residential property.
- iv. In order to demonstrate that that Flat is now used as part of the Public Hall, a programme of work has been undertaken. The kitchen has been converted to a cleaner's hub, the middle room is now a storage area for exhibition boards and glassware. The front room has been allocated to the Audlem Theatre Group with fixed rails and shelving for costume storage, as opposed to previously storing in the youth room and around the stage. Upstairs, it is planned that the bath and shower will be removed, leaving only the toilet and hand basin, which can be accessed from the Committee Room or other areas of the Flat. On the top floor, one small bedroom has been fitted with shelving for general storage and there is now a filing cabinet to house the archives

and documents. The middle former bedroom is Iain's workshop and store. The larger room has 3 walls of fitted shelving and houses the Theatre Group props and other equipment.

- v. A renewed application to remove the Flat from the Council Tax Register has been submitted with evidence to support it. The Cheshire East Council Tax Officer has confirmed that they are in touch with the Valuation office about our application and hopefully, the process will not now be protracted too far into the future.
- vi. The CE Council Tax Officer has agreed to suspend collection of the Council Tax due on the Flat until the New Year.

9 Audlem Public Hall Management Committee

- a) SF enquired as to whether any of the existing Committee wished to resign from their positions. There were no resignations to record.

- b) SF therefore moved on to the Election of Officers:-
 - i. Chair, AF would like to nominate SF to stay on in this role. There were no other nominations received and no opposition to this, with SF confirming he would be happy to stay on in the role. LM seconded the nomination and SF was voted as Chair by the Committee and all present.
 - ii. Vice-Chair, SF would like to nominate AF to stay on in this role. There were no other nominations received and no opposition to this, with AF confirming he would be happy to stay on in this role. PB seconded the nomination and AF was voted as Vice-Chair by the Committee and all present.
 - iii. Treasurer, SF would like to nominate JT to stay on in this role. There were no other nominations received and no opposition to this, with SF reporting that JT had stated he would be happy to stay on in this role. RF seconded the nomination and JT was voted as Treasurer by the Committee and all present.
 - iv. Secretary, SF would like to nominate RH to stay on in this role. There were no other nominations received and no opposition to this, with RH confirming she would be happy to stay on in this role. AF seconded the nomination and RH was voted as Secretary by the Committee and all present.
 - v. Facilities, SF would like to nominate DW and CC to stay on in this role. There were no other nominations received and no opposition to this, with CC confirming she would be happy to stay on in this role, and SF reporting that DW stating he would be happy to stay on in the role. RH seconded the nomination and DW and CC were voted as Facilities by the Committee and all present.
 - vi. Health, Safety & Compliance, SF would like to nominate AF to stay on in this role. There were no other nominations received and no opposition to this, with AF confirming he would be happy to stay on in this role. CC seconded the nomination and AF was voted as Health, Safety & Compliance by the Committee and all present.

- c) Nominations for new Committee members
SF proposed that Peter Stone be nominated as a committee member, having previously acted as ADCA representative on the Committee. SF proposed that PS' role on the committee would be to assist with IT and Fundraising. PS was happy to accept this role, and the nomination was seconded by RC. There were no further nominations for new Committee members.

- d) Renewal/Re-elect of all other committee members.
SF confirmed that in view of there being no resignations, all other committee members were re-elected to the Committee.

SF noting that recently Kate Down had stepped down from Audlem Parish Council, and therefore from her role as representative on this Committee. It is recorded therefore that this Committee currently does not have a representative from either Hankelow or Audlem Parish Councils.

AF noted that once the CIO takes over, there would be prescribed Trustees and the structure of the Committee is a matter to be determined by the Trustees, for now the Committee is structured appropriately.

10 Questions from the audience

- (1) Concerns raised over the safety of turning on/off the automatic mechanism of the Hall doors. It is felt that when turned “on” if someone is stood behind the door, it won’t open and this would not be safe for any disabled user. AF explaining the previous problem encountered with the door where the motor had burned out. The diagnosis was that this had been caused by pulling the door open when in automatic mode. AF updates that it has now been repaired, although the Committee is still in discussion with the manufacturer as to this issue. As a precautionary measure, the Committee feel it appropriate to have the automatic mechanism turned off, with users being responsible for turning it on when required. AF said that the signs are a temporary measure so that the mechanism is not broken again. The Committee hope to have more information about the use of the automatic mechanism from the manufacturer in short course.
- (2) A question was raised from the audience as to the correct naming of the original Hall building, distinguishable from the new part, being the Annexe. Reference was made to naming on hall booking forms, and how the Hall is referred to in advertising by user groups. Minutes were produced of a Committee meeting on 27th September 2017 where the naming “the Town Hall” had been agreed. The member of public feels it is important to use the original name in keeping with the Hall’s historic standing in Audlem and feels that this would benefit the advertising and would bring in an increased custom base. SF and AF responding to thank the member of public for the question and feedback, that the Committee would consider this and review and correct where appropriate.
- (3) A question was raised as to the correct address for Audlem Public Hall, as opposed to the Annexe. The member of public pointed out that the Hall address is “12” Cheshire Street, and the Annexe is “12a” Cheshire Street, however the signage in the Hall only lists “12a”. The Committee would look into this and ensure the correct address was used on signage throughout the Hall.
- (4) A question was raised for keyholder users of the Hall in relation to requirements of locking/unlocking the main door into the Hall, the member of public sought clarification that they could just use the locking mechanism and didn’t need to use the automatic mechanism settings. LM clarifying that this is correct, the automatic setting can be turned to “on” if the users wish to use the automatic-pads.
- (5) A member of public wished to pass their thanks on to LM for all of her help with Hall bookings and any user enquiries, as well as passing their thanks to JT for his help, efficiency in responding to them.

SF adding his thanks to Geoff Stretch, who continues to look after the snooker room bookings and access, as well as keeping the outside areas tidy and his general continued support to the Hall.

Meeting closed at 8.20pm. With thanks for everyone's attendance.

Next Committee meeting scheduled for 20th November 2024 at 7.30pm in the Small Hall.

R. Hodgkins
16/10/2024