

**Minutes of the meeting held by Hamsey Parish Council as Sole Trustee of
Beechwood Hall and Rural Park**

Registered Charity Number 206200

**Meeting held virtually on Google Meets on Wednesday 5th May 2021 at
7.15pm**

This meeting was not open to the public

Present: Cllr T d'Arienzo, Cllr K McBrown, Cllr C Henry, Cllr C Perkins, Cllr J Redwood and N Kinch – Clerk to Hamsey Parish Council

Apologies: Cllr S Fleming & Cllr C Croft

Meeting began at 7.15pm

1. Chair thanked everyone and welcomed all to the meeting.
Apologies as above.

2. The minutes from the last meeting of Hamsey Parish Council as Sole Trustee of Beechwood Hall & Rural Park held virtually on Thursday 4th February 2021 were agreed and signed as a true record.

3. Chair thanked Cllr Henry for all of the hard work and time spent on looking into ideas to increase the hall's rental potential. The proposal to increase the rental income to the hall was discussed (circulated prior to the meeting). Cllr Henry led the discussion and thanked the efforts of the Beechwood Hall Working Group members in offering suggestions to the proposal. The main objectives are to increase rental by way of offering suitable packages for different events. Potential hirers for weddings would have three packages to choose from – Gold, Silver and Bronze, as detailed in the proposal for different levels of hire and different set prices would be available for evening social hire of weekdays and weekends. The proposal includes the minimum party booking to be for 3 hours to allow time for set up, take down and cleaning. This is to be reviewed in time if necessary and increased to 4 hours minimum if required.

Other local hall pricings were looked at in preparation for this proposal.

Additional add ons to be discussed with the Cleaning Contractor i.e. offering additional cleaning services for hirers at a set price to be included as an option. This service will be dependent on the Cleaning Contractor's availability.

Queries were raised as to how we can get the right balance of local residents hiring the hall for events when most weekends seemingly are booked by regular hirers especially in the summer months. Weddings are the main income for the hall and as Cllr McBrown stated, have been at times turned away due to regular hirer's classes having been pre-booked some months in advance. The ability to book so far in advance for regular hirers shall be reviewed and the suggestion of 3 or 6 months as a cap to book in advance shall be reviewed, particularly over summer months when at the height of wedding season. Chair mentioned that neighbouring village halls have no regular hirers for events such as exercise classes over the

weekends to allow for larger events like community events, weddings, corporate events and birthday parties to go ahead. This bookings pattern has mostly been determined by the number of annual events booked in advance, which precludes regular hirers from booking regular slots.

Suggestion to place an advert on Facebook requesting if any local residents wish to book the hall for events to get in touch, with a reminder from Cllr Perkins that we need to be mindful that the hall's facilities are for all to use and encourage residents to book.

Gathering of evidence by way of feedback on bookings through the Hall Master Booking System, which can relay information on potential hirers looking at availability, website hits, phone calls and email enquiries shall be needed to further discussions.

Cllr McBrown at this point temporarily left the discussion to show a couple that had travelled from London, the hall for a wedding then returned after 5 minutes.

Cllr Redwood asked if there are any volunteers for carrying on the annual Jumble Sales after the previous organisers who have now moved out of the area. Chair explained that Sally our Hamsey Parish Newsletter Editor has several fundraising events organised but as ever volunteers are desperately needed to be able to run these events. Sally is also Chair of the PTA at Hamsey School so will ask for parent volunteers to help, and we hope that members other of the community will come forward to help.

Proposal agreed by all on the pricing suggestions put forward by Cllr Henry but the add ons shall need to be discussed firstly with Jane, the Cleaning Contractor before adding to the options.

Questions on the couple viewing the hall were asked of Cllr McBrown to ascertain their interest after the viewing. Cllr McBrown stated they seemed interested and remarked how modern the hall appeared but were slightly disappointed that the hall did not offer round tables. Suggestion to add on the website links to companies that hire furniture for weddings and events.

Cllr Henry stated that the wording on the booking form was flagged up in the Beechwood Hall Working Group meeting and suggested that the terms be reviewed to state that local persons aged 18 and over can hire the hall for their child's birthday parties but any person wanting to hire the hall specifically for an 18th birthday party shall not be able to do so. The wording on the booking form is to be revised and changed to reflect this.

Cllr Henry also explained from the Beechwood Hall Working Group meeting, Keavy's suggestion in thinking about the market potential and to gain as much information from hirers looking to book and the possibility of marketing further on paid sites such as Google advertising to increase rental opportunities. Advertising far and wide would be of great benefit in show casing the hall and the proposal to set aside £1000 from the grant funding received by Beechwood Hall to increase the revenue was laid out, providing that the website is made up to date in readiness for greater exposure. Suggestion would be to contact a local Social Media company in Lewes, to help bring the Beechwood Hall Facebook page up to date with current information. This was originally set up by Chair for the Wedding Fayre in October 2020 but has not been updated in some months now. The Social Media company would be paid to update information most likely for a couple of hours bi-weekly. This could however be incorporated into a new Hall Manager role for someone with the relevant skill set. Chair explained a recent post she had placed on Facebook requesting information on Electrical Car Charging Points, in which a local resident who specialises in training social

media has offered help with choosing an EV charger. Chair agreed to ask the resident about the social media role at the same time.

Cllr Henry stated that Keavy had mentioned in the previous meeting that a call out for previous hirers could be placed on the Facebook page so their photos from events held at the hall could be placed on the page for everyone to see and a link to Beechwood Hall website might be added to increase revenue.

Brochures were discussed and agreed to investigate the hiring of a Graphic Designer to produce an A4 brochure for viewers at the hall to see and a link with QR code available at the hall and on the website, for potential hirers to add their email addresses to and then download a more comprehensive PDF version.

Agreed in principle to budget £1000 for Marketing and to get three tenders for the Social Media and Graphic Designer Companies with quotes for a future meeting.

4. Management roles were discussed by Chair informing all that Cllr McBrown had decided to relinquish the role of Bookings Manager after being in the volunteer post since January 2019. Cllr McBrown will focus on a more strategic route within Beechwood Hall and work towards becoming Chair of the Beechwood Hall Working Group with support from Cllr Henry. A new Hall Manager role that shall focus on revenue, sales and converting bookings into enquiries shall be advertised. This shall be a paid role, offering 5/6 hours per week, at times unsociable hours, answering email and phone enquiries with the use of the Hall Master Booking System to aid the task, showing people around for viewings and receiving feedback on the hall and booking process in the hope of raising the hall's profile and revenue. A background or interest in marketing and knowledge of social media platforms would be of benefit. Chair explained that the new Hall Manager contract would supersede both Bookings Manager volunteer role and Hall Booking and Website Management Services role- which is not a stand-alone service role. At present the Hall Booking and Website Management service provider receives £200 monthly in payment for services as a contractor to Beechwood Hall and it would not be financially viable to support both roles, so therefore it was agreed it would be in the best interests of the hall to consolidate the two roles in to one.

Chair explained that we are as a group appreciative of Keavy's hard work and ideas to date. Chair expressed her thanks to Keavy in her contributions to the hall and the Working Group meetings and urged all to be objective from a business point of view, acknowledging this is not always easy when dealing with a friend, family member or neighbour.

Cllr McBrown declared a Conflict of Interest and abstained from voting. Cllrs Redwood, Henry and Perkins all agree that Chair shall deliver the news tomorrow, 6th May 2021 to issue the contracted one month's notice to terminate the service contract. All agreed on the caveat that the new role shall be defined as a clear role of Hall Manager with new responsibilities and a wider remit.

5. The addition of a welcome sign was discussed by Cllr McBrown and Cllr Henry. This was also discussed at the Working Group Meeting, whereby the suggestion to have a fun, colourful sign to welcome visitors but to also sign post them to the use of the facilities would be a good idea. Examples would be to use the recycling bins, dogs on leads. A heritage sign

shall be investigated once the All Weather Access Path has been installed to give more details about the Environment, Wildlife and Heritage of Beechwood Hall.

Rose Baker, Reception/ Year 1 teacher at Hamsey Primary School has agreed to ask the children to create some lovely posters about Beechwood Hall to be displayed on the grounds. All in favour of a welcome sign to create a community feel and responsibility to visitors to look after the grounds they are free to enjoy. Cllr Henry mentioned that signposting people to the facilities was brought up at the last Working Group meeting and the potential to increase the rubbish facilities or options could be explored further to deter waste being left on site. Cllr McBrown stated that there have been a few regular repeat offenders of the 'Dogs on a lead' ruling at the Hall and could they potentially receive a warning letter. This was discussed in great detail and agreed that a draft letter be written and circulated for potentially three different templates and actions. The letter would need to be mindful of tone and aimed at appealing to said person to follow the rules and hopefully resonate with the sense of community spirit. Punitive action was also discussed with ways of warning repeat offenders. Chair to write a draft letter and incorporate the need for compliance i.e. health reasons, children playing etc but also to highlight the need to have dogs under control at all times especially as the grounds are evolving with the new facilities now on offer and the soon to be all weather access path. All agreed in principle, Cllrs McBrown and Henry to get three quotations to share at a future meeting.

6. Cllr Henry shared with all the Safeguarding Policy she has been working on – circulate prior to the meeting. The new policy shall run alongside the current Beechwood Hall Children and Vulnerable Person's Policy to ensure all protection measures are in place. Cllr Henry has liaised with Action in Rural Sussex to receive information and a template for the Policy proposed. All Trustees would be required to receive training carried out by professionally qualified, Cllr Henry and then sign the policy as responsible individuals but not be held accountable according to the policy's regulations. The policy would then be added to the website, whereby hirers would be required to provide their own policies or adopt this policy ahead of hiring the hall. Chair suggested that from a Vulnerable Persons point of view perhaps it would be best if all hirers had a similar policy to ensure all are protected. All agreed in principle to adopt the policy after training has been given.

7. Cllr McBrown explained the details for the Parish Children's Christmas Party due to be held on Saturday 11th December. Two entertainers so far have been contacted for quotes, one being Sally Edwards and her Puppet Company run with her husband. Sally has quoted £300 for an hour. Cllr McBrown has also contacted a second entertainer that performs magic tricks and is awaiting a quote back.

Expenditure was discussed for food in previous years and Clerk explained the donation jar normally recouped the money spent on food.

Chair explains reservations on holding the party like in previous years and suggests a different format with Covid measures in mind, to keep social interactions if possible to a minimum. Attendees would enjoy a puppet show or something similar whilst remaining seated with their household/families, snacks would be provided such as Pringles, popcorn and a refillable drink to avoid food waste and alleviate the need for additional party tableware and wastage that brings. After the show, the children and their parents/carers could assemble outside to see Father Christmas arrive on his sleigh and hand out gifts. Cllr Henry suggests show casing the new path if possible by having a light show for all to enjoy.

All agreed for Cllr McBrown to receive three quotes and then discuss in more detail at the next meeting.

8. The proposed Community Day event on September 5th 2021 was discussed in detail. Chair explained the concept is for the community to have the opportunity to reconnect post Covid and have an afternoon of enjoyment. Low key and community led is felt the best approach due to volunteer help and previous experience of running events such as the Hamsey Fayre. Clerk passed on Cllr Fleming’s ideas regarding the Village Day from the phone call held this morning. After discussion it was felt better to have a low key event, welcoming people to bring their own picnics on the day, with the addition of a dog show if this could be organised and an art sale of local artists’ work giving a donation to the hall for any sale made, asking Hamsey School PTA if they’d like to run a bar and the Church group if they’d like to, as in previous years sell teas, coffee and cake. Games on the field would be very welcome and also any Environmental Group talks that Cllr Fleming would be happy to arrange. Cllr Fleming had suggested a local band and this could be arranged but if no availability speakers with back ground music could be played. All very mindful that great events need an army of volunteers which is always tricky to gain. Cllr Henry suggested that the advertising be kept to the locality and that branding of the day be clear as to not invite people for a full day of festival activities when this is not what is planned.

9. Chair discussed the idea of installing an Electrical Car Charging Point at Beechwood Hall. Chair explains this is in the early stages and there are various options to look at. Some companies offer to crowd fund the venture whereas others charge upwards of £20,000 on the basis the expenditure is recouped over time. Cllr Perkins mentioned that in a Rail meeting, Network Rail had mentioned the increase in need for Electrical Car Charging points and in line with the Government’s pledge to reduce carbon emissions this is something that could be added to the review of the Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish. Chair will gather more information and get a proposal ready for another meeting.

10. Future hall expenditure was discussed. Chair explained this shall likely roll into future meetings as it is always best practice to try and forecast in advance any expenditure and factor this into the budget if possible. Cllr Redwood asked to have some more information on what the budget for the hall is and expenditure calculated for the year. This shall be something to work towards and with the help of the Hall Master Booking System soon to be up and running, the hope shall be that more information can be collected on the break -down of hall bookings which shall in time potentially expand the financial template currently used. Cllr Henry suggested adding in the Marketing budget of £1000 for this financial year to incorporate the increase in revenue through advertising and creating a brochure with a Graphic Designer. All agreed.

Chair thanked all for attending the meeting.
Meeting then ended at 21.36pm.

Minutes by N Kinch – Clerk to Hamsey Parish Council

Chairperson.....