

# **BADLESMERE LEES AND HALL COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Tuesday, 31 January 2024**

Present were Chris Moore (Chair), Sue Earl (Secretary), Steve Burt, Ian Earl, Gareth Fulton, Fred Gregory, Charlie Kirby, Ben Pullen, Tom Sisley.

N.B. Meeting began at 6.30 pm, and the last part was affected by a power outage.

## **1 Apologies.**

1.1 Dave Austin, Rick Blackman.

## **2 Approval of minutes**

2.1 The minutes for the November meeting were approved.

## **3 Matters arising (numbers refer to entries in the November minutes)**

- 3.1 3.1 No actions to report concerning the following items in the November minutes: constructing broom cupboards, checking for asbestos, arranging an electrician; the posts bordering the A251 and the tracks (though see 11.2 below).
- 3.2 3.1 IE contacted KCC PROW seeking a replacement map and offering to renovate the footpaths cabinet. PROW replied saying they are currently in consultation with The Ramblers Association and a joint decision on such cabinets and maps is due shortly.
- 3.3 3.1 A replacement toilet seat has been purchased and fitted.
- 3.4 4.3 The committee agreed that transfer of funds to a high interest rate account will be of little benefit as the funds in question are likely to be spent fairly quickly this year.
- 3.5 7.3 A prioritised list of projects has been drawn up and included in an update of the Reserves Policy. The list will be continually revised during the renovation work for what is encountered may result in changes to the priority or the inclusion of new jobs.
- 3.6 8.3 DA and IE provided examples of suitable 'Defibrillator' signage. The committee agreed to go ahead with whatever DA & IE choose, noting that the funding will come from that still remaining from the fund-raising quiz held in 2016.
- 3.7 8.4 The groundwork team currently at The White House may be used for the work at the village hall, and then be used for erecting the post on the layby. (CM, SB to liaise).
- 3.8 8.5 SE still to report back on whether funding from the North Downs AONB is possible.
- 3.9 8.6 The owners of the sports equipment have been informed of the committee's view.
- 3.10 9.2 CM is still pursuing the village hall getting CIO status.
- 3.11 11.4 Research found that refurbished meters often soon suffer the same problem as the existing meter. A new meter will cost ~£200, and there will installation costs. The new meter would also require new plastic cards for topping up, each possibly 30p to buy. IE suggested only cards of £5 denomination be purchased as the current tariff will end in April and a big hike in charges are to be expected. IE to go ahead with the purchase of a new meter and associated cards, and arrange the meter's installation.

## **4 Accounts**

- 4.1 2023 Accounts. Draft versions of the summaries and bank reconciliations have been produced and will be forwarded to committee members very soon. Independent checking of the accounts will take place before the AGM in May, after which they will be published on the website.
- 4.2 The current balances in the four accounts (as at 29 Jan 2024) are:  
BPH: current = £2 152.29, reserve = £35 091.15;  
BLPC: current = £6 055.29, reserve = £3 308.27.
- 4.3 IE requested permission to change the name of the bank account(s) of the Badlesmere Lees Preservation Committee. This is just a tidying up of what appears to be simple historic typos: on the paying books for the current account #00550124 Badlesmere is spelt with two 'd's, and when logged in online the reserve account #95104941 is truncated to BADLESMERE LEES BR rather than the expected BADLESMERE LEES PR. The committee unanimously agreed that the changes (corrections) should take place.
- 4.4 The 100 Club: Tickets seem to be selling more slowly than usual though it was noted that LB has recruited at least three new members. The death of Mary Moore will be sorely felt as she used to buy at least ten tickets for her family. An inconclusive discussion took place on how to get non-residents (of the hamlet) or users of the lees, e.g. dog-walkers, to join. An entry in the Parish Magazine was suggested (CM to write).
- 4.5 Village Hall Hire Fees. The document that IE had forwarded to members prior to the meeting which showed that the income from hiring out the hall *and from fund-raising events* falls short of the fixed and variable costs of maintaining the hall by about £250 per year was discussed. The calculations excluded expenditure on new items and any renovation or refurbishment that was undertaken (all financed from the reserves). Compared to other local halls Badlesmere charge less, sometimes considerably less, but this is set against our also having fewer facilities. Furthermore, the hire fees we charge have not kept up with inflation. It was agreed that:
- a) Hourly rate to be increased from £8 to £10/£12 (resident vs non-resident),
  - b) regulars could still get a discount (hourly rate = £10 if a small non-resident group),
  - c) a two-tier charging rate was appropriate, at the Booking Manager's discretion, to distinguish between large and small groups,
  - d) to introduce a flat rate for a nominal 5-hour party hire so hirers do not need to work out exactly how many hours they want (retaining the 8-hour charge for a 24-hour hire),
  - d) to charge for the use of the kitchen, i.e. hobs/ovens/Burco: a flat fee of £20,
  - e) separately charging for use of tables and chairs (a definition of a large group) was not to be done,
  - f) resident refers to people in Badlesmere and Leaveland,
  - g) permanent use of storage facilities by regular users would incur £10 per month fee, when the store becomes wholly theirs,
  - g) commercial hirers would be charged at rates determined at the time of the enquiry.

## 5 Safety

- 5.1 The safe routes externally from the rear emergency exits will be completed once the renovations have taken place. (One of the exits may be relocated.) Clearing of the routes has already begun – see 6.6 below.

- 5.2 Safety. DA pointed out that the emergency signs in the village hall do not match current recommended practices (down vs. up arrows, etc). These to be updated when the refurbishment is completed in case the exits are changed. DA to determine what is needed.

## **6 The Hall**

- 6.1 RB is in the process of revoking the claim for subsidence. The village hall will remain insured with Hiscox through CAS at least for this year.
- 6.2 SB gave an update of the refurbishment works. The hall floor and joists beneath have been replaced the full length of the main hall (but not yet under the stage) and for a distance of about 2m into the hall. This has enabled the floor to be raised ~20mm reducing but eliminating the slope. Replacing the sole plate, the next task, may solve this issue. The next stage will be continued from the outside with the removal of the corrugated iron cladding to enable access to the wall timbers. Some have been taken off, and replaced, already to ascertain the size of the job. The stage will need to be removed where it is against the south-facing wall.
- 6.3 Discussion then ensued on whether to sacrifice this part of the stage, or all of the stage, as it is rarely used. This would allowed the construction of cupboards in its place (or perhaps just to a depth of 2m) alleviating the shortage of storage space (though losing the three, large, under-stage storage trolleys). Many considered that this modification would cause the hall to lose much of its heritage and character. SB showed plans that included the loss of the stage on the right (when looking at it) and the gaining of access to the toilets so removing the need for a corridor which in turn released space for more toilets. His plan had four ordinary toilets and a wheelchair accessible toilet, a widened door from the main hall (the current route to the toilets) with storage space and the emergency exit adjacent to the kitchen. IE suggested retaining the stage in its entirety but having the left side floor hinged to allow the storing of the tables and chairs trolleys there. If the whole stage was need these would need to come out but occasions when the stage was need would most likely be when the tables and chairs could be moved or would be needed anyway.
- 6.4 SB said that while renovating the wall timbers, insulation should be inserted between the cladding and the tongue-and-groove inner wall. It would then make sense to insulate the ceiling/roof. Removing the roof would be expensive and a massive undertaking, so he suggested plasterboard, with integrated insulation and a vapour barrier, be attached to the underside of the ceiling. This would have the added effect of sealing off the gaps that exists in the ceiling where debris rains down from time to time. CM pointed out that the plaster is hygroscopic and the possibility mould growth would result was high.
- 6.5 All the above is food for thought and will need further discussions and decisions, but did not stop the planned work on the south wall which will begin next week.
- 6.6 Outside, clearing of the vegetation, rubble and rubbish between the hall and the fence bordering Colleys Cottage, and between the hall and the copse/The Old Rectory border, has begun (SB's men). Also the digging to find the soakaway for the guttering has started, and the blocked main drain has been cleared. A bonfire has been placed on the carpark, and an 8-yard skip is to be ordered.

## **7 The Lees**

- 7.1 Speed calming measures for the north track – signage. SB and CM to liaise.
- 7.2 UK Power Networks: Re-routing of the electricity power line near Ivy Cottage has been halted by residents as the planned work which included going under the north track would require a new pole to be placed on the Lees. Residents thought this to be an unnecessary and unsightly addition and if any lines were to be laid underground this should be extended across as much of the lees as possible. CM has written to the Estate to ascertain their opinion and possible input, and is awaiting a reply.
- 7.3 Track repairs. GF has yet to forward details of the cost of the work that was carried in on the north track in August 2023, and no suggestions on how the costs will be met. Further work has been identified as relatively urgent – GF to get a quote from Andrew Wilcock – again with no suggestion on how these new costs will be met.
- 7.4 The Spring Clean-up has been scheduled for Saturday, 23 March, beginning at 9.00am. In addition to the usual collecting of branches brought down by winter storms and any pruning required, the team will need to tackle the nettles, brambles, etc near the electricity pole opposite Ivy Cottage and by the edge of the woodland in the south east corner, which may require an extra day. Concern was expressed at the state of the woodland, and, in particular, at a tree that is unstable near perimeter fence and public footpath. Investigation and possible action will take place during the Spring Clean-up. CM also to inform the Estate.

## **8 Start-of-year decisions and Coming events**

- 8.1 Dates of committee meetings. Tuesdays (the first in the month not available) were preferred over Mondays (only the third in the month available). The frequency was left at nominally 4 meetings a year, but extras will be added if deemed necessary.
- 8.2 Mowing of the lees. It was agreed to continue with Ben Bowles as contractor. The south end of the lees is to be included in the first cut (in the past it was excluded).
- 8.3 Mowing the verge by the Leavemere bungalows: CK agreed to continue doing this.
- 8.4 TS agreed to continue his mowing of the grass at the front of the village hall, and will add the rest once it has been landscaped. TS will also put the waste/recycling bins out.
- 8.5 SE is prepared to continue cleaning the hall (which will include replacing the bag in the dog waste bin). The committee welcomed this.
- 8.6 D-Day 80 (6 June) – to be discussed at the next meeting.
- 8.7 10k Run 2024. SB proposed the postponement of this year's 10k Run as more should have been done before now to promote it. By having it a biennial event (i.e. once every two years) it may be viewed as 'special' and hopefully better supported. Agreed.

## **9 Governance**

- 9.1 IE has updated the three main Policy documents, and the new versions were ratified by the committee. SE remains the named person with safeguarding responsibilities. CM is now the Data Protection Officer.

- 9.2 The Reserves Policy has been rewritten to remove matters past and includes new balances for the current accounts at the start of the financial year (1<sup>st</sup> Jan), namely £2500 (BPH) and £1500 (BLPC).

## **10 Crime**

- 10.1 Concern was expressed over reports from residents, in the last few weeks, of potential thieves being chased off properties and of sightings of strangers seemingly casing the Lees area. Residents have been told to keep a look out and report suspicious activities to the police.
- 10.2 CM has been in conversation with the local PCSO, PC Gary Morris. One of the laybys on the A251 will be added to the possible locations of a mobile speed cam team. The local Speed Watch manager is Nicole Martin.

## **11 AOB**

- 11.1 CK requested that 5-6 posts be bought for him to position alongside the south track to prevent vehicles crossing the lees, which has been an issue lately. Agreed.
- 11.2 Several members are still expecting the mound at the base of the village sign to be removed. However, since daffodil bulbs have been planted (and snowdrops about to be) the removal will not be arranged until after Spring. Others favoured its staying, but visible stones should be removed and grass seed sown.
- 11.3 The dog waste bin by the Footpaths map in front of the village hall is somewhat primitive and unsightly. IE to replace it with a new, plastic, dark green one.
- 11.4 The cabinet of the defibrillator in the telephone box at Falcon Farm receives power from Falcon Farmhouse. The cost is borne by the owner, Ms J Treasure, and the committee instructed the chair to send a 'thank you' letter to show its appreciation.

**The meeting ended at 9.00 pm.**

**The next committee meeting is scheduled for 6.30 pm, on Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> March, in the village hall.**