

Meeting Date: 6 June 2019, 7.30pm

Location: Campbell Room, Dumbleton Village Hall

Present: Jim Harmsworth Cowles (Chair)
Kate Hending (Vice Chair)
Richard Price (Treasurer)
Rob Mercer (Secretary)
Lucy Harvey (Events Officer)
Anna McCartin
Robin Philips-Lamb
Residents (3)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from committee members Paul Crowther, Nick House and Julia Kirkman, and from Dumbleton residents Howard Morris, Karen Morris and Jenny Maher (on behalf of the WI).

2. MINUTES OF LAST AGM

Rob Mercer summarised the minutes of the 2018 AGM. A copy is available in the electronic archive.

No amendments were requested. The minutes were proposed for acceptance by Robin Philips-Lamb and seconded by Richard Price.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

Richard Price presented the Treasurer's Report and the Annual Accounts, covering the period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019. Copies of the report and the accounts are available in the electronic archive.

The bank balance at the end of the accounting period was £19,738.20. This is approximately £12,200 less than the previous year's closing balance and is mainly the result of the project to replace the kitchen and install a bar in the Campbell Room. The total cost of this project was £18,200 (see Chairman's Report).

Revenue from rents and hire charges was £6,052.79, a decrease of £1,177.6 on the previous accounting period.

Total income for the accounting period was £11,421.87, an increase of approximately £1,770 if the £10,000 National Lottery Grant, received during the previous accounting period, is ignored.

Social events (The New Year Dance, wine bar evenings and coffee mornings) raised £5,202.19, an increase of £3,411 on the previous accounting period. This more than offset the reduction in hire income. The New Year Dance made a profit of £2,316.18, an increase of £874 on the 2018 Dance.

Capital expenditure was £18,791.42, mainly due to the kitchen/bar project referred to earlier.

Total expenditure amounted to £23,579.06 – the major items of expenditure are given in the Annual Accounts.

The Hall's annual running costs were approximately £2,000 lower than last year, at £4,748.06. This was mainly due to lower electricity, water and LPG costs.

An annual music licence was purchased which enables recorded music to be played at social events.

A roof inspection at the start of 2019 revealed that the roof requires significant work in many areas, such that it may be necessary to replace the whole roof structure. This will be a major expense, currently estimated to be in the region of £75,000 to £100,000. While grants may be available to fund some of the cost, it is certain that most of the cost will need to be self-funded.

The heating system in the main Hall will have to be replaced during 2019 at an estimated cost of between £10,000 and £15,000.

Richard thanked Tim Daffurn for auditing the accounts.

The accounts were proposed for acceptance by Rob Mercer and seconded by Robin Philips-Lamb.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Jim Harmsworth Cowles gave the Chairman's Report. A copy is available in the electronic archive.

Jim welcomed everyone to the AGM, particularly the village residents who were not committee members.

New Kitchen and Campbell Room Improvements:

Thanks to fundraising efforts by the committee throughout 2018 and a £10,000 grant from the National Lottery's Awards4All scheme, secured by the previous Chair Karen Morris, the committee were able to replace the kitchen and add a much-needed serving and bar area to the Campbell Room.

Jim thanked Anna McCartin for agreeing to manage the project from start to finish. Because of her expertise and professional approach, the project was delivered on time and under budget.

Jim thanked Matthew Harvey and his team for working long hours, including over Christmas, to ensure that the new facilities were ready in time for the New Year Dance.

The new facilities have been extremely well received by all users and have contributed to an increase in bookings for parties and related events.

Successful Fund-Raising Activities

Because the Hall is a charity, the committee spends a lot of time raising money to ensure that cash reserves for necessary refurbishment and emergencies remain at a reasonable level.

In the past year the level of fund-raising activity has increased, with several successful, profitable and enjoyable Wine Bars and Coffee Shops. These events brought in over £4,500 in revenue.

Jim thanked all committee members and other helpers who have baked cakes, cooked bacon, buttered rolls, made coffee and tea, served drinks, set up, cleaned up and worked on the till at these events.

Jim thanked Lucy Harvey for taking on the role of Events Officer after the 2018 AGM and for being the main organiser of the Wine Bars, Coffee Mornings and New Year Dance.

New Year Dance:

The New Year Dance is the Hall's main fundraiser and a significant event in the village calendar. After a slightly disappointing attendance in 2018, the committee worked hard to bring people back to the event.

97 tickets were sold, an increase of nearly 50% on 2018, with many people attending for the first time.

The usual mix of young and more mature dancers enjoyed a fabulous selection of meats, salads, breads, cheeses and brownies prepared by the committee. Dancers were also able to give generously to the Village Hall coffers with the Higher or Lower game, Roll A Coin and the very popular Bucket of Booze Raffle

Thanks to the efforts of the committee, a profit of £2300+ was made. The event proved to be very popular.

Co-operation with other Clubs

At the start of the year the committee agreed to have closer ties and co-operation with the other clubs and organisations in the village. Each club has virtually the same market – the village residents – so it made sense that the clubs should be working together instead of competing.

The committee now have regular communication with the other clubs and organisations, in particular the Village Club and the Cricket Club, to ensure that events don't clash. This new co-operation has resulted in money being generated from the hire of Hall equipment to both clubs and a joint Safari Supper on Valentine's Weekend. All 60 tickets were sold for this event and brought many people to the Hall for the first time. A profit of over £400 was made and very positive feedback was received.

Improved Systems:

Having successfully negotiated a free three-year deal with Gigaclear for high speed broadband, improvements in other areas have been made in order to offer the services demanded by today's customers.

The first addition was a Point of Sale system with a card reader for contactless and card payments, including Apple and Google Pay, with an app-based checkout and stock control system. Unlike traditional card readers, the iZettle system does not have a monthly charge or minimum usage fee, charging instead a very small fee per transaction. It has already proved popular at wine bars, coffee shops and the New Year Dance – over £2,600 in sales has been taken using it.

An online booking system has been introduced to make it easier for both one-off hirers and long-term customers to see and book available slots. The system makes invoicing each month a much simpler task, with invoices automatically generated and e-mailed to customers in a couple of clicks. The system is Cloud-based so it can be accessed at any time on any device, meaning that more than one committee member can be responsible for bookings.

Integration of the booking system into the Village Hall website gives users a real time calendar of events and means that customers can book directly through the website.

Increased Use of the Hall:

All the improvements over the past year and the increasing profile of the Hall is beginning to show benefit in terms of increased income, as noted in the Treasurer's Report. The main Hall is in use every weeknight and the Campbell Room is used four afternoons a week by an after-school club, Little Big Learners. The Campbell Room was hired during the day for yoga classes – it is hoped that these will restart soon. There has been an increase in one-off bookings for parties – several of these have come from parents of children attending the after-school club. Positive comments have been received about the excellent facilities, the ease of booking and the competitive hire charges.

In the coming year the committee will aim to fill the morning daytime slots with more classes and clubs and to ensure the Hall is used as much as possible.

The Committee:

Jim admitted to feeling a huge sense of responsibility and some trepidation taking on the role of Chair after Karen Morris stepped down after many years of hard work and service to the Hall.

Jim stated that it very quickly became clear he had no need to be concerned. He paid tribute to the passion and commitment of everyone on the committee to ensuring that the Hall remains at the heart of the village and a focal point for village activity.

Jim thanked the committee for being the team that it has become over the past year.

The committee expressed their gratitude to former member Sarah McInnes and to Nick House, who is leaving the committee after the AGM. Sarah resigned from the committee during the year as her family commitments left her with little or no time for the Village Hall – her ideas and help during her time as a committee member were appreciated. Nick has decided to step down but has assured the committee that he will be attending Village Hall events, entertaining us with his jokes and spending money at the bar.

Jim welcomed Claire Stanley as a new committee member.

The Future:

As noted in the Treasurer's Report, the committee has two major projects coming up.

The LPG heater in the main Hall has failed. The cost of repair is significant and coupled with the less than satisfactory performance of the system means that it should be removed and replaced it with a modern, efficient and cost-effective system. Whilst the Hall will be eligible for certain grants towards the cost, the committee will need to do a lot of fundraising to cover the costs. In the short term, as the new system will have to be in place for the winter months, it is inevitable that the Hall's cash reserves will be severely depleted.

A survey of the roof of this 120-year-old building has also highlighted the need for repair and replacement across most of it. Ideally, this is best done all at once, but as the estimated cost for this is between £75-100,000 it is likely that repairs will have to be made in a piecemeal way.

Even taking this approach, each repair will cost between £5,000 to £7,000 which, to put it into perspective, is about the same as all the fundraising activity in the past year.

Therefore, the committee will have a lot more to do and a significant amount of money to raise to secure the future of the Village Hall. This will require a lot of creative ideas, hard work and effort from the team – as well as the generosity of the village.

Despite these big challenges, coupled with all the usual aspects of running the Hall, Jim expressed confidence that the committee would face them down and ensure that the Village Hall remains at the heart of Dumbleton for another 120 years.

Jim concluded that the committee should celebrate a successful year and look forward to the coming year with confidence.

5. ELECTION OF THE COMMITTEE

The committee members who agreed to stay on were re-elected with no objections.

The committee officers were elected:

Jim Harmsworth Cowles was re-elected as Chairman

Kate Hending was re-elected as Vice Chair.

Richard Price was re-elected as Treasurer

Rob Mercer was re-elected as Secretary

Paul Crowther was re-elected as Booking Secretary

Lucy Harvey was re-elected as Events Officer.

6. AOB

A question was asked about the possibility of raising the hire charges in order to generate more income. The response was that the Hall is not a modern building and cannot offer the facilities of other village halls in the region, such as Toddington. Therefore, it would not be appropriate to have similar charges to these Halls. In addition, Dumbleton Village Hall is competing with the Village Club and the Cricket Club and must set its charges accordingly. It was noted that the hire charges were simplified at the start of 2019 to eliminate the different rates for summer and winter.

The residents who attended the AGM thanked the committee for all their work running and maintaining the Village Hall for the benefit of the local community.

The committee thanked Jim for all his enthusiasm, his ideas and his hard work as Chair over the past year.

The meeting was closed at 8.20pm.

Minutes approved by:

Jim Harmsworth Cowles (Chair)