

**Minutes of St Boswells Village Hall AGM Meeting  
Held on 29th November 2021, at 7pm in the Village Hall**

Present:

Committee members: Cliff Ellershaw, Christine Little (Booking Clerk), Alastair Minnis (Secretary), John Offord (Treasurer), Douglas Oliver (Chair) and Kate Warner. Members of the public: Samantha Brennan, Mark Douglas, Christine Holmes, Annette Patterson, Charles Strang, and Audrey Rae

1. Apologies received: Ros Anderson, Shenagh Ellershaw, G. W. Jack, John Lamont MP, Amanda Richard, Sandra Thomas.

2. The minutes of our previous AGM, on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020, were approved.

3. Matters arising. All covered in the subsequent meeting.

4. Treasurer's report: the finance report for the new SCO (48481), covering the period to the end of June 2021. This is now our new financial reporting year rather than the year to the end of March as was previously the case. The financial situation for the period from April 2020 to March 2021 was covered by the old SCO reports. John Offord reported that, In the three month period to the end of June (after the old SCO had been wound up and the new SCO was in operation), the Hall only received income from users in the final month of June and this amounted to £197.50. By far the largest receipt of money was in the form of COVID related support grants from the Scottish Government via Scottish Borders Council. This amounted to a total of £13,550. In addition, we were successful in being chosen by the Co-Op as one of their three community organisations that they support each year. We also received £1,474 from the National Lottery fund to enable us to create a new Village Hall website. Expenditure for the final three months of the year was £3,895. This included a final payment for work on the new Village Hall website and the costs of some internal repainting. We therefore had a surplus of £11,337 and ended the year with a balance of £50,707.

5. Chair's report, again to the end of June 2021. Douglas Oliver began by thanking the secretary, treasurer and booking clerk for the very substantial amount of work they had contributed to the management of the hall. Its finances are on a sound footing. We are grateful to the members of our committee who assiduously sought out sources of financial assistance and followed through the (often complicated) application processes. A special word of thanks is also due to Janette Jefford, who served with dedication as the hall's caretaker at one of the most difficult times in its history.

This financial year saw the completion of the Management Committee's efforts to reconfigure our organisation as a modern charity under OSCR. The transfer process from the old to the new involved placing the hall on Scotland's new land registry, the replacement for the General Register of Sasines. The impact of Covid-19 delayed the Land Register of Scotland in approving our application. It was granted on the 3rd December 2020. At an open meeting of the Hall's Management Committee on the 18th March 2021 the completion of our transition to the new SCO (48481) was announced and recorded.

We were all set to have a limited opening last Autumn, and the Management Committee had made extensive preparations. But that did not happen due to stringent new pandemic lockdown requirements being imposed. Only a few events, involving children with additional needs, were permitted, with the event organisers and the hall's officials carefully following the relevant government guidelines. Things began to ease significantly in May, with the SBC taking over the building's ground floor for use as a polling station for the Holyrood election. Since then, various regular users began to come back, but during the remainder of the financial year the types of events we could accommodate were very limited. The Bridge (the advisory organization for village halls in the Scottish Borders) kept providing us with updates, collating the numerous government mandates relating to different types of events. Our efforts to advise our users of the frequent changes were helped considerably by the launch of the hall's new website at the beginning of June. Furthermore,

with the site's new calendar and other enhancements to the booking process, reservation requests and inquiries have become easier to process. These webpages also aim to celebrate the history of the Village Hall and indeed of St Boswells in general. Our building has been at the centre of village life since 1896, serving the community in many ways. To that end, we are hosting a section for our Community Parish Council.

*At this point the trustees, the Management Committee's office bearers, and the committee's regular members and regular members, all stood down. The secretary took over the chairing of the meeting, to conduct the elections.*

6. Election/re-election/resignation of trustees. The following were re-elected: Cliff Ellershaw, Shenagh Ellershaw, John Offord, Douglas Oliver, Sandra Thomas and Kate Warner

Proposed by: Alastair Minnis; several seconders.

John Offord proposed Alastair Minnis; several seconders.

Christine Little was elected as a new trustee. Proposed by Alastair Minnis; several seconders.

7. Election/re-election/resignation of the Management Committee's office-bearers and regular members. The following were re-elected: Cliff Ellershaw, Christine Little (Booking Clerk), John Offord (Treasurer), Douglas Oliver (Chair), Sandra Thomas, and Kate Warner. Proposed by Alastair Minnis; several seconders.

John Offord proposed Alastair Minnis; several seconders.

[Subsequent to the meeting, Samantha Brennan was co-opted as a member of the Management Committee.]

8. AOB. There was none.

10. Date of next AGM. Given the uncertainties of the current pandemic situation, it was agreed that this date should be fixed later.

### **Minutes of an open Village Hall meeting, held on 29<sup>th</sup> November following the AGM**

Present: the same people who attended the AGM.

1. No apologies were received in addition to the ones noted for the AGM.

2. The minutes of open meeting conducted by Zoom on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021 were approved. This was the 'inaugural' meeting of our new SCO.

3. Matters arising: covered in the subsequent meeting.

4. Treasurer's report on our current financial position (from the end of June 2021, that being the period reported on in the AGM). John Offord reported that in the four months to the end of October we have received income of £6,367. This includes a COVID related grant from Scottish Borders Council of £550 and a utilities refund of £682. The balance is from charges to users. Expenditure for the four months was £13,906. This included the annual insurance payment of £1,546 and repairs and maintenance work costing £ 7,346, of which £7,026 was for repainting external woodwork. The balance of expenditure is made up of the usual running costs of the Hall. At the end of October our bank balance stood at £42,647 with a further £340 held in petty cash.

5. Review of current health/lockdown easing arrangements as they affect the village hall, including a review of how the hall has been used during this period and what issues have arisen. Alastair noted that currently there are two major government mandates in force: mask-wearing when not engaged in permitted activities, and providing information for the NHS Trace & Protect service. Our regular hall

users are diligently continuing to complete our paper forms and post them in the box we've put in the lobby for this purpose; others are scanning in with our QR code. One-off users can be less compliant, however. This is due in some measure to a general slackening of compliance in the larger community (though the mandates haven't changed), which is impacting on us. The threat of the new Omnicron variant may remind people they shouldn't let their guard down.

Good ventilation falls within the government's 'advisory' rather than 'mandatory' category (together with hand-sanitizing). There's been a range of responses to what we're doing at the moment, in respect of ventilation. Some people have praised us while others have suggested we could do more. There was a complaint about noise coming from the hall when the greater hall's rear doors are opened to improve ventilation. Further, with winter upon us, we don't want to expose users to drafts. A balance must be achieved between the need for ventilation and the need for users to be kept warm in the hall. Concerns have been expressed about ventilation in the lesser hall. Ways of improving this were discussed. [Following the meeting Douglas Oliver and a work colleague investigated the situation in the lesser hall. The Velux rooflight can be set as a vent. This allows ventilation into the room, with a fan extractor removing it, thereby achieving a good air-flow. Hirers shall be informed about how to operate the extractor. Using it together with the judicious opening of doors and the serving hatch will enhance ventilation in that area.] Alastair also noted that an assessor from Ecosafety had just conducted a review of the hall's fire and evacuation procedures. We await his written report.

6. Account of village hall refurbishments and maintenance work. Recently all the external paintwork was repainted, and soon after Xmas we hope that the plan to re-slate the roof on the lesser hall will be implemented. (A delay has been caused by the difficulty of obtaining scaffolding.) Work needs to be done on the stonework to the left of the main entrance door. The abovementioned safety report will require some work on signage and related matters. We are discussing with Dave Angus Audio (Galashiels) an arrangement whereby the hall's audio and sound system will be maintained and made more accessible to users. This led into a discussion of how the hall's finances stood in relation to the demands upon it. We have a healthy bank balance at the moment, gained by hard work and application-writing by committee members, but substantial maintenance bills need to be paid. The hall costs a thousand pounds a month just to run, and needs a regular and robust income-flow to ensure its future. We have not increased hire costs since pre-Covid days; at the moment we are, in effect, subsidizing users' fees.

7. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, 2022. The time set for this commemoration will coincide with our Village Week next year, and a co-operative venture including the VW committee, the Community Council, and the Village Hall Committee was proposed as the best way to take this forward. Annette Patterson (Community Council, Green St Boswells) reported on her own excellent work towards having a commemorative tree planted. Various suggestions were discussed as to what the hall might do: an artwork painted onto the front wall of the newer part of the building, a mural painted in the space above the stage on the greater hall, a commemorative plaque, and so forth. The Chair undertook to direct further discussion of this matter.

8. Improving the appearance of the bus-stand area. Annette Patterson reported on the plan that she is driving forward. She has obtained funding for two planters. This is very welcome news to the VH Committee, particularly since the area in question is just across the road from the main entrance to the hall. Annette's efforts were commended.

9. AOB. There was none.

10. Date of next meeting. Given the uncertainties of the current pandemic situation, it was agreed that this date should be fixed later.

Alastair Minnis, VH Committee Secretary, 11.12.2021