

Minutes of the AGM of St Boswells Village Hall, Thursday 6th October in the Lesser Hall, 7pm.

At the beginning of the meeting, Kate Warner, who is stepping down from the committee but continuing as a trustee, was warmly thanked for her many years of service in so many roles. Her contribution has been extraordinary. Karen Reilly was thanked for her work as Caretaker, and the new person in that role, Michael Tunnock, was welcomed to the team.

Present:

Committee members: Samantha Brennan, Cliff Ellershaw, Alastair Minnis (Secretary), John Offord (Treasurer), Muriel Offord (Booking Clerk), Douglas Oliver (Chair), Kate Warner, together with Michael Tunnock (Caretaker).

Members of the public: Denise Brebner, Wilma Burns, Tony Burton, Mark Douglas, John Farquhar, Kenneth Gunn, Christine Holmes, Kaye Johnston, Kenneth Ovens, Annette Patterson, Karen Reilly, Liz Todd, Burnett Wilson.

1. **Apologies** received from: Wendy & Mike Davidson, Ros De La Hey, John Lamont MP, John & Christine Lawrie, Christine Little, Charles Strang, Sandra Thomas.

2. The **minutes** of the previous AGM, on 28th February 2022, were approved.

3. **Matters arising.** The matter of 'Resilience Centres' in the village had been raised. Talks are ongoing, with the PCC taking the lead in seeking to formulate a village-wide plan.

4. **Treasurer's report** (year ending 30th June 2022). John Offord reported that the accounts for the year (audited by Kenneth Ovens) show a deficit of £17,464. Meaning that our expenditure in the year was greater than our income by this amount. This difference was covered using part of our reserves. At the end of June, after covering this deficit, our reserves stood at £33,243. The deficit needs to be seen in light of the significant sum that was spent on repairs and maintenance which was £20,115. This covered the repainting of the exterior woodwork and re-roofing of the extension. These together with other one-off items of expenditure amounted to £18,806. Additional expenditure was incurred in commemorating the Queen's Jubilee of £2,768 for the light placed over the main entrance. We received a grant from SBC for £2,500 towards the costs. We also received the second tranche of funds from the Co-Op Community fund of £2,837. We are very grateful to the Co-Op for including us in their annual community fund raising scheme.

5. **Chairperson's report** (year ending 30 June 2022). Douglas Oliver began by thanking the trustees and the members of the hall's management committee, particularly the secretary, treasurer and booking clerk for the incredible amount of work they contributed to the smooth running of the hall during the period ending June 2022. He is particularly grateful to those members who tirelessly worked to find sources of financial assistance and waded through the often-complicated application processes. Also, our general committee and members of the public who have supported the management committee throughout the year. At last year's AGM, he reported that the transition from the old-style charity to the new entity had been completed. Since then, we have been functioning fully as SCO 48481, and this shall be reflected in the financial report, to be submitted after the AGM to OSCR, the Scottish independent Regulator and registrar for Scotland's charities. The main work to the building has been the external painting of the woodwork in August 2021 and the roof over the lesser hall which was re-slatted in May 2022. This along with other smaller repairs has eaten into our funds, but a building of over 120 years old does take a bit of work and must be looked after. During the early part of our financial year the emergence from lockdown was slow, but given the constantly changing government restrictions which the hall managed to follow, we ensured everyone using our hall was safe. July 2021 saw the return of Zumba, Pilates and other exercise groups, together with our keen badminton players. After 9th August more events were made possible by the government, and all three halls became available for hire. The upper hall had not been in use, given its small size and hence fears concerning social distancing. On the 30th August a masked audience listened to Alistair Moffatt reading from his new book at an event organized by the Mainstreet Trading Company. They also organized a sell-out reading by crime novelist Ian Rankin on the 23rd September. By 9th October we were able to host a wedding.

St Boswells Live! returned to the hall on the 20th November. The appearance in December of the new 'Omicron' Covid variant meant the re-imposition of various restrictions, and the upper hall was again closed. However, from the 24th January some major lockdown measures were lifted, and other relaxations followed. The new year saw the return to the village hall of St Boswells Concert Band, an organization which dates back to the 1860s – they are even older than our hall. In February 2022 *St Boswells Live!* formally gifted to the hall the lighting and sound equipment and a full inventory was made. Several other notable events occurred in the months following, including both a collection for Ukraine with donations being handed in at the hall and a fundraising concert on the 7th May. A unique historical occasion occurred on the 2nd June when the Duke of Buccleuch unveiled the commemorative light for Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, with everyone retiring into the main hall after to enjoy an excellent buffet. Thanks must go to Allan Drummond and his wife, along with several members of the hall committee and a couple of volunteers for all helping out and making this a day to remember. A record of this event, and indeed of many other events in the life of the hall can be found on our superb website, which our secretary Alastair Minnis continues to keep up-to-date. This site aims to record and celebrate the history of St Boswells in general. We continue to host a section for our Parish Community Council on the site where their agendas and minutes from meetings are posted, and a photo album maintained. Mr Oliver finished by remarking that it is good to see our village hall back to being used by so many organisations and expressing the hope that it continues to flourish during the turbulent future that awaits us.

At this point 1. The trustees, 2. the Management Committee's office bearers, and 3. regular members all stood down, a new election being required in each case. The secretary took over chairing the meeting until this process was completed, then handed back to the committee's chairperson.

6. The following trustees were re-elected: Cliff Ellershaw, Shelagh Ellershaw, Christine Little, Alastair Minnis, John Offord, Douglas Oliver, Sandra Thomas, and Kate Warner. (Seconder: Tony Burton).

7. The following committee members were re-appointed, and the office-holders re-appointed to their respective o: Samantha Brennan, Cliff Ellershaw, Christine Little, Alastair Minnis (Secretary), John Offord (Treasurer), Muriel Offord (Booking Clerk), Douglas Oliver (Chair), and Sandra Thomas. (Seconder: Mark Douglas). Resignation: Kate Warner. Subsequently Denise Brebner was co-opted onto the committee (and welcomed back).

An appeal was made for more people to contribute to the work of the committee, and volunteer to arrange events so that the hall is used more fully and frequently, and hence its income increased. Ideally, we should have an events manager, to promote the hall's excellent facilities and encourage more groups and businesses to use it. The treasurer is setting up a 'Giftaid' scheme, which has tax advantages and should encourage people to donate.

8. The energy costs crisis.

(A) Treasurer John Offord noted the shocking increases in energy prices that have occurred. The hall was on fixed tariffs for electricity and gas, both of which have now come to an end. The volatility in energy prices in the last few months has meant that our current energy suppliers have not offered any new fixed tariffs, so we are on their variable rates for business. Also, many energy providers are not accepting new customers, so switching is difficult. The Westminster Government has indicated that there will be a domestic price cap (effectively a cap on tariffs) and that a similar scheme will be put in place for business and charities. This scheme is only for six months in the first instance. It should be remembered that this scheme is only for six months in the first instance. When taken together with the domestic price cap, this is an unaffordable policy which is unlikely to be extended. Price rises are inevitable. (It should be noted that there has been no increase for over 4 years.) Therefore, the committee agreed that regular user charges will be increased by 20%, while commercial and/or one-off users' charges are increased by 50%. The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are permitted to vary these charges in light of circumstances and the nature of the event to be held in the hall. Based on the use of the hall in the last financial year it is considered that these increases will generate enough income to cover the budgeted costs. They will come into effect for all bookings received on or after 1st December 2022, and a review shall be undertaken by the committee after six months.

(B) The secretary explained that a grant application had been made to the SBC's new 'Community Led Learning and Development' (CLLD) fund, to enable the hall to be used as a 'heat bank' and meeting centre (particularly for the elderly and vulnerable) on at least two occasions per week, and also to enable it to waive charges for several of the creative/artistic groups that meet in it, during the winter. The result is to be announced in early November. During an extensive discussion, John Farquhar detailed the possible consequences of energy cuts this winter, reinforcing the importance of careful advance-planning.

9. The hall's progress towards greener energy.

(A) Douglas Oliver reported he was seeking out a control system to fit onto the boiler, which would work through the hall's WiFi, so that heat levels can remotely be managed.

(B) The Secretary reported that a substantial questionnaire from The Bridge in association with consultants Johnson Allan had been completed and submitted, as a stage towards the hall receiving an 'energy audit' funded by a government grant awarded to The Bridge and partner organizations. It's our understanding that as soon as this documentation is obtained we can progress to seek funding (for whatever improvements are deemed possible) from Local Energy Scotland's 'Community and Renewable Energy Scheme' (CARES). In the discussion, Annette Patterson noted the importance of being involved in a village-wide scheme.

(C) As a result of the AGM an energy sub-committee was formed, consisting of Mark Douglas, John Farquhar, Christine Little and Alastair Minnis. They shall review the hall's energy options (in light of the abovementioned audit), and report back to the full committee.

10. **AOB.** Kenneth Gunn described the current difficult situation of St Boswells Concert Band, which has returned to its original base in the hall. He stressed the importance of getting more people to help, and in particular to recruit younger people to join. A publicity drive was planned. He was assured that the Committee would continue to do everything it could to support this vital enterprise, including the promotion of its events.

11. Date of next AGM. To be decided.

Alastair Minnis (Hall Secretary) secretary@stboswellsvillagehall.org

24/10/2022