

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BUILDINGS MANAGEMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19TH AUGUST 2020, AT 7PM VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING PLATFORM

Committee Members present:

Mrs A Clarey, A Cooper, Mrs M Cooper, S Dhaliwal, S Hayes (Chairman), D Matthews, J Talbot.

Also present:

Town Clerk – Mrs K Elliott-Turner, Assistant Clerk – Ms C Jenkins and Councillors Mrs J Hyde, H Pickering, G Russell, B Saunders and one member of the public

As a member of the public was present and wished to address the committee as Chairman of the Stotfold Good Neighbour Group under agenda item 6 – Update on re-opening of Memorial Hall and Greenacre Centre, it was agreed that this item would be moved forward to after the Clerk's Report, Correspondence Received & Matters Arising for Information agenda item.

17/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Collier and Mrs Bundock.

18/20 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS ON MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE AGENDA

Councillor Hayes declared an interest in item no. 5 – Variation of Mossman Centre lease, as his wife is president of Stotfold Guides – an honorary position. Councillor Mrs Clarey declared an interest in agenda item 6 – Re-opening of Memorial Hall and Greenacre Centre, as she is a member of the Good Neighbour Group (who wish to speak on this matter). Members were reminded that if at any time during the meeting they feel they have an interest in an item being discussed, they should declare it at that point.

19/20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES

Not at this point.

20/20 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

Clerk's report

- During lockdown, one of the Clerk's office windows was found smashed. It appears that this may have been due to extreme heat building up behind the closed security shutters and an imperfection in the glass causing it to smash. There is a possibility that it may have been smashed during the short time the shutters are up when cleaning takes place in the building. A claim has been submitted with our insurers, which includes replacement of the window and the solar film recently applied.
- On health and safety grounds, a light and movement sensor has been fitted to the Clerk's office, as when she now enters her office via the Council Chamber (as part of new distancing measures) to cross the room to turn on the light, she does so in almost complete darkness as the shutters are down. Terry Seymour Electrical Contractor's charge £175 plus vat.

- Following issues with meter reading and invoicing by British Gas, it appears that one meter has not been recognised by any energy supplier for some time and therefore although it has been recording the electricity used, it has not been billed for. A second supply is for the underfloor heating. The intention is now to put all the electricity supplies through one meter (smart meter already fitted) but will require some rewiring, with a likely charge by British Gas and an electrician for this work.

Matters arising

Minute 7/20 – the Memorial Hall stage curtain track system has now been replaced.

Minute 8/20 – Hertfordshire Driveways Ltd are replacing the gravel surround at the Greenacre Centre on 14th September 2020

22/20 RE-OPENING OF MEMORIAL HALL AND GREENACRE CENTRE

The Clerk gave the following update:

Following a further risk assessment of the two 'community centres', the Memorial Hall and Greenacre Centre, consideration of community centre and village hall specific guidance provided by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England), BRCC (Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity) and Government guidance on social distancing, wearing of face coverings and re-opening of community centres, both halls are due to re-open for regular hirers on 7th September 2020. Ad-hoc bookings, parties or new regular hirers are not being taken at this time. At the current time, Stotfold, Shefford and Arlesey have an increase in coronavirus cases, and Central Beds Council is monitoring this. Subject to this situation improving, the halls will still open for hire from 7th September.

(Councillor Mrs Hyde left the meeting at 7.12pm)

Members have been provided with a copy of the risk assessment carried out on the facilities, together with a set of Special Conditions of Hire, which are to be read alongside the usual Conditions of Hire document. Each returning hirer is required to sign to say that they will adhere to the Special Conditions and to provide the council with a copy of their risk assessment specifically addressing covid-19 safety measures.

These documents have been provided to hirers, who have also been received a Covid-19 secure poster, produced using guidance from ACRE.

Members will note that at this time, the kitchen facilities are not available to hirers, except for hand washing, and we will ensure that there is a supply of hand soap and paper towels for kitchens in both buildings. The toilets are also closed in both facilities. An assessment was considered against the risk of a potentially large number of people coming through both buildings and using the toilet facilities. Currently the toilets are cleaned once a day. It has been suggested, and I welcome views from members on this, that as I have agreed for two groups with elderly and vulnerable attendees that they may use the disabled toilet only, that this is extended to any hirer using the facilities, with sanitising between each use. The reason for the disabled toilet only is because it ensures there is one in and one out, with queuing when necessary.

In terms of maximum capacity for each hire, I have considered our risk assessment, Government guidelines on distancing, the requirements regarding face coverings,

advice provided by ACRE and BRCC and assessed each individual hire group. This has resulted in a calculated figure for each individual hirer, and a significant reduction in numbers permitted for each room. This figure includes the group leader and spectators, as well as attendees. Those classed as exercise are not required to wear face coverings and therefore must abide by 2m distancing, and those wearing face coverings permitted to have 1m distancing. As community centres, legislation requires that anyone entering them must wear a face covering, and may then only remove them for specific reasons, i.e. because they are undertaking an exercise class. There are also general exceptions for wearing of face coverings such as not recommended to be worn by under 11's, those with asthma, or breathing difficulties, those who rely on lipreading, etc.

The limitations imposed by distancing, face covering requirements and cleaning has resulted in slight shifts to start and finish times for some hirers in order to facilitate safe people movement and to carry out touch surface cleaning by keyholders after each hire. It has produced a few complaints from hirers about the significantly reduced numbers of people permitted in their classes. Some feel that reduced numbers mean it is not economically viable to continue to run their classes, although others are considering adding additional sessions, or increasing their hire times to accommodate more, but smaller groups. The capacity levels will be monitored and reviewed.

In the Greenacre Centre, as there are multiple rooms all using the same entrance, changes have been made to public spaces, hireable spaces and how people move around the building. A one-way system has been introduced, with the front door of the building being the entrance, and the rear kitchen fire door being the exit. However, where we have hirers in the Council Chamber, and particularly when there are other hirers in the building, those using the Chamber will leave via the room's fire door. To remove risk of transmission through touching of the large number of leaflets, tables and chairs in the building foyer, these have been removed for the time being, and are now stored in the Maple Room. As this room is the smallest we hire out, the calculations for maximum numbers has made it un-hireable at this time, and therefore it seemed better suited to storage. Regular hirers of the Maple Room – Pilates, Youth Group, Citizens Advice, and Hartbeeps baby group have been offered use of the larger Council Chamber which provides safer distancing, with excess tables and chairs now being stored in the Maple Room. This will be for the pandemic period or until such time that room capacity levels and risk levels are reassessed and it is safe for them to return to their original hired room.

The Memorial Hall also has a one-way system, with front double doors being the entrance, and the kitchen fire door being the exit. Exceptions have been made for those groups with elderly or disabled attendees who cannot easily use the steps from the kitchen door, and they may use the front door or main hall side fire door as an exit.

Groups using the Rear Hall only will enter and leave via the rear fire door.

Both buildings are to have a sanitiser dispenser at the entrance and exit points, together with appropriate signage around the buildings. These will be erected and displayed this week.

All these measures have enabled us to safely reopen to our regular hirers.

Since the start of lockdown in March, the Greenacre Centre toilets have been flushed and taps run on a daily basis and all other facilities have been weekly. Legionella water testing kits have been ordered, water samples taken from all facilities, and have been sent off for analysis. The two hireable facilities will only reopen subject to an 'all-clear' result.

Discussions took place regarding use of kitchen fire doors as exits in both buildings, as a member felt that these doorways were too narrow and had steps and exiting this way would result in funnelling and people congregating to chat. Doorways in the Greenacre Centre in particular are wide enough for wheelchairs, so they are not considered to be narrow, there is also no step. As previously mentioned, those who cannot use the step out of the Memorial Hall kitchen door may use the side fire door or front door (if session is not followed by another hire session). Markings will be added to the floor to indicate that queuing should take place when leaving the building. People do have to take some responsibility for their actions and follow social distancing requirements themselves, and we can only provide signage and floor markings to assist. The member concerned felt that use of both kitchen fire doors as exits was counterproductive from a safety point of view.

(Councillor Mrs Hyde returned at 7.24pm)

A query was raised about the cleaning of a hall by the hirer, and the Clerk clarified that before each hire, touch surfaces will be wiped down and sanitised by our keyholders; during the hire session, the hirer is responsible for the safety of their attendees and therefore they will sanitise during their hire time.

The Chairman reminded members that as a requirement for our public liability insurance, our insurers have made it very clear that we must follow Government guidelines, and therefore our hirers must follow our terms and conditions. Everyone is ultimately responsible for their own safety.

The Chairman of the Stotfold Good Neighbour Group's Chair-Based Exercise classes thanked the council for preparation of the documents to enable return to hire our facilities. She had originally wished to request special permission for her attendees to use the toilet facilities during their hire period, and to use the front door rather than kitchen door when exiting. The Clerk has already given permission for them to use the disabled toilet and to exit via the front door or side fire door. Council was thanked for enabling the class to return to the hall, as attendees being able to see their friends will be of great value to them, aiding their mental well-being.

RESOLVED that hirers are permitted to use the disabled toilet facilities in the Memorial Hall and Greenacre Centre.

23/20 VARIATION OF MOSSMAN CENTRE LEASE

Members considered a request from the Mossman Centre Committee, on behalf of Stotfold Guides, for permission to erect a shed-like structure as an outdoor meeting room/teaching space within the grounds of the Mossman Centre. Their lease states that no erections are permitted, and a request is being made to vary their lease to permit. The Mossman Centre are willing to pay any legal costs incurred by the Council in order to do this – although the Clerk advised that our solicitor has confirmed that a simple letter as an addendum to the lease will suffice.

RESOLVED that permission is given to the Mossman Centre Committee and Stotfold Guides to erect a shed-like structure as an outdoor meeting room/teaching space within their grounds, subject to meeting any building regulation requirements, and that a formal letter forming an addendum to the lease giving such permission will be provided.

24/20 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Under section 1.3 of Standing Orders, the Chairman proposed that the press and public are temporarily excluded for the following two agenda items, whilst matters pertaining to staff issues and confidential financial and contractual matters are discussed and that they be instructed to withdraw from the meeting for the following two agenda items only. Agreed by members.

25/20 ADDITIONAL DUTIES FOR KEYHOLDER/CARETAKING STAFF DURING PANDEMIC PERIOD

Members were given an update on the additional work required of our keyholder/caretaker staff during the pandemic period on re-opening the halls for hire.

26/20 BUILDING COMMITTEE ASSETS REVIEW

Members considered a confidential report reviewing the assets falling within this committee's remit.

RECOMMENDED that formal discussions and investigations will continue in regard to the future of this committee's assets and the contents of the confidential report.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.10pm

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: