

Woodhurst Village Hall Report to Parish Meeting 2008/09

Background

Woodhurst Village Hall is constituted by a trust deed made by Woodhurst Parish Council dated 6th March 1987. The management committee has the responsibility for the management of the hall (the property) for the use of inhabitants of the Parish of Woodhurst (without distinction of political, religious or other opinions) including for the use of meetings, lectures, classes, recreation and leisure, with the object of improving the conditions of life of the inhabitants of the parish.

Management Committee

Members of the committee are elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Village Hall, casual vacancies may be filled during the term. During the past year the following served as members of the committee:

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| Chair | Mr Simon West |
| Vice Chair | Mr Nicholas Dowding |
| Secretary | Miss Annabel Armstrong |
| Treasurer | Mrs Tracy Bass |
| Letting Officer | Mr Simon West |
| St John's PCC Rep | Mr Alistair Marr |
| Parish Council Rep | Mr Alistair Marr |
| Other Member | Mrs Ginny Tack Mr Gary Davis |

Annual Review

Through the continued hard work of all the committee members and volunteer villagers we have had another successful year of bringing the village community together at the Hall through family, social and fundraising events.

Some events are a combined effort between the active groups in the Village such as the Church and Woodhurst in Bloom; most notable of these is the Woodhurst Feast Week, which is arranged by a small committee with representatives from the Church, Hall and WinB. Feast Week 2008 featured a scarecrow festival, fete, scarecrow walk, cream teas and open gardens, Art Attack and a 1940s Style Evening of Music and Dance. Feast Week raised £1,418.06 which was split between the Church, Woodhurst in Bloom and the Village Hall.

The Hall has been used as a venue for a number of different events ranging from a Polling Station for HDC, the Church Cheese and Wine fundraising evening and refreshments after the licensing of Reverend Barter in the Church. The Hall has been privately booked during the year by residents for a number of funeral wakes and a christening reception. The Hall's facilities have been made available to the Church for their Advent Fair and for a couple of weddings. Woodhurst in Bloom have used the Hall for a children's art session during Feast Week as well as for their planting up evening, nest box building and a Japanese evening.

The Line Dancers continue to book the Hall regularly on Wednesday evenings. Woodhurst Parish Plan Group have held a number of meetings in the Hall during the year and booked it for a Saturday of focus sessions. The Parish Council hold regular meetings and have had an EGM during the year.

During the year the Hall committee has arranged a summer and Christmas Quiz, a Halloween children's event, 100 Club, Easter Egg Hunt and a number of Village Bar nights. The New Year's Eve event was cancelled due to lack of interest.

Forthcoming events planned by the Committee this year include Feast Week events, bar nights, Halloween children's event and Christmas quiz.

A formal letting agreement is being used for all bookings, attached to this is a copy of the Hiring Rules. Investment has been made during the year in new plain white crockery, cutlery, chopping boards and the like. A new hot water boiler was purchased jointly with the Church. A hiring agreement has been drawn up for the Village Hall equipment which is available for hire to villagers.

The Premises

The gas heaters have been removed on health & safety grounds and have been replaced by two electric space heaters.

The Village Hall Committee remain concerned about the overall structure and integrity of the Hall. As the structure of the Hall is nearing the end of its useful life and the Hall itself does not offer particularly welcoming or flexible accommodation, the Chairman and Secretary have been preparing a plan and scheme for replacing the Hall.

The site of the Hall offers sufficient space to replace the existing structure with a more aesthetically pleasing alternative, picking up design features in the local vernacular. Careful styling and design will enhance the experience of the users of the Hall, widen its appeal such that villagers might be encouraged to set up interest groups knowing that there is a comfortable and appropriate venue within walking distance of all dwellings in the village whilst also offering a limited amount of car parking for those travelling in from the surrounding area.

Careful styling and design should be able to address possible concerns for neighbouring households; for instance keeping the apex height of a replacement building at or below the level of the existing structure will be possible through better use of the space between the ground level and the current roof height. Constructing a replacement building from true ground level and incorporating a storage return along the north boundary will better buffer and control any sound generated so as not to impinge into the rear gardens of the houses to the north of the site. A new building will also have better sound proofing both of walls and windows which will be a considerable improvement on the current Hall.

A new Village Hall for Woodhurst should be designed to provide flexible accommodation that offers:-

- a venue for village social events of 80-100 people seated

- a cost effective meeting venue for smaller gatherings such as Parish Council Meetings, toddlers playgroup, garden club
- a welcoming environment for village pub nights
- sufficient space and flooring for use as a line dancing venue, keep fit classes and other sports uses (table tennis, etc)
- a building that incorporates energy saving measures and makes use of natural resources available to ensure it is sustainable and economic to run for the management committee and affordable to user groups

Requirements

- Make best use of central village location with a low level single storey, environmentally sensitive construction in keeping with the architecture of the village
- Energy efficient and low maintenance
- Provide storage space away from central hall space
- Flexible internal space through use of sliding walls with mood lighting
- Modern kitchen suitable for limited amount of food preparation, reheating and to provide ample cupboard storage
- Legacy building which will enhance the strong sense of community that Woodhurst has
- In keeping with the requirements of the Huntingdonshire District Council Design Guide (2007)
- Would satisfy and be granted planning permission by Huntingdonshire District Council

Once drawings have been prepared and costings obtained we propose inviting Villagers and the site's Landowners to an open evening where the scheme can be considered in more detail and villagers input can be received. Funding will need to be secured, we plan on submitting grant applications to the Lottery Community Sustainable Energy Programme/Government Low Carbon Building Programme, Entrust/WREN Grant, Huntingdonshire District Council Capital Grant and will be seeking local sponsorship of materials and labour.

Finances

A full financial report will be made available at the Village Hall AGM on the 19 May.

Annabel Armstrong

Secretary, Woodhurst Village Hall Committee

19 April 2009