

MINUTES OF THE WOOTTON COURTENAY VILLAGE HALL AGM HELD ON 7TH JULY 2025

1. WELCOME

- 1.1. Alan welcomed everyone to the meeting and he thanked all for attending, especially as it was such a lovely summer's evening.
- 1.2. Paper copies of the agenda and accounts were available around the Hall. The minutes had been circulated via the village email.

2. APOLOGIES

- 2.1. Chris Binnie, Dee Binnie and Paul Scott.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST AGM

Subject to the incorrect spelling of Sara Maskell's name, the minutes were agreed as a true and correct record of the meeting. Proposed by Jeremy Curtis and seconded by Alan Gardner (unanimous agreement).

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 4.1. Investment of Hall Funds: to be covered in the Treasurer's report.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT

5.1. Thanks were expressed to:

- Fellow trustees for their help and support.
- Nicky Parnell and Sharon Share for coordinating the Village 100 Club, which contributes approx £800 p.a. to Village Hall funds.
- Terry Walker for all of the work he has done around the Hall.
- Sarah Fox for painting the Village Hall finger posts.
- Mark Summers-West for helping with the apex windows black-outs.
- Mike Hill for checking the annual accounts.

5.2. Special Project Works

- 5.2.1. The acoustic partition panels have been serviced.
- 5.2.2. Patches of external decking have been repaired.
- 5.2.3. General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR): Bill Hodgson has been leading on this area of work, many thanks to Bill. Trustees now all have dedicated 'woottoncourtenayvillage' email accounts and trustees have undertaken GDPR training – and we have taken a quiz to test our knowledge.
- 5.2.4. The Community Council for Somerset (CCS) runs a Quality Assurance award scheme ('Hallmark') and we have submitted an application to achieve Hallmark 1. Barbara has coordinated and submitted required documentation and CCS will be carrying out a site visit on 14th July to inspect the Hall; we will keep you posted on the result.
- 5.2.5. The external seats have been installed on the veranda and are already being well utilised.
- 5.2.6. The Photography Club has a new display board and the board in the lobby has been replaced.
- 5.2.7. A roof leak has been repaired.
- 5.2.8. Repairs have been carried out on the boiler and the immersion heater.
- 5.2.9. We now have a Finance Policy, with thanks to Barbara.
- 5.2.10. Modifications have been made to the fire door and the proscenium arch has been adjusted. Many thanks to Terry Walker for his help.

6. TREASURER'S REPORT

- 6.1. Barbara, Village Hall Treasurer, read out her report:

As the Treasurer of the Wootton Courtenay Management Committee, I am pleased to confirm that the Village Hall accounts remain in a stable and robust financial position.

It is important to note special thanks and appreciation to colleagues who help the finances run so smoothly:

- Dee Binnie, our letting secretary, effectively manages the bookings for the village hall. The hall booking software, Hall Wizard, remains invaluable in aiding our management efforts. Hirers use this system to make their bookings, while Dee utilises it to issue invoices and monitor incoming payments. We extend our gratitude to Dee for her meticulous management.*
- Given the scale and nature of our operations, we are not required to undergo full accounts audit each year. However, we elect to have an independent financial review conducted by a qualified individual. Mike Hill has reviewed the accounts for the 2024/25 financial year, and his approval is reflected in the circulated documents. We extend our appreciation to Mike for his work.*
- Thanks are also due to Alan Rowe and all committee members – who take a real interest in financial operations and contribute to financial decision making.*

I am now happy to highlight some key issues relating to the accounts and Village Hall financial management in 2024/25.

- We began the year with £48,828 in the bank and ended with £48,381, resulting in a £447 deficit compared to the previous year's £2,228 surplus; I am not overly concerned at this deficit. The main reason for the deficit is that we received a £2,000 bequest from Joan Burnell in 2023/24 but spent most of it in 2024/25, including over £1,000 on new wooden chairs for the Hall's exterior.*
- No donations from the Dunkery Players were processed in the last two financial years. I am really pleased to inform you that £800 was received just after the year end, and this will be reflected in next year's accounts – many thanks to Mary and the Dunkery Players.*
- I am also pleased to report that Hall Hire Income has increased to £4,172, compared to £3,270 in the previous year. This increase is very encouraging, and we hope it will continue to rise towards the pre-Covid levels of approximately £5,000 per annum.*
- Income from the solar panels has decreased slightly compared to the previous year. This is due to a timing issue; we received a Feed In Tariff payment shortly after the financial year end.*
- The 100 Club donated £750 to Village Hall funds. Many thanks to Nicki Parnel and Sharon Share for all of the work that they do in managing this wonderful Club.*
- As a committee, we continue to invest in the Hall to ensure the building's maintenance. In 2024/25, premises running costs increased from £6,892 to £8,251. The main reasons for this increase are a one-off payment of £1,191 for the new chairs, £594 for servicing partition doors (not an annual requirement), and £866 for additional servicing, maintenance, and repairs on the boiler and heating system.*
- The Film and Theatre Club continues to run at a surplus – many thanks to Valerie and now Amanda and their wonderful team of helpers who organise the Theatre Club events and to Mary Noble who coordinates the Film Club, with a little help from me.*
- Mary also organised a wonderful Elvis inspired Take Art event, enjoyed by villagers and visitors from further afield – many thanks to Mary, these events take a lot of organising.*
- There are a couple of finance issues not related to the accounts that I would like to draw to your attention:*
 - Firstly, as Alan has mentioned, we now have a Finance Policies and Procedures Manual in place.*
 - Secondly, during the year we have been investigating higher interest earning accounts to achieve a better return on our reserves. This has presented certain challenges. While banks provide free banking for charities and CIOs, they are less willing to offer*

access to higher interest earning business accounts. As of now, we have not succeeded in opening a business savings account. We are currently considering closing our accounts with TSB and exploring the option of using the Charities Aid Foundation's banking services for our accounts. We aim to provide more information on this matter at next year's AGM.

- *A final thank you to those committee members and villagers who give up their time and contribute their skills and expertise to keep our Hall running so effectively.*

7. ELECTION OF TRUSTEES FOR 2025/26

- 7.1. The nine Village Hall trustees were noted on the agenda, namely: Barbara O'Keefe, Mary Noble, Nicky Scott, Daphne Wilbraham, Brian Matthews, Bill Hodgson, Paul Scott, Mark Oxtoby and Alan Rowe.
- 7.2. The CIO Officers are the chair (Alan Rowe), vice-chair (Brian Matthews) and Treasurer (Barbara O'Keefe) and, in line with our constitution, these postholders "shall be charity trustees as long as they hold those roles".
- 7.3. As noted at the previous AGM, Kate and Dee retired from the committee last summer, and the chair was delighted to report that Mark Oxtoby and Daphne Wilbraham have kindly agreed to join the committee. Mark represents the Photography Club and Daphne represents Sustainable Wootton Courtenay.
- 7.4. Confirmation of appointment of new trustees:
 - Daphne Willbraham: proposed by Peter Clapham and seconded by Ruth Walker. All in favour, no objections.
 - Mark Oxtoby: proposed by Peter Clapham and seconded by Roger Carrick. All in favour, no objections.
- 7.5. Confirmation of three-year appointment of two trustees on rotation (both trustees have agreed to stand for re-election):
 - Mary Noble: Proposed by Richard Oliver and seconded by Jeremy Curtis. All in favour, no objections.
 - Bill Hodgson: Proposed by Simon Brown and seconded by Alan Gardner. All in favour, no objections.
- 7.6. There were no questions regarding trustees' appointments.

8. FUTURE PLANS

- 8.1. Hall Roof: *At the last AGM we reported on a structural survey on the hall roof. To recap, we commissioned a survey of the hall roof to address any concerns over the extremely slow but steady splaying of the roof. Happily the surveyor concluded that there is no immediate safety issue: the roof is quite safe but it is continuing to very slowly spread outwards.*

However, the recent work on the north fire door, and adjustment of the proscenium arch, brought home the fact that we need to do something about the roof sooner rather than later: apart from anything else we are approaching the practical limits of adjustment on both the door and the arch. So we have asked the structural engineer to prepare a more detailed proposal on the best way to prevent further movement of the roof. He will be visiting the hall again on Thursday 10th July, and we will provide a further update when we have received his report"

- 8.2. The Hall committee is working with the Parish Council on a joint initiative – to provide a 'warm safe place' in the event of a protracted power cut or similar disruption. The plan is to procure and install a small generator which will enable Hall heating, lighting and a small number of appliances to be run to make hot drinks etc. The generator will be wired into the Hall system with a change-over switch; all costs will be split 50/50 with the Parish Council.
- 8.3. Questions/comments on Future Plans: A question was raised whether the current National Grid work would obviate the need to install the proposed generator. The Hall Committee and Parish

Council felt that the work by National Grid may reduce the number of power outage instances, but there is no guarantee of this. And with global warming bringing increasingly severe weather conditions, it is still prudent to have a backup arrangement in place.

9. SECRETARY'S REPORT

Mary's notes:

I am pleased to say that it has been a busy year, and this is thanks to you. Thanks to those who give, and thanks to those who support, it makes it all worthwhile.

Village Talks: *I have loved organising The Village Talks because this is a perfect example of a village working together. They are only successful because of the amount of people willing to give up their time to present them: in such a small village it's wonderful that we don't run out of speakers. So thank you. The first of our talks was An Illustrated History of Wootton Courtenay, presented very professionally by Roger Carrick, Chris Binnie and Patrick Hoyte. This included a light, early history, some details of the infrastructure and sale in 1920, and an update on how the village changed after the sale. The retiring collection gave generously to the Air Ambulance and the RNLI.*

In November Jackie Macbeth presented a talk entitled 'The Building Blocks of Music' in which she explored why music sounds the way it does. She illustrated her talk by performing excerpts from classical, jazz, folk, rock and pop music plus a few of her own compositions. It was very well attended, much appreciated, and raised a generous amount most appropriately for Musicians Without Borders. In December Ian Stewart presented 'A Short History of the Invention of Miners' Safety Lamps. This was a really interesting, well illustrated talk enhanced by a collection of lamps from some of our villagers, Richard Oliver, John Brady and Ian himself. The retiring collection gave a generous amount in aid of Prostate Cancer.

In February of the new year Chris Binnie discussed the issues and benefits of the West Somerset Lagoon in a talk entitled 'Tidal Power from the Bristol Channel'. We are lucky to have such an expert on this, and that he should share his knowledge with us, while at the same time raising a generous amount for Minehead Lifeboat Station.

In March Duncan McCanlis and members of the Porlock Poetry Group presented a talk on a lovely book that they had produced called 'Through the Library Window'. They shared with us the story of the development of the book, they read some of the beautiful poems that they had written, and shared photos of Exmoor that supported them. They were very grateful to receive the proceeds of the retiring collection to support The Porlock Community Library.

In April Greta and Ingrid shared with us their experiences of their travels in Japan. This was a much appreciated, very well attended talk in which the audience was invited to immerse themselves in the sights and sounds of this extraordinary country. And they did! It was the final one of the winter talks and we certainly ended on a high, while at the same time raising a very generous amount for The West Somerset Food Cupboard.

As you can see the talks continue to flourish, and I am particularly pleased by the variety of themes, and the time and thought that is put into them. What a talented and interesting village we are!

I already have four talks lined up for next winter, though they haven't signed on the dotted line so I won't publicise them yet. But I am confident that they will happen, and I'm really looking forward to them.

Take Art: *We have continued to support Take Art, a charity organisation that is close to my heart, and in March we were treated to Elvis in Blue Hawaii. The audience of just fifty people loved this! I think it was one of the best Take Art shows that we have had. You didn't have to be an Elvis fan to appreciate it, though of course it helped if you were, but it was just an evening of sheer fun.*

We applied for two Take Art shows for the coming year and the first Good Habits will entertain us in November. This is a musical duo who have performed at folk festivals throughout Europe and who have excellent reviews. They were our first choice and we were lucky to get them. We weren't so lucky with our second choice who could only perform for one night and had eight villages wanting them. So they

chose, and they didn't choose us. We were offered other acts but none that really appealed to us. I decided therefore to approach 'Elvis' privately, he wasn't in the new Take Art brochure but I had kept his number. They are touring a new show 'The Spy Who Loved Me Tender', (Elvis does Bond) and they have agreed to bring it to us in the new year. It will be expensive because we won't have Take Art funding, but I am really excited about this and I am confident that we will love it!

The Dunkery Players: *were busy again this year and in April performed, over two nights, Take 4, four one act plays that were very well received. We had many new members, both on and off the stage, and I was so grateful to them all. It made the production quite special. We made a profit of £840, £500 of which we gave to the Village Hall.*

We are already planning our next production!

The film club: *has shown four, very different, films that were much enjoyed. They were Lion, a true story set in India and Australia, Mrs Harris goes to Paris, a beautiful feel good film starring Lesley Manville , and another true story One Life, showing the rescue of hundreds of Jewish children from Czechoslovakia. For Christmas we chose something quite different The Muppet Christmas Carol, and those who came loved it.*

We are happy to receive requests for films, we have two in at the moment for The French Lieutenant's Woman and The Salt Path. So watch this space!

Before I hand over to Valerie to tell us about the theatre club I would just like to thank you all for your continued support. We couldn't do it without you.

Theatre Club (read by Valerie Clapham)

Forthcoming events:

21st July: 'A streetcar named desire' by Tennessee Williams. A contemporary National Theatre production starring the ubiquitous Gillian Anderson.

22nd September: 'Macbeth' starring Christopher Eccleston and Niamh Cusack. An RSC production from 2018.

20th October: Mozart's 'Don Giovanni' from the Royal Opera House (2019).

27th October: George Bernard Shaw's 'Mrs Warren's Profession' from the National Theatre. Starring Imelda Staunton

17th November: 'Inter Alia' by Suzie Miller and starring Rosamund Pike

15th December: 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland' from the Royal Ballet (Steven McRae as the Mad Hatter)

2026

22nd June 2026 - three one act ballets by Frederick Ashton from the Royal Ballet

Valerie thanked Amanda Elliot for all of her work leading the Theatre Club.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Alan invited questions, there were none.

Villagers were thanked for attending. The meeting closed at 8.20pm.