

12 May 25

Community Clerk – Rackheath Community Council

Copies to:

RVH Committee

RACKHEATH VILLAGE HALL BRIEF TO THE RACKHEATH ANNUAL COMMUNITY MEETING – 12 MAY 25

General Comment

Rackheath Village Hall continues to be a valuable asset to the village of Rackheath and the local environs. It remains a charitable trust administered by a small group of trustees and regular volunteers and is supported and used by regular groups offering a wide range of activities. The request for “new blood” from our Community that I sought last year has so far gone unanswered, so my small committee continues to run this facility and seeks to address its various challenges as they arise as well as looking towards ongoing development. The benefits of charitable status, which allows our rates to some of the lowest in the locality and provide more favourable rates to Rackheath residents continue and we have several large expenditure refurbishment tasks in train. My Committee and I continue to liaise with the Community Council about the Village infrastructure development.

Hall Improvement

Last year, I reported the redecoration of the main hall, the installation of electronically-controlled thermal blinds and self-help redecoration of the kitchen which improved the general appearance of the main hall. As we continue to move forward, so far this year work has begun to improve the foyer, ceilings in the toilets and replacement of the blinds between the kitchen and the main hall. Later this year, during the summer, we will be tackling the main hall ceiling and replacing the tiles. Additionally, we have looked at refurbishing the main hall floor which we hope to move forward on with a plan once the ceiling has been completed. I previously mentioned the plan for an extension to the Hall to provide better storage, reworked kitchen and toilets that meet current legislation/requirements. That is currently on hold, but will be considered again when the other large tasks are complete. We have just made provision for a cleaner twice a week bi-monthly and continue to rely on our users to leave the Hall in a clean condition on departure – this has, as you might expect, variable results and, like most community buildings, occasionally results in more than “fair wear and tear” from non-regular hires. .

Grants

Where the Village Hall has access to grants or funding as a recognised asset of the village, my committee will seek to defray costs of larger works where possible. This year, we have requested support for the costs associated with the main hall ceiling replacement and also on behalf of the Rackheath Players for their replacement of the tin storage shed at the rear of the Hall. After gaining planning permission where required, we have been in consultation with the Community Council who are working with Broadland DC to ensure that any development funds given to us are in accordance

with the legislation. Various meetings are in train at present and the Community Council Sec is preparing a CIL grant policy. Together we hope to get an answer that benefits the community and that we might be able to progress an application for CIL money towards the middle of this year.

Areas Of Concern

Sadly, the RVH Committee is increasingly facing the sorts of challenges faced by most volunteer organisations. The following areas are not new to this audience:

- **Lack of New Committee Members Coming Forward to Help Run RVH.** As identified to this forum over the past years, this situation remains critical for the Village Hall to function. New committee members who recognise the importance of the facilities the Hall provides for its users and how it should and can be used are essential. There has been discussion with the Community Council about the Village Hall being administered as a responsibility of the Council. Having explored the provisions of our situation of as a trust with charitable status, any change of control has further provisions and constraints that need careful consideration. Useful information has been provided by ACRE (the body that guides village halls) and I hope to be able to lay out the various arguments to my committee soon. However, the “takeaway” is that trusteeship has to be maintained and the Village Hall has to be run by a self-contained committee – so the call for new members remains!
- **Ongoing Structure & General Fabric Maintenance.** The need for a general structural survey carried out on the whole building has yet to be taken forward. As previously mentioned, we look to our users to read and heed instructions and guidance so that the hall is looked after. Sometimes, that needs reinforcing. (Did I mention stacking chairs?!)
- **Energy Supply.** The reliance on gas for heating and the limitations on electricity need further consideration about what solutions could be viable, whilst being protected from damage.
- **Respect For Property & Users.** As I’ve noted previously, the Village Hall and its grounds are private property. Members of the Community are asked to respect those who have booked the Hall and acknowledge that the rights of our hirers extend to the grounds as well as the Hall itself. That also extends to the refuse bins which are not a communal dumping facility.

Summary

The Village Hall continues to meet the needs of regular local groups and a wide range of other hirers. The committee is working to make sure it remains viable through longstanding, planned refurbishment within the available budget and funding constraints. Going forward, areas of concern around support from the community have to be addressed within the requirements of the Hall’s charitable trust status.

Steve Hands
Chairman
Rackheath Village Hall