

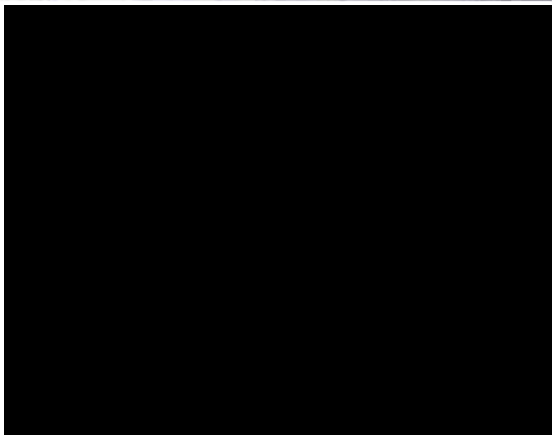


EAST HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMPLAINT FORM : CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS

A. Your details

1. Please provide us with your name and contact details. Anonymous complaints will only be considered if there is independent evidence to substantiate the complaint.

Title:	Mr
First name:	Neil
Last name:	Clarke
Address:	
Contact telephone:	
Email address:	
Signature:	
Date of complaint:	

Your address and contact details will not usually be released unless necessary or to deal with your complaint.

The following people may see this form:

- Monitoring Officer of the Council
- Standards Committee members
- Council's Independent Person(s)
- The subject member(s)
- the Parish Clerk (if applicable)

If you have serious concerns about your name and a summary, or details of your complaint being released, please complete **Section C** of this Form and also discuss your reasons or concerns with the Council's Monitoring Officer.

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Please tell us which complainant type best describes you:

- ☒ A member of the public
- ☐ An elected or co-opted Member of the Council
- ☐ An independent member of a Standards Committee
- ☐ A Member of Parliament
- ☐ A Monitoring Officer
- ☐ Other council employee, contractor or agent of the Council
- ☒ Other (Chair Much Hadham Village Hall Management Committee)

2. Equality Monitoring Form - please fill in the attached form.

B. Making your complaint

3. Please provide us with the name of the Member(s) you believe have breached the Council's Code of Conduct:

Title	First name	Last name
Cllr	Anthony	Baxter
Cllr	Selina	Bannerman
Cllr	Richard	Key

4. Please explain in this section (or on separate sheet(s)) what the Member is alleged to have done that you believe breaches the Code of Conduct. If you are complaining about more than one Member you should clearly explain what each individual person has done, with dates / witnesses to substantiate the alleged breach.

It is also important that you provide all the evidence you wish to have taken into account. For example:

- You should be specific, wherever possible, about exactly what you are alleging the Member said or did. For instance, instead of writing that the Member insulted you, you should state what it was they said or did to insult you.
- You should provide the dates of the alleged incidents wherever possible. If you cannot provide exact dates it is important to give a general timeframe.

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- You should confirm whether there are any witnesses to the alleged conduct and provide their names and contact details if possible.
- You should provide any relevant background information or other relevant documentary evidence to support your allegation(s).

Please provide us with the details of your complaint. Continue on a separate sheet if there is not enough space on this form.

This complaint covers events and correspondence over a period of several months. It concerns the conduct of Much Hadham Parish Cllrs Baxter, Bannerman and Key. Cllr Key has I understand now resigned from his position – but you may still consider him responsible for his behaviour whilst in office.

Their behaviour has in my view failed to reach the required standards in relation to their objectivity, accountability, openness and for Cllrs Baxter and Bannerman as the Parish Council Chair and Deputy – leadership. In particular I would note the item in the code of conduct – “Always treating people with respect, including the organisations and public I engage with and those I work alongside.”

My own relationship with the Village Hall Committee and the Parish Council has been fairly recent, but my understanding is that the relationship between the two organisations has not been a good one. The Parish Council owns the Village Hall on Trust, but has contributed minimally over the years to the maintenance of the building – leaving the Village Hall Management Committee to raise charitable funds to pay for essential repairs to the building, as well as for improvements and embellishments. Both relationships and the building have suffered as a result of the absence of a joint approach.

Since retiring from work I have been doing some work to modernise some of facilities in the hall, and reviewing various aspects of the building including general maintenance, maintenance of gas, fire and electrical appliances, internal decoration etc. One concern which came to light concerned the external soffit boards, bargeboards and guttering. Some of this was leaking, and in places the fascia boards were clearly rotting. (See appendix 1). Rather than go down the route of repairing and re-decorating I agreed with the Village Hall Committee – which included Cllr Liversage – to get estimates for the cost of replacing all (except the most ornate) barge boards, soffits and gutters. This strategy was reported to the Parish Council by Cllr Liversage. A service specification was drawn up, and estimates obtained. The lowest tender was accepted by the Village Hall Management Committee. The details of this application were then reported to the Parish Council at its meeting on the 19th May 2015 and the item (19) supported. Details of the application were subsequently requested and a report including photographs, service specification and estimates were forwarded on 12th June for Parish Council records. Arrangements were made with the contractor to commence work during the school summer holidays.

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At the end of June Cllr Key requested a meeting. His attitude from the outset was aggressive and dismissive. He was adamant that the fascia boards did not need replacement – merely minor repair. Clearly we had different views on this. Our plan was to replace all the fascia board, soffits, gutters and downpipes to create a decoration free and maintenance free environment which should then need minimal attention for a minimum of 15 - 20 years. As the contractor had already been briefed, Cllr Key agreed to urgently provide an alternative quotation. Clearly the alternate strategy would require periodic repair and painting to protect the woodwork. Cllr Key agreed to this but almost immediately changed tack (appendix 2).

Despite our requests for a documented and costed alternative strategy we have since been subjected to a series of disparaging remarks and statements – essentially accusing us of managerial and financial incompetence. The e-mail from Anthony Baxter (appendix 3) does not take a collegiate so much as a big brother approach – not helped by several clear factual errors (notably the Village Hall Management Committee accounts are presented to and signed off by the Parish Council on an annual basis – and they have a representative on the VMHC – so there is no reason for them to be unaware of our expenditure or to be able to challenge this wherever appropriate).

By the 21st July neither Cllr Baxter nor Cllr Key had provided any documentary evidence to support the contention that their approach was financially sound (see appendix 4). A quotation was finally obtained – dated the 21st July – and sent to us on the 22nd (appendices 5 and 6) with an e mail from Cllr Bannerman. The quotation was for replacement of a small section of guttering, and for plastic cladding of the fascia boards. This approach is only recommended if the fascia boards are in good condition. The quote for this was £33.60 per metre. We have 180 metres of guttering – total thus £5,040 + £365 net. However the price was clearly a lower specification (which we had rejected) and did not include the cost of any gutters or downpipes which required replacement following removal and attempted re-fitting (the gutters and downpipes are generally at least 28 years old so quite brittle). Not a quote that provided huge savings! We note that this contractor was used by the Parish Council to repair the gutter and the eventual price had risen from £365 to £468.

What was disgraceful was that Cllr Key took it on himself at this point – clearly with the support of Cllr Bannerman (see appendix 6) though with no request or agreement from the VHMC- to contact our contractor. This resulted in considerable distress for ourselves, and the contractor (Mr Rivett) who complained to Cllr Baxter about the way he was spoken to by Cllr Key (appendix 7). I have not been informed of the outcome of this complaint. Cllr Bannerman's e mail gives an interesting insight into the plans of the Parish Council to take a lead co-ordinating role across a number of organisations within the Parish. Sadly this has consistently felt more like a takeover bid than an offer of joint working.

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It was also at this time that another issue had arisen. Movement of a floor in the Green Room (the smaller meeting room) indicated a possible problem with wet rot in floor joists. Instead of contacting the VHMC to investigate this jointly Cllr Bannerman commissioned a builder to make a hole in the floor to examine the state of the underlying timbers. It was clearly implied that this was the result of negligence by the Village Hall Management Committee and an e-mail was sent from Cllr Baxter demanding urgent repair. At this point the acting Chair of the VHMC – Peter Appleton – resigned this position – as a direct result of the high-handedness from these Parish Council Members. I was elected as the new Chair of the Committee.

A meeting was held between the VHMC and Cllrs Baxter, Key and Bannerman on the 24th July to try to move things forward. A number of decisions were made (see appendix 8). It was agreed that the VHMC project around the fascia boards etc. would not proceed, and the PC would lead on repairs to the Green Room and fascias – and could approach the VHMC for appropriate assistance. There was no indication that the PC did not agree my account of the meeting.

At the beginning of September we were copied into an e-mail from Cllr Bannerman (appendix 10) stating that the VH (Village Hall Management Committee) would be paying for the floor, but the Parish Council would seek to assist with obtaining grants from East Herts. There had been no discussion, no request and certainly no agreement that we would be, or would be able, to assist in this way. This approach is extremely concerning. It disregards the budgetary responsibilities of the Parish Council as well as the financial responsibilities of the VHMC. It demonstrates a fundamental lack of respect – essentially making a request for £10,000 by copying another organisation into an e-mail that says they will be paying. The e-mail also raises questions about the financial operations of Much Hadham PC. A decision appears to have been made at an executive level (Cllrs Bannerman and Baxter as Chair and Deputy?) that the Parish Council would not fund this repair, and would “ask” the Village Hall Management Committee to do so. The fact that Cllr Bannerman was informing other councillors of this indicates it was not a subject raised at full council.

I wrote to Cllr Baxter on the 4th September asking for a 1:1 meeting to discuss this apparently hasty action from Cllr Bannerman. His response appears to have been to copy my e-mail to her. After several e-mails a meeting was called to resolve issues on the 14th September 2015 between Cllrs Bannerman and Baxter, and Peter Appleton (now VHMC Treasurer) along with myself (appendix 12). The responsibilities of the VHMC were explained in detail, confirmation was given that the East Herts grant had been applied for, and cautions raised about the ability of VHMC to meet the range of demands we are currently facing – together with concerns that there are restrictions on how charitable funds can properly be used. Various structural and maintenance issues were identified and Selina offered to lead on the development of a comprehensive structural assessment and maintenance/development programme. The possibility of an application for assistance with the funding from VHMC was left open – where this could be shown

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to be an enhancement. The gents' toilet was identified for attention, and it was suggested the VHMC invite Cllr Bannerman to sit on their Committee.

Notes on this meeting were circulated on the 20th September (see appendix 13). No response was afforded to this e-mail so one might be forgiven for understanding it to be an agreed record of the meeting.

On the 8th November I wrote to Cllr Baxter asking if there was any news (appendix 14). Cllr Baxter responded the same day and, with no apparent apology for the difficulties being caused for the Village Hall Management Committee, essentially back-tracked on all the agreements we had reached – and left the Hall Management Committee to get on with arranging and funding all repairs and drawing up a schedule for future maintenance. The Village Hall Management Committee was left to sort out the problem and we still had not had the courtesy of a request!

The final appendix (15) shows a number of e-mails following my challenge to the Parish Council decision not to assist with the Hall Floor issue. Again there was no apology for going back on previous agreements, nor for not offering any assistance. Worse there were inaccuracies which patently misrepresented the true situation. *"The guttering and the fascias have been repaired (thanks to the efforts of former Cllr Key) where the damage was greatest. This repair cost under £500 which was significantly under the amount of money to be spent (£10,000) by the Village Hall committee based on your work schedule. This change of plan which saved over £9,500 of unnecessary works and tax payers money was thanks to Cllr Bannerman and former Cllr Key."*

While the wrought iron section of gutter has been replaced the fascias have not been repaired and are deteriorating – putting the under-lying timbers at risk. The claim that £9,500 of unnecessary work has been avoided is a disrespectful nonsense. Cllr Baxter should also be aware that VHMC funds do not belong to the tax payer. As a charity we are responsible and accountable for the use of funds – but not to the tax payer as such.

I will not respond to the inaccuracies of the final rudeness from former Cllr Key but do note with concern that it was evidently endorsed and re-circulated by Cllr Baxter. Whilst he may well argue that his comments were just a joke he needs to know that not everyone is laughing – and this sort of thing is neither clever nor the sort of behaviour we should expect from someone in public office.

Apologies that this is somewhat lengthy – but I felt that a detailed understanding of the background was important. I have been turned down for financial assistance by other organisations – this is not the end of the world - but I have never faced the level of disrespect, and rudeness experienced from these councillors.

Peter Appleton - the treasurer of Much Hadham Village Hall Management Committee is aware of this complaint and has indicated his agreement to provide further information if required. His e mail is - [REDACTED]

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C. Confidentiality of complainant and the complaint details

Only complete this next section if you are requesting that your identity is kept confidential

5. In the interests of fairness and in compliance with the rules of natural justice, we believe Members who are complained about have a right to know who has made the complaint and the substance of the allegation(s) made against him / her. We are, therefore, unlikely to withhold your personal details or the details of your complaint unless you have good reasons to believe that you have justifiable grounds, for example:

- to believe you may be victimised or harassed by the Member(s) against whom you are submitting a written complaint (or by a person associated with the same); or
- may receive less favourable treatment from the Council because of the seniority of the Member against whom you are submitting a written complaint in terms of any existing Council service provision or any tender / contract that you may have or are about to submit to the Council.

Please note that requests for confidentiality or requests for suppression of the personal and complaint details will not automatically be granted. The Assessment Sub-Committee will consider the request alongside the substance of your complaint and the Monitoring Officer will then contact you with the decision. If your request for confidentiality is not granted, we will usually allow you the opportunity, if you so wish, of withdrawing your complaint.

However, it is important to understand that - in exceptional circumstances, where the matter complained about is very serious - we may proceed with an investigation (or other action) and may have no choice but to disclose your personal and complaint details, because of the allegation(s) made, even if you have expressly asked us not to.

Please provide us with details of why you believe we should withhold your name and/or the details of your complaint:

N.A.

(Continue on separate sheet(s), as necessary)

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D. Remedy sought

6. Please indicate the remedy or remedies you are looking for or hoping to achieve by submitting this complaint.

- In my view the councillors concerned should issue a public apology to the Village Hall Management Committee for the way these matters have been conducted. This should be formally minuted and reported on the PC website.
- To be fair I do wish to note that Cllr Bannerman has already apologised to us for her part in things early in September and her subsequent involvement may have been limited.
- The Councillors concerned appear to deal with Parish Council finances in an executive manner, and may require training to ensure that they adopt appropriate procedures which ensure that budgets and grant applications are set and agreed openly based on clear evidence, and not behind closed doors, on the basis of unreasoned prejudice or at the changeable whim of the chair or deputy. It would have been good if we had been invited to discuss our situation with the full council.
- Training may also be helpful in relation dealing with complaints. An understanding of the conciliation approach adopted in these processes could be very helpful for these individuals in helping them understand why they get the responses from people and other organisations that they do.
- Should former Councillor Key seek office again complaints against him should - if they have not been addressed - be considered as unfinished business.

(Continue on separate sheet(s), as necessary)

E. Additional information

8. Complaints must be submitted in writing. This includes fax and electronic submissions. Frivolous, vexatious and politically motivated tit-for-tat complaints are likely to be rejected.
9. In line with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, we can make reasonable adjustments to assist you if you have a disability that prevents you from making your complaint in writing. We can also help if English is not your first language.
10. If you need any support in completing this form, please contact the Monitoring Officer as soon as possible.

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Monitoring Officer Contact details:

The Monitoring Officer – Simon Drinkwater
East Herts Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8EQ

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Monitoring Form – Local Assessments of Complaints Standards Committee - Assessment Sub Committee

Working towards equal opportunities

East Hertfordshire District Council is committed to a policy of equality of opportunity in both employment and service provision. We seek to ensure that no person receives less favorable treatment on the grounds of gender, race, or ethnic origins, marital status, disability, age, sexual orientation, family responsibilities, religion, trade union involvement or political belief or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

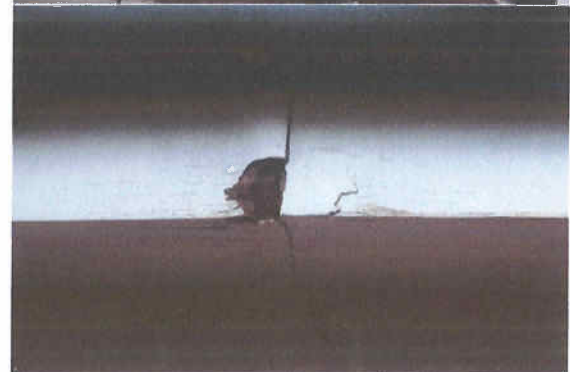
White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Chinese or other ethnic group
White British	White and Black	Indian	Caribbean	
White Irish	Caribbean	Pakistani	African	
Any other White	White and Black	Bangladeshi	Any other Black	
background	African	Any other Asian	background	Chinese
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Any other mixed	background	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>
	background	<input type="checkbox"/>		

*Categories used are those utilised by
the Office of Population Censuses and
Surveys

Do you have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on your ability that you wish to declare under the Disability Discrimination Act?

Yes ☐ No ☒

Appendix 1



From: Sue Clarke [REDACTED]
Sent: 10 July 2015 21:26
To: JANET LIVERSAGE
Cc: Peter Appleton; Tony Baxter; Richard Key; Selina Bannerman
Subject: Re: Works

Hi! I have to say I remain unconvinced that the repair works required can be executed at a viable cost. The project proposed would deal with the immediate repairs and future proof this area of structural maintenance for the next 15 to 20 years at least.

To withdraw from the agreement we have with Rivetts without having a costed alternative feels irresponsible - particularly as it took months to secure 3 acceptable quotations for the works and we could easily end up having to start this whole process again if the rub down, repair where necessary, and repaint option does not prove to be as cheap as people are hoping.

The agreement last week was that the Parish Council would look for one (rough) estimate for the repairs to give us an idea of whether this approach does make financial sense. As this hasn't yet happened I am very reluctant to recommend we withdraw from the commitment made by the Village Hall Committee. As an alternative perhaps Peter can help us with information on the cost of the last external redecoration of the hall? - which though dated and covering elements not covered in the current works may give us a 'ball park' figure?

I agree that the Parish Council and the Hall Committee should work closer together, but I would suggest that if the Parish Council wishes to dictate how the Hall Committee uses its own funds it should do so in a timely manner, and provide a costed alternative? Otherwise there seems little value in having a Hall Committee? The Parish Council could manage the hall directly? This would indeed clarify issues of responsibility and accountability?

Neil Clarke

On 10 Jul 2015 19:57, JANET LIVERSAGE [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Neil and Sue,

Richard Key is organising for a company to look at the gutters for the area which is in urgent need of attention.

He remains adamant that the boards and gutters should have attention, but are not in need of replacement. I have to agree about most of this except on the side that has the metal gutters. It really needs sorting there and before the winter.

We really need to organise a meeting between the Parish council reps and the Village Hall committee to realize a programme of repairs and maintenance. It has been noted that the Gents toilets need replacing, but there may be even more urgent works.....of course the fabric of the building comes first to ensure that it is water tight, safe etc.

I believe it would be best to cancel the proposed works to the boards and gutters and then meet up to go through things very thoroughly so that a priority list may be drawn up and auctioned.

I know that this will make you sigh and I understand the time that has passed since this work was first mooted, but it is important to make good decisions together so that we are supporting the same goal....which is always the best for the village. As we are all Much Hadham residents we want to be sure that the best decisions are made and then we go forward together to create a great facility of the village hall, with pride for our community.

I do hope that you agree with this sentiment. If you would like me to contact the company I can do so, but you felt that you were happy to do this. Let me know if you have changed your mind.

Let's get together really soon. Does anyone have a suggestion of a date or dates??

Regards

jan

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPad](#)

From: Anthony Baxter [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 July 2015 22:20
To: Peter and Sylvie; Neil and Sue Clarke
Cc: Selina Bannerman; IANFT LIVERSAGE [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Village Hall repairs

Dear Mr Appleton,

Thank you for your two e-mails.

The management of the Village Hall is clearly a current source of concern for the Parish Council. There are several issues that need to be resolved. This resolution will be achieved when the Village Hall committee and the PC enter a meaningful dialogue about these issues.

The Village Hall is an amenity that is held in trust for the Parish by the PC and managed by the VHC. It has only been in recent times that the PC has been afforded sight of the VH accounts and been involved in debate over the management of the fabric of this amenity.

I understand there is a meeting of the VHC on Wednesday to discuss various matters. I have not seen the agenda but could I ask that you discuss the following:

- 1) Parking management for the rear of the Village Hall. There really needs to be a fair and equitable solution to the problem of unauthorised parking which is affecting neighbours of the VH, the use of the VH and indeed the village itself.
- 2) The current state of affairs regarding the repairs (fascias, soffits, guttering etc.) to the VH which it seems are unnecessary and costly. I believe Cllr Richard Key has proposed an alternative, more realistic and less costly solution.
- 3) A review should be carried out on the previous repairs to the VH. A lot of Parish money has been spent on the VH but the Hall itself is still in need of a lot of remedial work (e.g. the men's toilets) to bring it up to modern day standards. There is also a concern that there is an immediate need for structural repair to the sub floor of the Green room where damage to the sub floor has occurred from water ingress due to damaged guttering. We have commenced an investigation into the extent of the damage. The PC is at a bit of a loss as to what exactly has been spent on the VH in the recent past and why.
- 4) A plan that identifies what needs to be done to the VH to bring it up to date (an asset management and maintenance plan) and make it a more valued amenity to generate funds for the village. I would suggest and expect this to be done through a sub-committee of VH and PC members.
- 5) As you put in your e-mail, the viability of the VH committee as it is currently constituted should be discussed.

I look forward to hearing about your deliberations in due course.

With regard to your comments about the front of the VH parking, I reiterate what I said in my previous e-mail which was that the PC has resolved to put two planters at each end of the parking space. These will be maintained (stocked, watered etc.) by the PC. The middle bays will be available for ambulance, disabled and emergency vehicles. I would expect that catering vehicles would use the rear car park.

I note than in an e-mail you sent to Cllr Liversage you said that her presence at the Wednesday VHC meeting was not required as the VHC wanted to hold their meeting *in camera*. I would ask you to reconsider this request. Cllr

Liversage has my and the entire PC's confidence and she will faithfully represent the PC's position which is not unreasonable.

The PC very much values the Village Hall as an amenity for use for all villagers and the PC appreciates that a lot of effort and hard work has gone into its management over many years. Previous PC's have in a sense left the VHC to 'get on with it' without being directly involved. The increase in financial scrutiny of village amenities by local councils and Government together with a desire by the current PC to make the most of our assets means that maintaining the *status quo* is no longer an option. I appreciate that recent PC communications have caused a degree of angst amongst the VHC, you have said that we are being 'heavy handed and not having a clue about the VH' but I should point out that as PC, we are obliged to take responsibility for all Parishioners assets including the VH, pavilion, the recreation ground etc. This PC is taking its responsibilities in such matters very seriously.

We are at your disposal to help improve the VH and manage the asset as best we can for all villagers.

I am happy to meet with you personally to discuss all options.

I will be forwarding this e-mail to the whole VHC when I have their addresses.

Yours sincerely

Tony Baxter

Dr Anthony D. Baxter
Chair MHPC

From: Peter and Sylvie [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 July 2015 15:36
To: Neil and Sue Clarke [REDACTED]
Cc: Anthony Baxte [REDACTED] Selina Bannermar [REDACTED] JANET
LIVERSAGE [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Village Hall repairs

Dear Mr Baxter

Further to the reply which you have received to this email from Neil Clarke may I also point out that when we have caterers for a function at the hall the front of the hall is reserved for the caterers vehicles so that they have easy access to the kitchens. As these are invariably long they park sideways across the front of the hall by prior arrangement so how do you anticipate that we should deal with them in the future if there are flower containers?

Perhaps it would be better if you spoke to the management committee before making any further decisions on how to block this off.

Could you also please confirm who will be responsible for the cost of stocking,maintaining and watering these throughout the year.

Yours sincerely

From: Neil and Sue Clarke [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 July 2015 22:00
To: 'Tony Baxter' [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Cc: 'Selina Bannerman'; [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: FW: Village Hall repairs

Dear Dr Baxter,

I would be grateful if you could find out whether we have had any quotes on the proposal from Richard Key that we should repair the soffit boards, barge boards and gutters (on both levels of the building), and re-paint the boarding? Without this we are not in a position to decide whether this "make do and mend" approach would actually be cost efficient? Richard thought the work could be done for £2,000 – and whilst I expressed my view that this maybe highly optimistic - we did agree to suspend the agreement with Rivetts to undertake a replacement programme in UPVC until this option has been explored. When we met on the 5th July Richard agreed to get a quote for this approach within a week if possible?

When we recently spoke to Rivetts about the issue they made 3 points:—

- i. They have removed the project from their schedule to start in the next 3 to 4 weeks.
- ii. That they have already purchased the materials for this job (so some compensation may be required if we do not go ahead), and
- iii. That the alternative approach suggested may actually cost as much as the replacement programme (and obviously contain no "future-proofing" element).

I suspect that the joist damage in the Green Room may be from the ground up rather than from the roof down as there was no internal sign of dampness running down the walls – but regardless it will need urgent attention both internally and externally. What is also clear is that where there are leaking gutters and rotten soffits it will not be helpful to delay the work through another winter. We had deliberately scheduled the soffit, barge-board and gutter work for the summer holidays when hopefully the weather would be good, and importantly the hall usage would be at a minimum. Due to the last minute intervention of the Parish Council (on a project that has been discussed and with minutes sent regularly to the Parish Council since September 2014) this time scale will not now be possible.

To re-iterate we are happy to consider a costed alternative approach to the soffit replacement strategy we have proposed – but in the absence of this a claim that the work could be done in a different way and far more economically – which is not then evidenced – simply puts a spanner in the works and makes it very difficult for us to know how to proceed. So it would be very helpful to know whether in fact a quotation for the work is available?

Personally I actively welcome the involvement of the Parish Council in developing a maintenance and improvement plan for the Village Hall – but I have to say the tone of much of the recent correspondence has felt extremely negative and, frankly, rather patronising. Whilst constructive criticism should never be denied, people who voluntarily give up their time to help co-ordinate the activities in the hall, roll up their sleeves to help with repair work, and who raise voluntary sector funds to help maintain the fabric of the building should be treated with respect – (even if they are less than perfect in all their dealings). Sadly this is not currently coming across in the correspondence.

Neil Clarke

P. J. ROOFING CONTRACTORS

STEVEN HUMPHREY 07850 348620
TONY LEWIS 07970 060196

VAT No: 986 0437 88



Appendix 5

P. J. Roofing, Arcroft Yard,
Marsh Lane, Ware SG12 9QL

Telephone: 01920 460848
Fax: 01920 460990
www.PJroofing.com



21st July 2015

Dear Sirs,

RE : Village Hall

We thank you for your enquiry and have pleasure in quoting the following:

Item 1

To remove existing cast iron gutter and clear from site. Supply and fix black plastic half round gutter to match existing forming all necessary corners and outlet details allowing 20 lm.

Complete for: £365.00 net/£73.00 vat

Total : £438.00

Item 2

To remove all gutters and set aside for re-use. Supply and fix white plastic cap it fascia over existing timbers re-fix existing guttering, leaving job clean and tidy on completion.

Complete for: £28.00 + Vat per lm/ £5.60 vat

Total : £33.60 per lm

Vat to be charged at current standard rate.

If we can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,

PJ Roofing Contractors.

From: Selina Bannerman [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 July 2015 15:40
To: Neil and Sue Clarke
Cc: Tony Baxter; [REDACTED] Peter and Sylvie; wendyduncan11
[REDACTED] Annica Farley;
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] John; Michael
Subject: Village Hall repairs and ongoing works.
Attachments: VillageHall.pdf; Untitled attachment 00147.htm; CORC.pdf; Untitled attachment 00150.htm

Dear Neil

Tony is away on business and has asked me to respond as he is stuck until later tonight by which time you will have had your meeting.

Thank you for your email . We appreciate that some of these emails may seem like a bolt out of the blue but much of this has been discussed over the past year or so at the PC meetings and requests for accounts and car parking have been minuted as well.

There is no intention on the part of the PC to insult or belittle the members of the VH committee, in fact quite the opposite. We are, just like yourselves, all volunteers who also take pride and care in our Parish otherwise we wouldn't put ourselves in the position that we do of donating huge chances of time whilst all of us have full time jobs. We are all coming from the same position as yourselves in giving our time for the good of the village and the Parish to ensure it remains viable and protected for coming generations.

We are also well aware and supportive of the huge amount of effort that goes into running these things and are feeling somewhat under the cosh ourselves. In this regard we are all in the same boat and we have previously stated that your dedication and time is admired and has never been in question. The only difference for the PC is that we are legally obliged to look after and maintain the assets of the Parishioners that we own them on their behalf. It puts us in a position of Landlord and thats not often a popular role.

As Tony mentioned in his email we are coming under much stricter scrutiny and have much we need to answer for regarding our group assets. When we gained a new Parish Council and Tony and I were voted Chair and Vice-Chair, we decided that one of the essential items was to get a proper list of assets and be able to report on the state of these and the work that would need to be carried out in the future, immediate repairs etc. As you suggest a rolling maintenance programme is most definitely required.

Perhaps in the past there has been a lack of communication between the PC and the VH and the minutes of both committees have been left to speak for themselves. Perhaps this approach could be much improved by a meeting with a few of you and the Pavilion Committee so that we can help each other. The Pavilion Committee was established as a subsection of the PC and consists of myself, John Carey , Mike Keough and Richard Key. We are all experienced in building and

Law. We feel we have a lot of the skill sets needed to put a programme together as well as being able to market the Parish assets.

We think that what maybe most helpful to all of us is to have a single group responsible for all the assets. We would like you to consider the idea of having the members of the PavCom together with some members from the VH committee, to devote ourselves to managing the properties. This way we can reduce the work needed to be done by all of us and have a viable and transparent rolling programme of works. We could also include the Village Hall under the marketing and booking system that we are setting in place for the Pavilion.

The three rental spaces are all very different and offer very different things suiting a wider variety of people. I explained to a parishioner at the last PC meeting, that some who will book the Pavilion would never have looked at the village hall but would have gone out of the village and visa versa, The ideal situation is to offer three areas that would suit everyone for whatever their size or purpose. The Pavilion has no kitchen and is small but ideal for anyone wanting some outdoor space... others want a confined space for children without fear of them leaving the building. Others like the dancers need a proper floor etc etc .

(As for catering i have been to many venues where the caterers have had to travel further than the kitchen from the back door. In a real state of no option we can always move the planters if we really have to. I have had flowers outside my front door as has most of the High street including Rogers house and they have never been stolen or vandalised. I can assure you that i will not allow them to go to ruin.)

Most other Parish Council sites include all their buildings that are for hire under one banner - we now have two different groups running this and we think it would benefit all the buildings to be grouped under one Web page on the PC website and Facebook. I know that Wendy Duncan has worked extremely hard on taking all these bookings and she could work with Annica on the new system if she wished. Its a internet based site which means that people can book and pay on line and see the diary whilst they are doing so. Deposits are taken and returned in the same way.

Roger Miller is the caretaker of the Pavilion also so we have much in the way of overlapping and would seem sensible to consolidate our energy and time and work together.

Regarding the work quote ...

Its approximately £400 for the guttering at the corner which has the greatest requirement . We appreciate that you had considered the rolling repairs to be done in the summer months, and this is no way a like for like quote, but its a lot of unnecessary work that has been quoted for by Rivetts - they have undertaken to do works that are not necessary - i don't in any way mean to sound offensive but its a fact and given the reaction of that company to threaten a law suit they are obviously very annoyed at this big chunk of work coming their way. However, What has just happened is common practise and they are seriously over reacting. PJ Roofing or another would do the required work but with a different specification. Most of this is joinery work.

Firstly no one undertakes to do a contract that size without a signature. Never on verbal say so and expect a binding contract. Secondly the materials ordered can always be cancelled unless they are bespoke and prepaid. The type of work, i am assuming would not have required any bespoke parts or timber so anything else was off the shelf and is refundable. I have had to do this on several occasions and the suppliers are used to it.

Richard has spoken to them and i would be glad to as well. My background is Law and building and Mike is our resident Lawyer for BP. We would be glad to explain to Rivetts why there are no compensation charges to be made in light of the fact there is no contract. Verbal in building never counts. I might add as well, that they were given over a fortnights warning that this was to be cancelled, i believe.

So please let me assure you that nothing we are referring to either in works or parking at the front of the building is personal . It's us trying to do our job responsibly and within our obligations as Councillors whose role it is to maintain and protect the parishioners property. We have a couple of companies that are known to either Richard or I that are very capable in this area of work and would be able to do the work required before winter comes.

We understand your frustration at having spent a year getting quotes and surveys done etc for us to put the brakes on it but i am sure you see that it was never too late to be more effective and that, with hindsight, we should have got more involved and helped out more in the first place. We have three new Councillors and we have fresh energy and eyes on the committees which are now working very effectively. We wish to work with you and extend all the services we can to create a more cohesive working group going forward.

Fyi the first quote for the works needed on the floor in the hall is to remove and replace and circa £10k. I am seeking another local building quote.

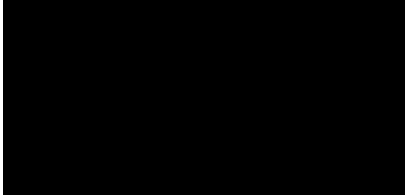
Would you be available to meet this weekend ? i am away on the 29th for two weeks . Perhaps Richard, Tony , Mike and I would be available Friday evening and Saturday and Sunday sometime to form a cohesive response to Rivetts ?

Kindest Regards

Selina

Our Ref: 14-729
22 July 2015

Mr A Baxter



Dear Mr Baxter

Re: Roofline at Much Hadham Village Hall – Mr R Kay

I visited the above site on 29 September 2014 and met a Mr Clark. I was instructed to supply an estimate for the renewal of fascias, soffits and where possible barge boards in PVC-ue, along with new guttering and down-pipe.

I sent out the estimate on 6 October 2014, copy enclosed and received a verbal order for the carrying out of the work at a site meeting on 12 May this year. Starting dates were also discussed and we agreed for around the end of July. I duly ordered the required materials, for which I have an invoice and proceed to programme the labour job in.

A week or so ago I received a phone call from Mrs Clark saying that the job had to be put on hold due to the fact that the Parish Council were questioning various aspects of the job. I explained the consequences of each point raised and agreed to wait for the result of discussions.

I today received a phone call from an extremely rude Richard Kay who claims to be a Parish Councillor and seemed to have some kind of agenda towards me. He raised points regarding the replacement rather than capping existing boards and I explained various reasons as to why capping is bad practice. I found his tone and manor very offensive, untrusting and totally unnecessary. I also find it hard to believe Mr Kay has managed to find himself in a position of representing a village such as Much Hadham.

Just for the record, I have had some 35no years' experience in roofline work and over 40no years in roofing in general. I run a very reputable company with a god name for standard of work and honest advice and I do not appreciate someone like this questioning my integrity.

I will be considering my invoice and will forward it when I'm ready.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely

CG Rivett
W&C Rivett

From: Neil and Sue Clarke [REDACTED]
Sent: 28 July 2015 10:16
To: 'Tony Baxter'
Cc: 'Selina Bannerman'; 'Peter and Sylvie' [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Village Hall repairs and ongoing works.
Attachments: VH repair1.jpg; VH repair2.jpg; VH repair 3.jpg; VH repair 4.jpg; VH repair 5.jpg; VH repair 6.jpg; VH repair 7.jpg; VH repair 8.jpg; VH repair 9.jpg; VH repair 10.jpg

Dear Dr Baxter,

Many thanks to you and your colleagues for sparing us your time on Friday. As you yourself commented meeting face to face can be far more effective than relying solely on e mails. Our view was that the meeting was positive and constructive and went a long way towards repairing the chronically weak relationship between our organisations. I hope we can build on this over the weeks and years to come.

Clearly we didn't keep formal notes of the meeting, but my understanding is that we agreed a course of action with regards both the key issues on the agenda:

1. The Parish Council has undertaken an investigation into the depression on the floor in the Green Room. The underlying timbers appear to have been affected by wet rot over a number of years – there appear to be indications that some dampness was present when the current floor was laid in the 1980s. The leaking gutter has probably increased the process in recent times causing saturation of the ground around the foundations. There is some doubt about whether there was a damp-proof course fitted when the building was constructed, and whilst there are 2 air-bricks below the floor level these may be inadequate to give good ventilation. The whole of the wooden floor (there is a concreted section adjacent to the kitchen) will need to be replaced. The Parish Council agreed to take responsibility for this work as the PC is responsible for the structure of the Village Hall. Grants will be sought from East Herts Council to assist with the work, and estimates are being obtained for the work. The Village Hall Committee has offered to assist with consideration of other issues around this room such as improved furnishings (e.g. perhaps a projector screen?) to make it more suitable for the range of organisations who use this facility.
2. Soffits, bargeboards and gutters. We had a long discussion about this. Much of the woodwork does remain in good condition, and it was agreed that full replacement is not essential at the present time. The Parish Council clearly feels that repairing is the most cost effective approach at the present. The Parish Council do not consider the offer from the Village Hall Committee to fund a full replacement of soffits, bargeboards and gutters to be an effective use of "public" (that is charitable) money, so this offer has not been accepted. The Parish Council will take responsibility for the external repairs. A brief tour of the building was undertaken to highlight the areas where the woodwork will require attention.

Following the meeting there are a number of areas which I suggest we need to look at:

1. Safety of the Green Room. The advice appears to be that it is not safe to use this room. There are a number of groups who have booked this room over coming weeks – notably the team responsible for Busy Week. Do we need to put a full bar on people using the room – or can this safely be a partial restriction – for example ensuring that heavy use by sports or dance groups does not take place? Leading up to the Village Fete the room is used for storage? Would this be acceptable?
2. Clearly we are only at the point of getting estimates for the work – but if the Green Room is to be out of action for a period it will be helpful as soon as possible to provide hall users with this information and enable them to consider alternative arrangements.
3. In relation to the woodwork repairs I have taken some snaps of the areas we looked at on Friday. Essentially these were taken going around the hall from the car park in anti-clockwise order. I hope they are helpful when looking at quotations for the work. The final one of the upper elevation shows a loose roof slate. There was also a broken roof slate outside the main hall door when I went to take the photos today.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 04 September 2015 17:08
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Selina Bannerman; Tony Baxter; Neil and Sue Clarke; Mary Byrne; Peter and Sylvie
Subject: Re: Parking at the Village Hall

That's correct Ian - we don't have funding already - we can apply for the capital grant upto £8 k but in that it's a 10k job the most they would give is 50% of that . Also the deadline for that is Monday and with the Fete and the pavilion and all the trades away on holiday it was difficult to get anything sorted in time .

So yes, the intention is that the VH pay and we try to help them recover some of the cost through a grant. Also the room when it's finished with an oak floor will hopefully encourage further bookings and we will start helping to market the village hall on our Pc website and FB page.

My understanding is that 10k had been set aside for the guttering so the money is available for repairs - the guttering and the other repairs can be done at the same time as the floor .
Hope this helps.

Kind regards
Selina

Sent from my iPhone

On 4 Sep 2015, at 13:26, <ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk>
<ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk> wrote:

Selina

Just to be clear, what is the source of funding for the floor? Is it from the VH reserves, with the hope that subsequently it will be recovered by a grant from EHC, or do we have a grant agreed already?

Regards

Ian

From: selinabannerman@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk [REDACTED]
Sent: 04 September 2015 12:52
To: <ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk> <ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk>
Cc: Tony Baxter [REDACTED]; Selina Bannerman
<selinabannerman@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk>; Neil and Sue Clarke [REDACTED];
Mary Byrne [REDACTED] Peter and Sylvie [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Parking at the Village Hall

Thank you Ian .

We should send that letter so its on record to all the estate agents in BS and Ware . Then it's recorded that they have been told that this is not the case.

Meanwhile when I finish with the pavilion next week I will arrange with Peter Appleton to get the moveable planters in place at the front .

From: Neil [REDACTED]
Sent: 04 September 2015 20:33
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: RE: Parking at the Village Hall
Attachments: Untitled attachment 00081.txt

Hi Tony,

I have to say I find this correspondence very disappointing. It is very presumptive and shows little understanding of how organisations work effectively with one another.

If the Parish Council wishes to gain financial assistance from the Village Hall Committee we would expect a request to be made? For expenditure of this level we would normally expect 3 quotes. If you want us to proceed with less we will check with the Charity Commission whether we should proceed on this basis.

Most grants are not made retrospectively. Do we have any verbal or written agreement from East Herts that they will reimburse the £5k? Will the Parish Council be making a financial contribution?

As it stands Selina appears to be looking to commit £10k of our funds on the basis of ccing us into some emails?

It would be helpful if the 2 of us could meet up please to look at a way forward? I'm away until Monday evening, but could meet up on Tuesday evening if you're free then? If not perhaps after the VH committee meeting on the Thursday.

Thanks,
Neil

----- Forwarded message -----

From: ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk

Date: 4 Sep 2015 18:32

Subject: RE: Parking at the Village Hall

To: selinabannerman [REDACTED]

Cc: 'Tony Baxter' [REDACTED] 'Neil and Sue Clarke' [REDACTED], 'Mary Byrne' <[REDACTED]> Peter and Sylvie [REDACTED]

> Very good – thank you.

>

>

>

>

> Ian

>

>

>

> **From:** selinabannerman [REDACTED]

> **Sent:** 04 September 2015 17:08

> **To:** <ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk>

<ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk>

> **Cc:** Selina Bannerman <selinabannerman@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk>; Tony Baxter [REDACTED] Neil and Sue Clarke [REDACTED] Mary Byrne [REDACTED] Peter and Sylvie [REDACTED]

> **Subject:** Re: Parking at the Village Hall

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> That's correct Ian - we don't have funding already - we can apply for the capital grant upto £8 k but in that it's a 10k job the most they would give is 50% of that . Also the deadline for that is Monday and with the Fete and the pavilion and all the trades away on holiday it was difficult to get anything sorted in time .

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> My understanding is that 10k had been set aside for the guttering so the money is available for repairs - the guttering and the other repairs can be done at the same time as the floor .

>

> Hope this helps.

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> Kind regards

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> Selina

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> Sent from my iPhone

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> On 4 Sep 2015, at 13:26, <ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk> <ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk> wrote:

>>

>> Selina

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>>

>>

>> Just to be clear, what is the source of funding for the floor? Is it from the VH reserves, with the hope that subsequently it will be recovered by a grant from EHC, or do we have a grant agreed already?

>>

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>>

>> Regards

Notes on the Meeting between Much Hadham Parish Council representatives and Much Hadham Village Hall Management Committee Representatives.

14th September 2015

1. Those present:

Tony Baxter – Chair, Much Hadham Parish Council

Selina Bannerman – Deputy-Chair, Much Hadham Parish Council

Neil Clarke – Chair, Much Hadham Village Hall Management Committee

Peter Appleton – Treasurer, Much Hadham Village Hall Management Committee

- 2. Clarification was made concerning the responsibilities of the Parish Council and the Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) concerning repairs and improvements to the Hall. It was agreed that, as the owners of the building, the Parish Council has primary responsibility for structural repairs to the hall. Whilst the Village Hall Management Committee has an income from lettings which may be used for structural works, this income is limited and is invariably used up to cover running costs (gas, electricity, water, cleaning etc.)**
- 3. The grant for assistance with the costs of Green Room floor repairs has been submitted to East Herts Council. Indications are that this will be viewed favourably, but the outcome will not be known until October.**
- 4. The Village Hall Management Committee can then be approached for a financial contribution towards these works. A number of considerations were discussed in this respect:**
 - i. The VHMC has a responsibility to members and the Charity Commissioners to account for funds. A sufficiently detailed request which will satisfy future accountability and auditing requirements makes life easier for all concerned.**
 - ii. As the VHMC does not have primary responsibility for structural works, any additionality within the project (e.g. the improved flooring proposed for the Green Room) should be highlighted as this clearly comes within the remit of the VHMC.**
 - iii. Cautions were raised about the funding available. Lettings income has been limited with the Drama Group not having a May production, and using the Church for its Autumn Production. It was also pointed out that where hall funds have been obtained for specific purposes (notably from**

From: Neil and Sue Clarke [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 September 2015 11:59
To: 'Tony Baxter'; selinabannerman [REDACTED] 'Peter and Sylvie'; 'Anthony Baxter'
Subject: Village Hall Meeting
Attachments: Notes of the Meeting Sept 2015.docx

May thanks for making time available to meet up last week. I've run off some notes from what I felt was a helpful and constructive meeting. Please let me know if there are any errors or omissions from the key points of discussion.

Many thanks,

Neil Clarke
[REDACTED]

From: Neil and Sue Clarke [REDACTED]
Sent: 08 November 2015 22:19
To: 'Tony Baxter'
Cc: selinabannerman [REDACTED] 'Peter and Sylvie'; 'Anthony Baxter'; 'JANET LIVERSAGE'; ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk; 'Penny Taylor'; alexyoung@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk; justingodfrey@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk; mikekeogh@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk
Subject: RE: Village Hall Meeting
Attachments: Notes of the Meeting Sept 2015.docx

Hi Tony,

Further to our meeting in September, can you please up-date me on progress?

1. With regards the Green Room Floor – have we had formal notice from E Herts that a grant has been agreed? What contribution will the Parish Council be making? Will an application for assistance be made to the Village Hall Management Committee? We meet on the 10th December and it will be helpful to have details of any request at least a week before the meeting as there are a number of items of expenditure we would wish to consider (including redecoration of the Green Room after the floor has been replaced, and purchase of some new chairs specifically for this room). We will need to know all the demands on the budget at this point in order to be able to determine what can or cannot be afforded.
2. We discussed the need for a thorough review of the structure of the building (including the various drainage issues). It was agreed that a structural survey would be conducted by members of the Parish Council with the intention of enabling us to develop a long/medium term maintenance/improvement programme for the hall. Can you tell us if there has been any progress on this please? Is it possible to put a timetable on this?

Many thanks in anticipation of your help.

Neil Clarke
Chair Much Hadham Village Hall Management Committee.
[REDACTED]

From: Neil and Sue Clarke [REDACTED]
Sent: 20 September 2015 11:59
To: 'Tony Baxter'; 'selinabannerman [REDACTED]'; 'Peter and Sylvie'; 'Anthony Baxter'
Subject: Village Hall Meeting

Many thanks for making time available to meet up last week. I've run off some notes from what I felt was a helpful and constructive meeting. Please let me know if there are any errors or omissions from the key points of discussion.

Many thanks,

Neil Clarke
[REDACTED]

From: Tony Baxter [REDACTED]
Sent: 08 November 2015 23:08
To: Neil and Sue Clarke
Cc: Selina Bannerman; Peter and Sylvie; Anthony Baxter; JANET LIVERSAGE;
<ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk>; Penny Taylor; Alex Young; Ian
Devonshire
Subject: Re: Village Hall Meeting

Dear Neil,

Thank you for your e-mail.

I have good news and bad news for you.

The good news is that we have received notification of a grant from EHC for just over £5000 to repair the Green Room floor - thanks to the fundraising efforts of Richard Key.

The bad news is Richard Key, Mike Keogh and Justin Godfrey have resigned from the Parish Council and there may be at least two other resignations at the December PC meeting. Their resignations are regrettable and unfortunate but entirely understandable given the climate of hostility and the total lack of appreciation due to those Councillors who have worked very hard on behalf of the Parish by other foolish and utterly selfish members of our community. I am sure you know what and who I mean.

I am by no means certain whether the next PC meeting will be quorate and therefore able to sanction any PC funds to support this project. I therefore suggest given the parlous state of the floor in the Green Room, the Village Hall Committee allocate the rest of the funds needed for repair from their own resources. Cllr Bannerman estimated that this would cost about £10,000 from a quote she received so you would need to find about £5,000 from your reserves. I doubt Cllr Bannerman would be willing to assist you given current circumstances and I would be grateful if you could relay to the rest of your Committee that the blame for this situation rests entirely on the people (mentioned above) who have sought to destabilise the PC to the detriment of the users of the Village Hall and indeed the rest of the Parish. As Chairman of the PC I would advise you that you should quickly take advantage of the grant awarded and make the necessary repairs (preferably through a reputable builder outside of the community after receipt of the requisite 3 quotes) as soon as possible.

With regard to your second point, the good offices of the PC members who were willing to help the VH are now closed due the reasons mentioned before. Again as Chairman of the PC, I would urge you to complete the structural review as soon as possible using your own resources and present these to the Dec or Jan PC meeting.

The VH is the biggest financial asset under the responsibility of the PC and I will be keeping a very close and beady eye on its upkeep on behalf of future generations of users.

I am of course available to assist you in the above matters and am very willing to discuss the matter further.

Best wishes

Tony Baxter
Chairman MHPC

On Sun, Nov 8, 2015 at 10:19 PM, Neil and Sue Clarke <nclarke167@aol.com> wrote:

From: Anthony Baxter [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 November 2015 21:48
To: Richard Key; Neil and Sue Clarke; 'Tony Baxter'
Cc: 'Selina Bannerman'; 'Peter and Sylvie'; 'JANET LIVERSAGE';
ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk; 'Penny Taylor'; 'Alex Young'; 'Ian
Devonshire'; Mike Keogh
Subject: RE: Village Hall Meeting

Dear Richard,

You posed a question.

"Why Mr Clarke is still trying to start this unnecessary and hugely expensive project I do not know."

You might say this. I couldn't possibly comment.

Tony

Dr Anthony D. Baxter
Chairman MHPC
[REDACTED]

From: Richard Key [REDACTED]
Sent: 15 November 2015 19:43
To: Neil and Sue Clarke <nclarke167@aol.com>; Anthony Baxter [REDACTED] 'Tony Baxter'
[REDACTED]
Cc: 'Selina Bannerman' [REDACTED] Peter and Sylvie [REDACTED]
'JANET LIVERSAGE' [REDACTED]; ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk; 'Penny Taylor'
[REDACTED] 'Alex Young' <alexyoung@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk>; 'Ian Devonshire'
<Ian.Devonshire@eastherts.gov.uk>; Mike Keogh <mikekeogh@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk>
Subject: Re: Village Hall Meeting

Dear Tony,

The pictures Mr Clarke attached to his email show mostly flaking paint, 95% of the timber and guttering is sound. Fact

Why Mr Clarke is still trying to start this unnecessary and hugely expensive project I do not know.

The fact is the Green Floor is rotten, the gents toilet stinks and has not been really be updated since I was a child and the general appearance of the building is shabby.

The Much Hadham Village Hall needs professional people maintaining it, at the moment it seems that there is the potential for continued poor decision making and poor return for village funds.

Kind Regards

Richard Key

From: Neil and Sue Clarke [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 November 2015 22:37
To: 'Anthony Baxter'; 'Tony Baxter'
Cc: 'Selina Bannerman'; 'Peter and Sylvie'; 'JANET LIVERSAGE'; ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk; 'Penny Taylor'; 'Alex Young'; 'Ian Devonshire'; Richard Key
Subject: RE: Village Hall Meeting

Dear Tony,

Thank you for the e mail below. I note that it does now contain a formal request for financial assistance with the Green Room Floor repairs. I will circulate this e mail to the organisations represented on the Village Hall Management Committee to be considered at the next meeting.

I would be grateful if you could forward the quotations we have been told have been obtained, along with the service specification for the work (if indeed one was produced).

I am afraid the Parish Council's management of the repairs to the fascias and gutters does not inspire confidence. We have been told for months that our proposal to replace gutters, soffits and barge boards with UPVC was unnecessarily costly. However, at no time has the Parish Council been able to provide a costed alternative. The replacement of a small section of guttering at a cost of nearly £500 goes nowhere near addressing the problems. Please note the attached photographs sent to you in my e mail of the 26th July 2015 which showed areas then needing repair. As far as I can see none of these have been attended to in the repairs undertaken to date, and all will be deteriorating further as water ingress continues.

The performance of the Parish Council in this whole matter has been woeful. On several occasions some Parish Councillors have been rude, patronising and disrespectful to the Village Hall Management Committee and indeed to our contractor. In my view this has amounted to inappropriate conduct by a statutory authority, and this continues in your e mail below. I have tried to be patient, trying to maintain a positive relationship with the Parish Council, but at this point it becomes very difficult to see any reason for not making a formal complaint. I think you have left me with little choice.

Neil Clarke
Chair Much Hadham Village Hall Management Committee.

From: Anthony Baxter [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 November 2015 14:36
To: Neil and Sue Clarke; 'Tony Baxter'
Cc: 'Selina Bannerman'; 'Peter and Sylvie'; 'JANET LIVERSAGE'; ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk; 'Penny Taylor'; 'Alex Young'; 'Ian Devonshire'; Richard Key
Subject: RE: Village Hall Meeting

Dear Neil,

Thank you for your message of support - it is much appreciated.

However to address your points. The current Parish Council has, after many years of previous Councils inactivity with the Village Hall, taken the view that the Parish Council should have some influence of the maintenance of its

primary assets. This was actually suggested by former District Cllr Carver in 2013. We (You, Mr Appleton, Mr Duncan, Cllrs Bannerman and Key and myself) have met to discuss two recent issues - the guttering and fascias; and the Green Room floor. The guttering and the fascias have been repaired (thanks to the efforts of former Cllr Key) where the damage was greatest. This repair cost under £500 which was significantly under the amount of money proposed to be spent (£10,000) by the Village Hall committee based on your work schedule. This change of plan which saved over £9,500 of unnecessary works and tax payers money was thanks to Cllr Bannerman and former Cllr Key.

The Green Room floor which is rotten no secure over needs as we all agree to be repaired. Cllr Bannerman managed to secure a grant of £5000 toward this repair and it should be stated that this grant was given to the VH at the expense of the application being presented for the Pavilion due to the fact that only one application is allowed to be made to EHDC per annum. We felt that the Green room repair was of greatest priority and benefit to the Parishioners.

You say the PC is abdicating its financial responsibility to the VH. Nothing could be further from the truth and smacks of opportunism. The PC has not committed any monies to the VH this year - it is not in any budget and any proposed spend has not been agreed the PC which it would be required to give.

When we met, we agreed that in future, the PC would exert some influence and assistance towards the repairs to the fabric of the VH building and support future maintenance. This is why I have asked you to come up with a Schedule of Works plan for the VH which should be presented to the PC for consideration and possible inclusion in the 2016 and beyond budget. I again ask you to comply with this request. Cllr Bannerman has offered to help with this process should you wish.

Coming back to the Green room repairs I formally request that the VH committee sanction spending from their own reserves to make the difference of the cost of the repair excluding the grant of about £5000. The monies saved from the unnecessary guttering / fascias project will more than covered this amount. Could you please provide me with an up to date statement of VH accounts so that the PC can understand the financial position of the VH.

The PC agree wholeheartedly with you that the PC should take more financial responsibility for its own assets which include the Pavilion, the Recreation ground and the Village Hall and also other assets. We hope you and the VH committee work with the PC Council in future in a coordinated fashion to set reasonable objectives to better maintain the VH asset than has historically been the case on behalf of all Parishioners.

Yours sincerely

Tony Baxter
Chairman MHPC

From: Neil and Sue Clarke

Sent: 10 November 2015 19:19

To: 'Tony Baxter'

Cc: 'Selina Bannerman'

'Peter and Sylvie'

Anthony Baxter 'JANET LIVERSAGE'

ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk; 'Penny Taylor'; 'Alex Young'

<alexyoung@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk>; 'Ian Devonshire' <Ian.Devonshire@eastherts.gov.uk>

Subject: RE: Village Hall Meeting

Dear Tony,

I'm sorry to hear that the Parish Council has had these problems. Sadly too few people in our community seem to recognise that it is only people who do anything who make mistakes. Some go beyond this general lack of grace by making personal attacks.

I certainly have no wish to add to your woes, but....

The response from the Parish Council is very disappointing. Having made it clear to us that the Parish Council has primary responsibility for the structural maintenance of the Hall, the council now appears to be abdicating financial responsibility for the repairs to the Green Room floor. We had at the meeting on September 15th raised a number of issues about any request from the Parish Council for financial assistance with the repairs. These points appear to have been disregarded.

1. A number of considerations were discussed in this respect:

i. The VHMC has a responsibility to members and the Charity Commissioners to account for funds. A sufficiently detailed request which will satisfy future accountability and auditing requirements makes life easier for all concerned.

ii. As the VHMC does not have primary responsibility for structural works, any additionality within the project (e.g. the improved flooring proposed for the Green Room) should be highlighted as this clearly comes within the remit of the VHMC.

iii. Cautions were raised about the funding available. Lettings income has been limited with the Drama Group not having a May production, and using the Church for its Autumn Production. It was also pointed out that where hall funds have been obtained for specific purposes (notably from the Recreation Trust) it may be necessary to seek agreement from the donors to use the funds for a different purpose.

iv. The weather on fete day was miserable for the second year running. Whilst people did very well in the circumstances, the grant available will inevitably not be as favourable as might otherwise have been the case

It is positive that East Herts have made a grant towards the works, but this does not absolve the Parish Council from financial responsibility. It should be noted that the Hall Management Committee could have made the application as it has previously. When the Council Tax precept for 2015/16 was discussed at the Parish Council Meeting on the 17th November 2014 it was agreed to keep the rate very low (lower than Sawbridgeworth, Buntingford, Bishops Stortford, Ware, and Hertford) on the basis that the Parish Council had a balance on its general fund in excess of £20,000, and no increase was required. Looking at expenditure by the Parish Council – even after paying for some new guttering – the Parish Council has still spent far more on bus shelters than it has on the Village Hall. (I have incidentally no problem with the expenditure on the bus shelters).

We will discuss the request from the Parish Council for financial assistance towards the cost of Green Room repairs at our next meeting. In the meantime we would be grateful if you would forward copies of the 2 quotations obtained, along with a copy of the service specification against which they were obtained.

Many thanks,

Neil Clarke

Chair Much Hadham Village Hall Management Committee.

PS I had a look at the guttering repair which looks fine (albeit it was dry at the time!). The rot on some of the bargeboards and soffits appears to be getting worse though. Is there any plan to repair these and/or paint them before the full ravages of winter? I am concerned that rot may spread to underlying roof timbers.

From: Tony Baxter [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, November 8, 2015 11:08 PM
To: Neil and Sue Clarke
Cc: Selina Bannerman; Peter and Sylvie; Anthony Baxter; JANET LIVERSAGE;
<ianhunt@muchhadhamparishcouncil.co.uk>; Penny Taylor; Alex Young; Ian Devonshire
Subject: Re: Village Hall Meeting

Dear Neil,
Thank you for your e-mail.
I have good news and bad news for you.

The good news is that we have received notification of a grant from EHC for just over £5000 to repair the Green Room floor - thanks to the fundraising efforts of Richard Key.
The bad news is Richard Key, Mike Keogh and Justin Godfrey have resigned from the Parish Council and there may be at least two other resignations at the December PC meeting. Their resignations are regrettable and unfortunate but entirely understandable given the climate of hostility and the total lack of appreciation due to those Councillors who have worked very hard on behalf of the Parish by other foolish and utterly selfish members of our community. I am sure you know what and who I mean.
I am by no means certain whether the next PC meeting will be quorate and therefore able to sanction any PC funds to support this project. I therefore suggest given the parlous state of the floor in the Green Room, the Village Hall Committee allocate the rest of the funds needed for repair from their own resources. Cllr Bannerman estimated that this would cost about £10,000 from a quote she received so you would need to find about £5,000 from your reserves. I doubt Cllr Bannerman would be willing to assist you given current circumstances and I would be grateful if you could relay to the rest of your Committee that the blame for this situation rests entirely on the people (mentioned above) who have sought to destabilise the PC to the detriment of the users of the Village Hall and indeed the rest of the Parish. As Chairman of the PC I would advise you that you should quickly take advantage of the grant awarded and make the necessary repairs (preferably through a reputable builder outside of the community after receipt of the requisite 3 quotes) as soon as possible.

With regard to your second point, the good offices of the PC members who were willing to help the VH are now closed due the reasons mentioned before. Again as Chairman of the PC, I would urge you to complete the structural review as soon as possible using your own resources and present these to the Dec or Jan PC meeting.

The VH is the biggest financial asset under the responsibility of the PC and I will be keeping a very close and beady eye on its upkeep on behalf of future generations of users.

I am of course available to assist you in the above matters and am very willing to discuss the matter further.
Best wishes

Tony Baxter
Chairman MHPC

On Sun, Nov 8, 2015 at 10:19 PM, Neil and Sue Clarke [REDACTED] wrote:
Hi Tony,

Further to our meeting in September, can you please up-date me on progress?

1. With regards the Green Room Floor – have we had formal notice from E Herts that a grant has been agreed? What contribution will the Parish Council be making? Will an application for assistance be made to the Village Hall Management Committee? We meet on the 10th December and it will be helpful to have

details of any request at least a week before the meeting as there are a number of items of expenditure we would wish to consider (including redecoration of the Green Room after the floor has been replaced, and purchase of some new chairs specifically for this room). We will need to know all the demands on the budget at this point in order to be able to determine what can or cannot be afforded.

2. We discussed the need for a thorough review of the structure of the building (including the various drainage issues). It was agreed that a structural survey would be conducted by members of the Parish Council with the intention of enabling us to develop a long/medium term maintenance/improvement programme for the hall. Can you tell us if there has been any progress on this please? Is it possible to put a timetable on this?

Many thanks in anticipation of your help.

Neil Clarke

Chair Much Hadham Village Hall Management Committee.

From: Neil and Sue Clarke [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: 20 September 2015 11:59
To: 'Tony Baxter' [REDACTED]; 'Peter and Sylvie'; 'Anthony Baxter'
Subject: Village Hall Meeting

May thanks for making time available to meet up last week. I've run off some notes from what I felt was a helpful and constructive meeting. Please let me know if there are any errors or omissions from the key points of discussion.

Many thanks,

Neil Clarke

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