

**WEST NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS**  
**CONSORTIUM**

**Minutes of Meeting of the management Committee held 16 September**  
**2008 at the Greenhead Village Hall, Greenhead.**

**1 Present.**

Mike Wood (Chairman), Malcolm Caisley, Norman Hooks, Adrian Hinchcliffe, Pam Niven, Pam Prior, Elizabeth Stewart,.

Community Action Northumberland – Jane Hart, Shaun Hogg.

**2 Apologies for Absence**

Michael Elphick, Bill Grigg, Keith Robson, Louise Currie.

**3 Resignation of Bill Grigg**

Bill Grigg had emailed the Secretary offering his resignation from the Management Committee due to not being able to attend the meetings. Bill's resignation was accepted by the Committee and it was agreed that the Secretary would write to Bill.

**ACTION** The Secretary to write to Bill.

**4 Minutes of the Meeting of the 17 July 2008 were accepted as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**5 Matters arising from the minutes.**

**(a) Discretionary Council Tax reductions for Charities**

As agreed at the last meeting the secretary had written to the Acting Chief Executive of the County Council and the Leader. He had received written responses from each of these officials that indicated that the Council was aware of the issue which would be considered by the Council in preparing the budgets for 2009/10.

The Secretary had also contacted the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium who had indicated that they were aware of the issue and thought that it may be worthwhile to jointly lobby on this issue later in the year.

It was agreed that all members of the Management Committee would write to their local Councillor drawing their attention to this issue. The Secretary to send out a pro-forma for this purpose.

Jane Hart mentioned that the Northumberland Compact may also be interested in supporting the case for the retention of discretionary rates relief for charities.

**ACTION** 1 The Secretary to liaise with the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium.

2 The Secretary to issue a pro-forma to all members with a letter asking them to contact and lobby their County Councillor.

**(b) Progress with the Constitution**

It was reported that just one signature was required.

**ACTION** The Chair to arrange to obtain the signature to complete the constitution.

**6 Membership**

The Secretary issued a list of members which totalled seventeen. Since the list was produced two additional Community Buildings (Acomb Village Hall and Corbridge Parish Hall) had joined.

**(a)** The Secretary had contacted the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium on the issue of the boundary between the two consortia. Their attitude was that rather than have fixed rules we should remain reasonably flexible on this. Those Community Buildings that are located close to the boundary to the two should be given the option of deciding which Consortium they wished to join. Members thought that this was a reasonable approach to adopt.

(b) With significant regret it was noted that the resources at the Hexham office of Community Action Northumberland (CAN) were likely to reduce in the near future and due to this it would not be possible for them to undertake clerical activities for the Consortium. Members expressed thanks for the support that had been given to date.

(c) The consequence of the CAN predicament for the consortium was considered. It would be beneficial if all Members could receive communications electronically. Of the nineteen that had joined only two had not provided an email address. It was decided that we should write to these members and ask if they can nominate one of their Committee members to receive electronic communications.

(d) There was a general discussion on how the Consortium should go about increasing the membership. Members thought that many Community Buildings would not have met during the summer to consider the correspondence sent out in July. It was thought that we should wait for a few months before taking any follow up action. The following actions were agreed:

#### **ACTONS**

(a) The Secretary to compile a press release on the membership number and what has been achieved so far by the Consortium.

(b) The Management Committee to consider a further 'personalised' approach to recruiting new members in early 2009.

(c) Community Action-Northumberland could act as 'honest broker' where their appeared to be a lack of understanding of the Consortium in the eyes a potential member.

(d) The Secretary to contact those members who have not provided an email address to ask whether they can provide one to enable communications to be sent to them electronically.

#### **7 Insurance Offer for Members**

The Secretary reported that the Members guide to the Insurance deals that had been negotiated had been issued to the first seventeen members. Since its issue Norris and Fisher had improved their offer so it would be necessary to amend the guide. Members considered that the guide was understandable.

**ACTION** The Secretary to amend the Members Guide to reflect the improved offer made by Norris and Fisher.

#### **8 Members Benefit Initiatives**

(a) A number of suggestions were made for investigation as further benefits for members. These were:-

(i) Maintenance of Fire Alarms and Associated Equipment and Emergency Lighting. This was confirmed as a significant cost at some Halls but others claimed that they were not fully aware of the legal requirements. The following action was agreed:-

**ACTIONS - Secretary**

- To contact Louise Currie to obtain the correct legal requirements for the maintenance of Fire Alarms, associated fire equipment and Emergency Lighting.
- Depending upon this information to identify a number of contractors who carry out this work.
- Obtain a better understanding of members needs by the issue of a pro-forma, if considered necessary.

(ii) Heating Oil

Members thought that it unlikely that the consortium could benefit from an arrangement with an oil company to supply oil to all those members that use heating oil, due to the distances between each Community building. It was reported that it may be more appropriate for individual Community Buildings to negotiate for the supply of oil to their local community. Some discounts may be available on this basis due to the reduction in transport miles.

(iii) Portable Appliance Testing

All portable appliances have to be certified as electrically safe every twelve months. All Community Buildings will be have to meet this requirement. One representative said

that they have a local electrician who carries out the tests using equipment provided by their Hall. The suggestion was made that, when funds allow, the Consortium could purchase the equipment, and train Hall representatives to do the testing. Further consideration to be given to this.

**ACTION** Norman Hooks offered to obtain the cost of earth leakage testing equipment.

**(iv) Electrical Installation Tests.**

All Community Buildings have to have electrical installation tested and certified every five years. There may be scope for arranging discounts with appropriate traders. Needs further investigation.

**(v) Surface Water Charges**

It was agreed that members attention should be drawn to the article published in Community Action News by Alan Hedley.

**ACTION** The Secretary to publicise this information.

## **9 Web Site**

The Chairman had looked at several possible web-site designs and providers and these were outlined. Following discussion, at this stage in the development of the Consortium, it was decided to pursue the Rural Click web-site (level 1) which is provided free of charge.

**ACTION** Mike Wood to pursue.

## **10 Finance and Budgets**

Liz Stewart reported that income to date from subscriptions was £190. The Secretary said that he had spent money on postage and copying which would be claimed.

## **11 Next General Meeting**

Members considered that there was not a need for a general meeting for the next few months but this should be a standing item on the agenda. Nevertheless it was considered that communications with members are essential to let them know what is being done on their behalf. It was agreed that we should develop an electronic newsletter which could be sent to members setting out a summary of the minutes and other items which will be of interest.

## **12 Progress with the Bank Accounts**

The Treasurer reported that the Bank is waiting for the details of one signatory before the account can be open.

## **13 Hallmark One**

Details to be included in the Newsletter.

## **14 Next Meeting of the Management Committee**

Was set for Wednesday 19 November 2008 at the Newton and Bywell Community Hall, Newton Village commencing at 9.30am.

Certified as correct

Chairman.

Date.....