

# WEST NORTHUMBERLAND COMMUNITY BUILDINGS CONSORTIUM

## MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 5 MAY 2009 AT THE NEWTON AND BYWELL COMMUNITY HALL, NEWTON.

- 1 **Members Present** Mike Wood (Chairman), Malcolm Caisley, Michael Elphick, Adrian Hinchcliffe, Norman Hooks, Keith Robson, Elizabeth Stewart.  
**Representative of Community Action-Northumberland – Jane Hart Items 1, 2 3, 7 and 8.**
- 2 **Apologies for Absence – Pam Pryor.**
- 3 **Minutes of the Meeting held 3 March 2009.**  
The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.
- 4 **Matters Arising from the Minutes**
  - (a) **Discretionary Council Tax Reductions for Charities**  
Tynedale District Council had given the Secretary assurance that the scheme was going ahead. This had also been confirmed by Community Action-Northumberland. Some Halls had not received the application form and the reason for this appeared to be that they are not known to the rating authority.
  - (b) **Circulation of the Constitution.**  
All members (on email) had been sent the corrected version of the Constitution. Also, all those joining since the last meeting had received a correct paper version. Correct paper copies of the Constitution would be sent out later in the year.
  - (c) **Water Charges**  
It was reported that Northumbrian Water appear to be one of two water utilities that have implemented the new policies on charging for surface water which goes into their system. Some members reported a significant increase in charges due to this.  
It was considered that the Consortium should be lobbying on this issue but before we do this the following should be determined:
    - Confirmation from ACRE that Northumbrian Water is one of only two water utilities to adopt this approach.
    - What stance is the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium taking
    - What stance is Community Action Northumberland taking**Action**  
**The Secretary to determine the above three points before considering any lobbying action.**
- 5 **Membership**  
The number now stood at 41. It was considered that there are still around 15 Halls that we would expect to be members.
- 6 **Members Benefits Initiatives**
  - 6.1 **Electrical Installation Testing and Portable Appliance Testing.**  
Mike Wood and Louise Currie had worked together to produce a full statement on these the requirements for Electrical Installation testing and Portable Appliance testing. The statement covers all aspects and is attached to these minutes. Thanks were expressed to Mike for this work for it clears up a number of uncertainties and confusion.
  - 6.2 **Requirements for the testing of Emergency Lighting.**  
This is still to be investigated.
  - 6.3 **Requirements for the testing of Fire Alarms Systems**  
This is still to be investigated.
  - 6.4 **Requirements for the testing and certification of Fire Extinguishers**  
This is still to be investigated.

## **6.5 Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) – Suggested joint action with the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium (NNVHC)**

Mike Gowland of NNVHC had enquired with the Secretary whether the Consortium was interested in taking joint action with them on PAT testing. The outline suggestion was to purchase the necessary equipment for PAT testing and to train up local volunteers who would then use the equipment to do PAT testing of portable appliances at Member Halls and possibly other establishments that require such a service (eg Churches). Grant applications would be made to purchase the equipment but the Consortium would need to have some capital available.

### **Action**

**In principle the meeting was in favour of investigating such a scheme but members wished to see more detail before a decision could be made.**

## **6.6 Agreed Actions on 6.1 to 6.4**

**1 The Secretary to write to a number of companies to establish whether they are interested in being on a panel recommended by the Consortium and offering benefits to members.**

**2 Efforts to continue to establish precise requirements for 6.2, 6.3, and 6.4.**

## **6.7 Energy Control Systems**

The Secretary reported that some information had been received from CAN on a product that was being developed locally which would enable improved control of Hall heating systems, better comfort conditions and lower usage of energy. One of the Trustees of the Newton and Bywell Community Hall was investigating the proposal and was in the process of obtaining a quotation. Members would be kept advised of the outcome of this scheme and it was suggested that it ought to feature in the talk by Arthur Scott on the 13.05.09.

## **7 Special Meeting 13 May 2009.**

The Secretary reported that he had received hardly any acceptances at this time but we should not be concerned about this. A further email would be sent to all members and a press release issued. Arthur Scott had been contacted and was ready to give his talk. He is not an expert on the availability of grants for energy schemes but the Secretary had identified a suitable person who could cover this aspect. A projector and screen will be required. The Secretary to consider the use of equipment that can be loaned from the Community Centre at Hexham.

Mike Wood and Adrian Hinchcliffe will give a short presentation on the progress so far with the Consortium. Both will work together on a small number of slides.

There had been no response from Greggs so it was decided to keep the catering to beverages and biscuits. Some members offered one or two additional items.

Mike Elphick and Malcolm Caisley gave their apologies for the meeting. Mike Gowland had asked if he could attend as a representative of the North Northumberland Village Halls Consortium and the Secretary had agreed to this. Louise Currie and Jane Hart would be attending.

### **Agreed Actions**

**1 The Secretary to work with Mike Wood on their presentation.**

**2 The Secretary to give Arthur Scott a further briefing.**

**3 The Secretary to request the presence of National Park representative who can talk about the grants available.**

**4 The Secretary to issue a press release.**

**5 The Secretary to email all members with a reminder.**

**6 The Secretary to investigate a screen and projector on offer at Hexham Community Centre.**

## **8 Community Action – Northumberland**

Jane Hart reported that CAN was still awaiting the outcome of some grant applications. Until these are known there will be no further staff appointments.

## **9 Consortium Web-Site**

Mike Wood said that he was awaiting replies from Management Committee members on the information they require for their own Hall. An example of the Newton and Bywell Community Hall

was circulated. It is intended that a part of the web-site is devoted to a summary description of each member Hall or Community building. It is hoped that there can be a link from each of these pages to other web-sites which may exist for the Hall/Community Building. Members agreed to send Mike the information he requires.

It was agreed that the web-site would be promoted at the Special Meeting.

**10 Treasurer's Report**

The Treasurer reported a book balance of £388.66 but this excludes a payment to the Secretary of £74.62 for postage and copying. The accounting year end is 30 September 2009. It was agreed that a suitable person be found to confirm as correct the accounts and books of account.

Following discussion at the last meeting on the use of direct debit for members subscriptions, the Treasurer reported that the Unity Bank may operate accounts which would permit the use of direct debit. It was proposed by Mike Elphick and seconded by Norman Hooks that further enquiries be made about the possibility of opening an account with the Unity Bank provided that they do allow direct debits to be used for the collection of subscriptions. This was unanimously agreed.

**11 Charity Incorporated Organisations**

Norman Hooks reported that the Stocksfield Institute and Community Association (SICA) had been approached by the Charity Commission with view to them considering a change of status to a Charity Incorporated Association. Norman had investigated this change including having discussions with David Francis of CAN. So far, Norman can only see benefits and no down sides from such a change. The SECA trustees are meeting this week to consider the change. Norman will report progress at the next Management Meeting.

**12 Annual General Meeting**

It was agreed that the Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 11 November 2009 commencing at 7.00pm. It was suggested that Newbrough Town Hall would be a fairly central location to hold the meeting. It was agreed that the Secretary would approach Newbrough to see if it is available. An alternative would be the Haydon Bridge Community Association Hall.

**13 Next Meeting of the Management Committee**

To be held Wednesday 3 June 2009 commencing at 9.30am at the Greenhead Village Hall.

**Minutes approved as correct**

**Signed**

**Position**

**Date**

## Electrical Safety And Testing In Village/Community Halls Etc.

The Electricity at Work Act 1989 states that all electrical systems and equipment used in the working environment should be in a safe condition. The Health & Safety Executive recommend that to comply with the regulations, an inspection and testing programme should be undertaken at all places of work.

The Electricity at Work Regulations place a legal responsibility on employers, employees and self-employed persons to comply with the provisions of the regulations and take reasonably practicable steps to ensure that no danger results from the use of such equipment. This in effect requires the implementation of a systematic and regular programme of maintenance, inspection and testing. The Health & Safety at Work Act (1974) places such an obligation in the following, circumstances:

- 1. Where appliances are used by employees.
- 2. Where the public may use appliances in establishments such as hospitals, schools, hotels, shops, community halls etc.
- 3. Where appliances are supplied or hired.
- 4. Where appliances are repaired or serviced.

The below guide is intended to advise on some of the basic requirements that fall on village hall and community building management committees to enable them to comply with these two pieces of legislation

The guide is by no means exhaustive and the emphasis must be on the word *guide*. Whilst every effort has been made to establish strict rules of law, the government and various authorities leave many matters open to interpretation and in some areas lay down guidelines only, not hard and fast rules of law.

There are however certain definite rules.

**Fixed Installation Testing (FIT)** involves testing the electrical circuits and systems that distribute electricity around a building. It covers all the hard wiring in a building, whether it is commercial, industrial or residential and includes community buildings. All electrical circuits in a building that are fixed, such as lighting socket outlets, air conditioning and other fixed plant need to be tested. **This must be done by a suitably qualified electrician at intervals of not more than every 5 years**

**Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)** involves the testing of all non fitted and portable electrical equipment used in a building. Such items as televisions, video/DVD equipment, kettles, non hard wired boilers, microwaves etc. Basically any item that requires plugging in to a socket. It also includes any such items brought into a building by users.

**There is no legal requirement for this to be done.**

HOWEVER many insurance companies, leases and premises licences may insist on it (check your documents). Also in the case of community buildings, many organisations wishing to hire the use of a building may insist on this as a condition of their doing so.

PAT if carried out is normally required every 12 months and does not require a qualified electrician but may be done by a suitably trained person using the approved equipment.

**In both of the above classes of equipment it is recommended that regular checks be made by “a competent person” at intervals depending on how frequently the equipment is used and the conditions under which it is used and kept.**

With PAT it is recommended that this be done on a weekly basis in buildings where the equipment is frequently in use. However in both cases the check largely consists of the competent person visually checking for obvious potential problems such as loose connections, frayed wires etc. and the competent person may be any person, advisedly a committee or staff member, who is qualified to use the appliance.

This advice has been assembled from various sources including the HSE website [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) and Village Hall Information Sheet 15 (Health and Safety Legislation and Village Halls), published by ACRE, both of which are excellent sources of further information on both this and many other health and safety matters.

Acknowledgement must also be made to Louise Currie of CAN who was responsible for much of the research.