the VICTORIA ROOMS Milverton

milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms

Registered Charity No. 293948

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHARITY TRUSTEES

1st October 2023 – 30th September 2024

Secretary to the Trustees: Maggie Dinning, No 1 Courtfield, Milverton, Somerset, TA4 1NA
Tel: 01823 400142 email: maggs46d@me.com

Trustees at 30th September 2024

Philip Knowles	*Chairman* Elected from the Parish
Bev Blackmore	*Vice-Chairman* Rep for the Music Club
Maggie Dinning	*Secretary* Rep for the Parish Council
Chris Pine	*Treasurer* Elected from the Parish
Lindsay Fortune	*Insurance Officer* Elected from the Parish
Sue Knowles	100 Club Elected from the Parish
Sally Ackland	*Monthly Market Manager* Elected from the Parish
Rachel Rossiter	Rep for the PCC
Geoff Elson	*Bookings Secretary* Rep for the Twinning Assoc and The Milverton Trust
Rebecca Beard	*Fund-raising Co-ordinator* Rep for Milverton Dramatic Society
David Hatfield	Elected from the Parish

Appointments and Retirements

During the period covered by this report we were delighted to welcome David Hatfield as a trustee. Helen Burton resigned as a trustee.

So far as internal organisation is concerned, there was no change in Management Committee officers during the period covered by this report.

The number of Trustees at year's end stands at 11. This leaves the Charity very short of trustees and we are now in serious need of people to step forward and take on trusteeships if the village hall is to continue operating.

Sources of advice and support

Lloyd's Bank PLC
Somerset Community Council
Action With Communities in Rural England (ACRE)
Somerset Council
Milverton Parish Council
Mr John Blackmore, building contractor
Mr Alan Cridlin, painter and decorator
Mr John Clements and, latterly, Mr Keith Beale, grounds maintenance
Mr Nigel Morris, external accounts examiner
Ms Denise Masters, *Need Some Help?* cleaning and catering contractor
Regular suppliers: Milverton Stores; Exmoor Ales Ltd; Hickleys Ltd
The Friends of the Victoria Rooms

Governance

The Victoria Rooms were built in 1887 by public subscription on land donated by the Broadmead Family. The Trustees form the Management Committee, responsible for managing the Charity in order to achieve the charitable objects set out below. The Charity is an unincorporated trust and, as such, cannot hold title to property in its own name. The Parish Council therefore acts as Custodian Trustee solely for that purpose. The Charity is administered under a Scheme approved by the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales dated 19th November 1985 and amended on 17th May 2016. The Approved Scheme and its amendment can be viewed on the Milverton community website at ***milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms***.

Objects of the Charity

- The provision of a village hall for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Milverton without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, race or political, religious or other opinions.

- Use of the village hall for meetings, lectures and classes or other forms of recreation and leisure time occupation in the interests of social welfare and with the object of improving the social conditions of the life of the inhabitants.

Appointment of Trustees

The Scheme approved by the Charity Commissioners governs the appointment of Trustees and the management of the Charity. Up to 8 Trustees may be elected from residents of the Parish of Milverton, together with one representative from each of the local organisations currently named for that purpose in the Approved Scheme. (There is no requirement for those representatives to be resident in the parish.) At year's end, the organisations entitled to nominate a representative to serve on the Management Committee were as follows:

- Milverton Parish Council
- Milverton Parochial Church Council

- Milverton and Fitzhead Society
- Milverton and Fitzhead Twinning Association
- Milverton Garden Club
- Milverton Dramatic Society
- Milverton Recreation Ground Committee
- Milverton Women's Institute
- Milverton Music Club

Under the Scheme, as amended, the Trustees may, on application, add other non-commercial local groups to the list and may also, on notice, delete groups, for example if they become defunct, no longer use the village hall regularly or otherwise cease to have a continuing interest in its management. (The Parish Council, as Custodian Trustee, cannot be deleted.) The Trustees have power to co-opt up to 3 additional Trustees (who need not be parish residents).

Prior to the Annual General Meeting all current Trustees elected from among Parish residents are asked if they are willing to stand for a further year. The policy of the Management Committee is to advertise vacancies for such Trustees in the *Milverton and Fitzhead Magazine* and on its community website pages. Vacancies are, in any event, announced at the public Annual General Meeting, which the Trustees have determined will be held, so far as is possible, no later than the 15th day of January following the close of the financial and reporting year (30th September) and of which 14 days public notice must be given.

Each local group entitled to send a representative to serve as a Trustee is asked to nominate a representative to serve for 12 months. The Trustees have no objection to one person representing more than one local group. Several local groups entitled to nominate a representative had, however, chosen not to do so at year's end.

Policies and Procedures

To guide the Management Committee in exercising its duty of care to Trustees, contractors and users of the village hall, and to ensure a consistent and transparent approach to the management of the Charity, the Trustees have adopted policies on governance, financial management, generating income, risk management (including fire safety and health and safety), data protection, premises management, equal opportunities and the environment. For convenience of reference, these are assembled in a single policy document which may be viewed at ***milverton.org,uk/victoria-rooms***. The intention is to review the document no less frequently than annually. Although no such review took place during the reporting period, the forthcoming re-design of the Victoria Rooms' page on the community website will provide an opportunity for this review to be conducted

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Hiring Agreement

Use of the village hall is subject to a Hiring Agreement which must be signed by the hirer when booking. The hiring agreement incorporates the Conditions of Hire which set out the respective responsibilities of each party to the agreement. **It is important to note that when a hirer signs the hiring form, he or she signs an undertaking that the Conditions of Hire have been read, understood and will be observed.** The Hiring Agreement also includes the hirer's consent under data protection law to his or her personal data being used by the Trustees for the management of the village hall.

The Conditions of Hire are on display in the Victoria Rooms and can also be viewed, along with the relevant forms, at ***milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms***.

Licences

The Management Committee holds a Premises Licence issued by Somerset Council authorising, *inter alia*, the sale or supply of alcohol on or off the premises. The Trustees have adopted a set of Bar Rules relating to the sale or supply of intoxicating liquor under the Licence. These are displayed in the Victoria Rooms or may be found at ***milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms***. The Trustees are registered with the Council for small society lotteries, including bingo. The village hall also benefits from a PRS/PPL copyright licence for the performance of live and recorded music otherwise than for commercial purposes. During the reporting year, the Committee took out a copyright licence issued by the Motion Picture Licensing Company allowing the screening of films and other audio-visual copyright works otherwise than for commercial purposes. Persons who wish to play music or screen audio-visual material in connection with their businesses are expected to obtain any necessary copyright licences themselves.

The Victoria Rooms are registered with Somerset Council as a food business, enabling Victoria's Café to continue operating.

The Charity has the benefit of a TV licence, covering the use of the audio-visual equipment in the Reading Room as an additional facility for hirers.

The Management Committee recognises the value of its licences in generating income for the Charity and will take all reasonable steps to protect them.

Risk Management

Insurance

The village hall is insured by Ecclesiastical Insurance through our broker Allied Westminster (Insurance Services) Ltd. During the reporting period the cover for main items were: buildings £997,324, contents £72,392, public liability £10,000,000, employer's liability £10,000,000 and trustee indemnity £100,000. No claims were made during the year. It is our intention to renew the policy through the same broker for the next 12 months.

The Management Committee recognises it is under a legal obligation to protect the building, its users and its contractors through adequate and appropriate insurance. Together with our brokers we are currently conducting a re-assessment of the cost of re-building the Victoria Rooms to ensure that our insurance cover is adequate.

Building Issues

- Gas appliances are tested by qualified personnel annually.
- The mains electrical installation is checked by a qualified engineer every 5 years.
- Portable appliance testing is carried out every 2 years.
- Fire Safety and Health and Safety Risk Assessments are reviewed annually by the Committee.
- Firefighting appliances are inspected annually under contract with the supplier.
- Volunteers from the Committee carry out other regular maintenance checks, including fire alarm and emergency lighting testing.

- The fire alarm system is serviced at the appropriate intervals.

Fire Safety and Health and Safety

The Management Committee's fire safety and health and safety risk assessments may be found on ***milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms.***

Safeguarding

The Management Committee's safeguarding policy may be found in its Policy Statement on ***milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms.***

Food hygiene

The Management Committee has adopted a Food Safety Management System which may be found in the kitchen or viewed on ***milverton.org.uk/victoria-rooms***.

Martyn's Law

During the reporting year, the Management Committee took part in a Government consultation exercise concerning the introduction of what is commonly referred to as "Martyn's Law", otherwise known as the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill. The Bill was introduced by the last Government to strengthen security at public events and venues following the Manchester Arena atrocity. The initial proposals included public venues with a capacity of 100 persons or more and required the managers of those venues to register their premises with a regulator and to adopt procedures to reduce the risk of physical harm to people on the premises in the event of a terrorist attack, although exactly what untrained village hall volunteers were expected to do in that unlikely event was not made clear. While fully recognising the need to protect members of the public who resort to premises in large numbers, the Committee, among others, strongly represented that the minimum capacity of 100 persons was far too low, catching most volunteer-run community buildings and village halls. We are pleased to report that common sense seems to have prevailed and that the Government is likely to table a Bill increasing the minimum capacity of public venues affected by the proposals to 200.

Financial Management

Funding Strategy

It is the strategy of the Trustees to manage the revenue budget on a self-financing basis. The contributions made by users of the hall are set to achieve this. At the same time, the Trustees recognise that hire and other charges should not be greater than necessary, bearing in mind the need for the village hall to remain accessible to residents within the Parish.

Reserves Policy

The Charity held £17,966-00 in the bank as unrestricted reserves at year's end. These funds are available to meet regular costs as well as unforeseen expenditure in relation to building maintenance - always a factor given the age of the hall - or urgent equipment replacement. It is the Trustees' policy to maintain unrestricted reserves of between 100% and 150% of annual revenue budget expenditure. The balance for the reporting year is well within that percentage range at 139%.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance of the village hall and from time to time this involves major works far in excess of cash reserves held. On identifying such major works, fundraising is undertaken with the object of meeting the costs in full (i.e. without needing a loan). Such funds would be restricted. There were no restricted funds in hand at year's end.

Banking arrangements

The Management Committee continues to hold a treasurer's account with Lloyd's Bank. Three trustees are signatories with two to authorise payments from the account.

Principal Activities in Pursuit of Objects

The hall is available for hire for private functions including children's parties and wedding receptions, as well as business functions, educational classes, performances and other events open to the public, village social functions and local fund-raising events.

The building continues to be well-used and bookings are now close to pre-Covid levels. Regular hirers include Milverton Women's Institute, the Cello Group, Milverton Music, Milverton Amateur Dramatic Society, Milverton Parish Council, the Pilates Group, the Tai Chi Group, the Bridge Group, Barefoot Boogie, Milverton History Group, Milverton Thursday Club, a Meditation Group and Milverton Table Tennis Club. The Committee is encouraged that the new Table Tennis Club has grown from strength to strength and, during the reporting year, was pleased to support the Club by purchasing one of the three tables now in use.

Volunteer Effort

Management costs are kept to a minimum through the use of volunteers. Substantial volunteer time is devoted each week to cover tasks such as bookings management, property maintenance, committee administration, financial management, fund-raising, publicity, insurance, fire safety, health and safety, food hygiene, website and social media management, licensing and general administration. In addition, Trustees give up their time to participate in meetings of the Management Committee and its Fund-raising Sub-committee as well as investing considerable time and effort in organising and running fund-raising events.

We are fortunate in having a group of dedicated "Friends" - volunteers who, although not Trustees, are prepared to make themselves available to assist with running events, setting up beforehand and clearing away afterwards, catering and bar work, website and social media management, setting up audio, video and lighting systems, and so on. We very much value their input and owe them a debt of gratitude.

The Charity continues to look for volunteers to keep the village hall running, either by taking on trusteeship or by helping out in various ways. Monthly appeals have been made via the community magazine. Without voluntary effort, Milverton would not have a functioning village hall.

Fund-raising and Other Income

Apart from hire charge receipts, regular fund-raising takes the form of our Saturday Monthly Markets, managed by Sally Ackland, including Victoria's Café. Rachel Rossiter

runs the Victoria Rooms' stall at the market. Sue Knowles runs our 100 Club. Other regular sources of fund-raising include the sale of used postage stamps (Maggie Dinning) and the hire of the Charity's gazebos (Philip Knowles). A major income stream is the Management Committee's participation in the Street Fair, with Chris Field and her volunteers running Victoria's Café and, this year, Terry Field stepping in to manage the bar with our team of volunteer bartenders. We are most grateful to all of them for their valuable contributions. The Committee continues to make the Main Hall available free of charge to the Milverton Trust, as organisers of the Street Fair, and to reserve part of the forecourt for use by Milverton Music Club on Fair Day.

The Fund-raising Sub-committee, consisting of Rebecca Beard, Sue Knowles, Maggie Dinning, Sally Ackland and Rachel Rossiter have been planning events. Events during the reporting year have included:

- A "Mince Pies and Merriment" evening on 8.12.2023
- A performance by Somerset Opera on 19.3.2024
- A concert at Milverton Church featuring Taunton Deane Male Voice Choir and special guest, local singer/songwriter John Hartoch, on 6th April 2024.

The Victoria Rooms has been registered as a "good cause" with the West Somerset Lottery, a local lottery for the benefit of good causes and charities in the local area. For each £1 ticket sold, the good cause receives 50p. To support us, please go to www.somersetwestlottery.co.uk and search for Milverton Victoria Rooms.

For the future, a Quiz Night is planned for 25.10.2024.

Sue Knowles writes a monthly news feature for the Milverton and Fitzhead Magazine where news of Victoria Rooms fund-raising and other activities may be found.

The Trustees acknowledge, with thanks, all those whose efforts have contributed to raising funds for the Charity. We also owe a debt of gratitude to all those who supported our fund-raising activities in one way or another.

Property Management

During the reporting period, routine maintenance continued to be co-ordinated by Maggie Dinning. This included work to remedy the growth of black mould on the interior walls of the front porch. Work has also been put in hand to repair part of the interior wall of the Main Hall adjacent to Fore Street which has suffered from the ingress of dampness.

Future Plans

The Trustees are always striving to improve the facilities available at the Victoria Rooms and will continue to upgrade and replace fixtures, furniture and equipment as necessary, raising funds and applying for grants as and when required. No major works are planned for the 2024/25 reporting year, although maintaining a Victorian building is always an expensive venture!

Thank You

As always, the Trustees would like to express their thanks to the Friends of the Victoria Rooms who, although they are not members of the Management Committee, are always available to help out when required. We are also grateful to the many Parish organisations

and residents who contribute in so many ways to ensuring that Milverton has a village hall of which we can be proud.

Footnote

This will be my last report as Chairman of the Management Committee, an appointment I have had the honour to hold for 13 years. During that time I have worked with enthusiastic, dedicated, hard-working teams of Trustees and other volunteers without whom the Victoria Rooms could not function. I am proud to have been their Chairman. While it is now time to step down, I am happy to remain a Trustee and to offer what help and advice I can to the Committee.

I confirm that all Trustees have been provided with a copy of this Report.

Signed on behalf of the Charity Trustees and with their authority…

Philip J Knowles
Chairman
Milverton Victoria Rooms Management Committee

October 2024

HALLMARK
a quality standard scheme for village halls
Hallmark 2 achieved