

HORNCLIFFE MEMORIAL HALL PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON 17/08/2026 RE. HALL FUTURE AND RECRUITMENT - MEETING TRANSCRIPT

(Does not include record of questions and answers from the meeting itself.)



CHAIR'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION – Good to see so many people here who have, I would imagine, a great fondness for Horncliffe Memorial Hall and an appreciation of all that happens here for the Community. It is a great space, in use most days, often 2 or 3 times a day and we'd like to take the opportunity to thank all those group and individuals who use it so thoroughly and contribute to its success. It is a thriving venue and in excellent financial shape, more about which Eileen will talk a little later on.

Before we continue, I would just like to pass on Committee member Mel's apologies. She is away on a personal matter, but the rest of the current Committee are all here to answer any questions you may have later, whether that be tonight, or in the coming weeks after this meeting.

Some background as to why we are holding this meeting: Our poster for it was headed 'YOUR VILLAGE HALL NEEDS YOU!', the reason being that we, as a set of individual volunteers on Committee, will be stepping down at our next **AGM** (which will be on **Sunday 6th December at 4p.m.** if anyone would like to put that date and time in their diary).

The stand down of committee members is of course a part of every AGM. However, it is usually the case with the Hall that more-or-less the same Committee steps back in again, with occasional individual changes of membership and roles, depending on who has contacted us to be a member that year. This year however, it has transpired that, due to an assortment of reasons, the majority of the current Committee do not wish to stand for re-election for 2027 – and the Hall cannot run without a committee. It needs people to maintain it and, as a registered charity, is required to have a body of Management Trustees for it to remain in operation.

We see this as a huge opportunity for things to evolve as far as the Hall and what goes on in it are concerned. We are sure that there are skills, knowledge and ideas out there to be tapped and we hope that people other than us will feel that they would like to take that opportunity to carry the Hall forward. So that is why we are here today – to seek the community's help in making that happen.

Still much information to come in the meeting, but **ANY POLITE QUESTIONS AT THIS EARLY POINT?**

There is a pack that we give out to potential new members, which provides general information about being on Committee, including the jobs that entails and I have some copies of that '**Induction Pack**', here tonight if anyone wishes to take one, or I can get one to you by tomorrow, should we not have enough here. It should be remembered that our 'Jobs List' is just that – it is a list of the jobs we on present Committee have found need doing, in the way we manage the Hall. It would be a different Committee's prerogative to decide how they wish things to be done, as long as Charity Commission guidelines are fully followed and the Hall's Trust Deed specifications not crossed. (Plain Text copies of the **Trust Deed** are also available to take away for information if wished.)

There are of course certain roles that *do need* to be covered on Committee. I am Chair and shall certainly not be continuing with that after December's AGM. Eileen is also standing down from the Treasurer's role that she has expertly covered for many years and so a person willing and able to carry out that job would be essential for the next Committee. Steph is Minutes Secretary and runs Bookings (another large aspect of what the Hall does to keep itself running) and so on but, as said, a new Committee would need to look at its personnel and see how to best fit.

Eileen will now give a brief rundown on two matters:

- 1) The afore-mentioned **Hall finances***
- 2) Current **Trustee indemnity***

[*See end of transcript for key information.]

POLITE QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR welcomed in relation to the above,
(other than referencing CIOs to be referred to next).

CIO: With reference to the Trustee indemnity issue, it will be known by some here tonight that over the last 12 months we the Management Trustees have been engaged in lots of discussion, research, checking and rechecking with regard to various trusteeship matters, including changing the Memorial hall from an unincorporated charity to a CIO – an incorporated one. Our investigations have referenced sources online, our own solicitors, HPC, CAN (the Community Action Northumberland support group, who do a lot of work with village halls), the more nationwide ACRE ('Action with Communities in Rural England' who work with rural village hall groups across the country) and the Charity Commission itself, which is the body that regulates charities such as ours.

From our attendance at quite a number of Northumberland village halls meetings and from talking more privately to members and leaders of other village halls' committees, we know that an unincorporated existence is still quite the norm for many Halls, as it has been historically. However, while some of us on the present Committee remain 'happy' with the indemnity insurances that Eileen has just explained (but need to leave Committee for other reasons), other members have outlined this year that their remaining on Committee would very much depend upon its obtaining CIO status. Therefore, as our main purpose as a set of Management Trustees is to try to best secure the future of the Hall – and having a working Committee is essential to that - we did, in Spring of this year, pass a formal Resolution to pursue Foundation CIO status.

That particular resolution hinged on agreement by Horncliffe Parish Council, as Holding Trustees of the Hall, to transfer the assets of the charity - i.e. the land and building of which they are the Holding Trustees - to the new CIO, which is the common practice in these situations. HPC affirmed that, although they are in general support of the Hall and certainly its becoming a CIO, they wish to remain as Holding Trustees and not transfer those assets.

The Charity Commission and other bodies who have researched on our behalf, say this is highly unusual – in fact the afore-mentioned national group, ACRE, say they have never come across it in their work with village halls before and the Charity Commission has even warned us that not transferring assets could be an issue for us because without that, the old unincorporated charity cannot be closed, so we might end up with two charities rather than one in the Hall's name. This would somewhat defeat the object, particularly re the indemnities issue, and possibly cause some complications were the trustees needing to seek legal advice, for any reasons, at a later date.

We believe there are ways around the above to still becoming a CIO: one being to look, in conjunction with Charity Commission reference, at possible lease arrangements with HPC, though more research

would be needed on this; another, more 'last case', scenario being to seek a Vesting Order from the Charity Commission. However, because to go any further with the CIO application would require listing on the application document the names of Trustees/Committee members who would be willing to commit to their roles for the CIO's first term and we don't at the moment have enough of those, the CIO registration (for which we do already have a started application form and have considered the integral updates to our Governance Document for) is unable to advance at this time. Any new Committee would be at liberty to re-look at this, form its own resolution and pursue whatever type of CIO status they felt appropriate to them and the Hall's future, should they so wish, but it is not essential to do so, as Eileen has explained in her risk indemnities references.

We hope, by laying the cards on the table at this meeting like this, new people will step up to become members and take, certainly the present Hall charity forward and possibly that application for CIO status.

Still with slightly more to say on that, proceedings are once again opened up to
ANY POLITE QUESTIONS.

Interested in becoming a member? It would be brilliant to know this evening if there are any people out there willing to become new Committee members and take the Hall forward in whatever form. However, we realise there are things to think about, so, if not tonight, we hope to hear from those people over the coming weeks. We do need to set a **deadline** for that of **31st August**. This is because we will need to start working with those people to further introduce them to what the Trustee/Committee member-ship involves, more fully to where we are at in terms of the CIO should they wish to know that, and to put ourselves in a position where we can properly elect and smoothly handover at the December AGM. As our flyer stated, we shall of course be on hand to help make transitions as smooth as possible for a good period after that AGM, but not, in the case of at least most of us, as Committee members ourselves.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO POINT OUT, BEFORE THIS MEETING CLOSES, THAT SHOULD WE FAIL TO GAIN NEW MEMBERSHIPS AND THEREFORE AN ONGOING COMMITTEE (UNLESS THE PARISH COUNCIL WISH TO BECOME MANAGEMENT AS WELL AS HOLDING TRUSTEES VIA STATUTORY POWERS OF AMENDMENT UNDER THE 2011 CHARITIES ACT), THE HALL WILL HAVE TO CLOSE BECAUSE IT WILL HAVE NO TRUSTEES TO RUN IT. In this, the 'worst' but nonetheless at the moment quite possible case scenario, the existing Committee would need to begin the legal processes required for winding up the Hall charity.** This is of course NOT something we have a wish to do, not least because the charity has stood in legal terms since 1948 and because the Hall is the really thriving, important, entity for this Community that I referred to in my opening statement. However, *this* management team just cannot go on, as we are, into another year.

So, should that 'worst case' occur, a further PUBLIC MEETING will need to be held as an integral part of the process. Again, we really don't want this to have to happen and so, in closing, I shall repeat once again this evening's publicity message, that **'YOUR VILLAGE HALL REALLY DOES NEED YOU!'** Please think about the part you could play in leading this Hall into its future, spread tonight's word to anyone you know who might be interested in Committee, and **let us know by 31st August, if willing to join.**

Any final comments from Committee before close.

Any final comments, polite suggestions or questions from audience for all before close.

Committee are going to hang around for a little while after this meeting, so please feel free to approach us with any more private questions or suggestions you would like to make - and same over

the next few weeks if you think of things then - and of course let us know you wish to join Committee.
(Don't forget Induction Packs, and/or Hall Governance copies are available if you need them.)

THANKS given for attendance and meeting closed.

***Key Finance and Indemnity Information, plus additional **Trust Deed-related**
(Notes on risk mitigation for 17/08/26 meeting):

- **Insurance:** Trustee indemnity insurance is held, including Loss of Income Insurance for Hall of £20,000 per year for 2 years.
Our current annual income averages £18,000 - £19,000.
- **Finances:**
 - Treasurer balances accounts at the end of every month and at the Committee meeting held on the first Monday of the following month, the Committee are given details of income/expenditure of previous month, plus the end of month bank account/cash figures.
 - Annual Financial Security Report completed annually in February by the Treasurer for discussion with the Committee – review signatory rules for cheques and internet banking – currently 2 to sign and authorise. The report also calculates the basic cost of running the Hall – utilities, cleaner, licence, insurance, boiler service etc. Estimates of the cost of replacing white goods and any known maintenance projects. These are added together and the total, plus a contingency amount for unknown maintenance costs, is then used to agree a minimum bank balance for the financial year. This is a requirement of the Charity Commission.
 - We have no mortgage/loan/employees.
 - As of today, the total of bank accounts and cash in hand is £28,224.78 and we also hold £2,500 in shares in the Fishers Arms.
- **Trust Deed:** The Trust Deed gives the Committee the power to close the Hall and sell it if it is no longer viable to keep it open. They do have to call a public meeting to ask the Parish residents what they want to be done with the monies raised but it is the Committee's decision to close the Hall.

