

## Briars Centre Committee meeting – 6/9/21 - Minutes

Chaired by: Katia Malcaus Cooper

Apologies: Karen Browne(O)

Attended by: Katia Malcaus Cooper(T,O), Richard Woolley(T), James Harris(O), Fiona Woolley(O).

Where T=Trustee, O=Officer, U=User Representative M=Member

### Resignation of treasurer Karen Browne

KMC and RW have received her resignation from the management committee, dated 1/9/21. Acknowledgement is made to the very valuable contribution she has made, as the Treasurer and also with many “everyday” tasks. She will be very sorely missed and leaves the management committee at its minimum compliment, and without a treasurer. Flowers and a message of thanks to be arranged by FW. JH offers to carry the operation of the treasurer until a new one can be found. This is voted unanimously.

### Form of the future Committee

FW reports having obtained and read the constitution, that the document is not fit for the purpose of overseeing the Briar Centre committee. It is organised in such a way that you have members who pay annual subs. As far we know it has never been run in this method, definitely not over the last 10 years. It is agreed that the make-up of the inherited committee and the inherited constitution are not in alignment. The entire document needs revising to run more like a standard, basic committee. The minimum numbers of volunteers will need reducing for it to be valid and achievable. FW does not believe she has the skill set for this revision. JH has some experience in these matters and agrees to review it.

In addition FW comments to the trustees that the Committee must be mindful that the charitable objectives are not lost. Only the charity, Curly Park Rangers, and the proposed youth club fall completely within its objectives. The businesses that operate out of the centre, are profit-making businesses and not charities and any businesses using the centre must be seen to be benefitting the residents of Lightwater.

The committee requires a substantial influx of volunteers with more time and with a broader skill-set than the current members. The 2 newest members, Ms Ekins and Mr Pembury possibly could be contacted further and more detail obtained as to how they can contribute to the understaffed committee. We could reach out once again for more help via Parish Council and the Lightwater Community and Briars Centre Facebook pages. KMC notes that this did not reap any rewards last time this was attempted in 2020, but we must try again. RW requests that a replacement Trustee is found to replace him at the earliest opportunity. JH is proposed as new trustee and voted unanimously. Additional trustees must be found with urgency.

### Report on Complaints

FW reported that she has collated the information and timeline of all the various complaints received this year, is there a possibility of it being the same person that is at the root of them all? Full information will be sent to PC Finnegan and the others involved in the investigation ( B Sword, PC Carnie, P Jaworek, C Alford). KMC reinforced PC Finnegan's advice to not reply or get involved in any complaint, but instead to contact him.

### New Hire Rates and Contracts

KMC reported Ms Ratnam (Briars Nursery) has continued to object to the proposed rate rises.

KMC opened discussion on additional items that the user agreement needs to include. A notice period of 3 months/1 term is proposed in

either direction. A behaviour/respect clause to be added to reinforce that the committee are not to be personally disrespected, and an understanding that the committee is comprised of volunteers only and they all have employment and families and have very limited times when they can carry out committee work. A damage clause to be included as over time, much equipment has been damaged or lost (eg the entrance arm chairs) and on inspection there are lots of small reparations to be done, broken picture frames, acoustic panels off the wall etc. The users need to have a reporting method for these things to be fixed, and honesty is expected. (Most of the time the committee doesn't know what is broken as they are not informed.) Clarity needs to be given that posting notices on acoustic panels is forbidden and if things are affixed to walls or doors, this must be temporary and they must be removed without damage each time the hall is vacated for other users. Similarly, all equipment and furnishings must be removed from the hall in between sessions. There are insurance implications for nursery toys and furniture to be present when the hall is hired privately, or by another user. Also, extra sessions outside the contracted ones, where access is required, must be requested with reasonable notice. Unsanctioned, uninformed entry, by some key holders has been informally reported to the committee. There are insurance implications for this, the users and their representatives would not be covered by centre insurance during this unsanctioned period. Other similar respect (of person and property ) clauses could be considered and included. The "gentlemen's" agreements that have stood historically to cover these issues is insufficient at this time. There are no contracts in place between the any of the regular users and the centre committee, and no terms of hire or use. There is a basic contract with each private hirer. JH to investigate an electronic key system where codes can be auto generated to allow entry when organised in advance, which may help cover the insurance issues.

## Garage

JH reported on his findings for a pricing up of racking the garage to be safely used for storage. He proposes using 1.8m racks, 4 units costing £480 + £200 approx for ply to separate the area and prevent reaching

through the shelving. Spend of £680 not approved until agreement from hirers on new rates, including rates for the storage of their property which until now has been included within their rate, however the space used differs widely between the present regular users. Would be fairer to charge by square metre or by metre of rack. Currently CPR, Rebekah's Dance School, Garry from football and the nursery all have belongings in the garage area, these parties do not pay any more than those regular users without storage.

### Water Company Demand

RW reports that the water company have informed him they will immediately be taking £1600 by direct debit, based on an estimate. RW believes this estimate to be widely inaccurate and will read the meter and contact the water company to resolve this serious tying up of funds.

### Rising Costs

RW reports of the rising costs of all areas of expenditure and warns of a cash flow crisis if new hiring rates are not implemented with the utmost urgency. The annual costs are circa £21,000, but £4000 per annum is required for surplus for reparation and reserves. This means that the new rate (£625 per week required, divided by the average hours hired) needs to be a £11 per hour to break even, and £15 per hour to build in the reserve to cover what is required by the lease and charity commission. This is not to make profit. This requirement of a minimum of £15 per hour, is significantly more than the £8.25 per hour that the Nursery and Dance School pay currently, and it is this discrepancy which is causing the cash crisis in the accounts. If left unchecked, this discrepancy will threaten the ability of the centre to function. It is not possible for it to run into debt due to its charity status, and ultimately it will have to close. KMC notes that this fact was stated at the meeting in April but "not accepted as truth".

## Booking Secretary Replacement

FW reports on the activity required by the booking secretary since her volunteering in the role since May. She finds that to directly replace the previous booking secretary would not be cost effective. As the regular users book the centre a lot of the time, most requests for availability are turned down due to regular bookings. Most requests for private hire are for Fridays or Saturdays when the centre is in use already. The actions of informing potential hirers could potentially be reduced by updating the regular hours used by the regular users on the web-site or automating the system. Over the summer a few private parties were held, but annually these would not cover the like-for-like cost of the previous booking secretary (£150 pcm). The potential of a booking service could be investigated for cost-effectiveness. Or if we could find a volunteer to carry out the task, that might make private hire viable. At this time FW is not in a personal situation where she can continue to carry out this role voluntarily (Booking Secretary). For this reason, along with the ongoing investigations into the multiple complaints this year so far, it is proposed that there is a pause on any private hiring for the remainder of the year. RW to set up an auto response to "bookings@" email to inform of this. Review in the future.

## Internal Comms

Further discussion on a communication system that regular users, committee members and cleaning contractors can use, "Event Brite" and "Fresh Desk" considered, communication between all involved slow and laborious and often by-passes parties. On the arrival of new members and their added expertise, this can be taken further.

## AOB

Private Hire Equipment – Trestle tables and replacement cutlery were two things identified as useful to private hires. FW has priced these up in Costco and on amazon. Tables 6 @ £59.99 and cutlery sets at £30. Due to the current suspension of private hires, this expenditure is not approved.

Cleaner – The new cleaner has requested that her contract be reviewed and signed by the trustees.

Window – all agree that it is a high priority expenditure, KMC to organise quotes.

Youth club – Looking at trialling 1 night per week for the younger age group to start on Saturdays after dance finishes from October.

Pat testing required – KMC to organise.

Recycling – Glass bin overflowing again, KMC will contact council again.

CPR – invoicing to be made asap but storage needs to be addressed, it is noted that CPR pay for reparations to the pitch and contribute that way. FW to send invoices for CPR and Rosalie to KMC for her to send on.

Allocation of resulting tasks:

KMC – To include a storage clause in the regular hirer agreement to make it fairer on those not using storage but being charged the same as those using a lot. To ask for new volunteers and trustees to come forward to aid the committee via the Parish council and facebook pages. Speak to Nicola about her contract. Organise PAT testing of all internal equipment by electrician.

RW – create an automatic email response to the booking@ email address. Take water meter reading and take up the discrepancy with the water company to try and stop them from taking the threatened £1600 or to have them return it asap.

FW – Arrange leaving message and gift for Karen Browne. Send the current constitution to JH. Send KMC the invoices for CPR and Rosalie.

JH – Investigate electronic keys. Review the constitutional document.