



PRIORY HALL

Priory Hall Management Committee Annual General Meeting Monday 14th March 2022 Chair's Report

As in my 2021 report, I look back on a most unusual year, with the Management Committee working diligently to allow safe use of Priory Hall - Much Wenlock's valued community meeting place. Occupancy rates were inevitably lower than normal, partly because of government measures to safeguard public health, and partly because some hirers found that their events would not be supported to the extent that would be viable. We decided to cancel our popular Christmas Craft Fair, but were pleased to be able to support the post-Covid return of the Much Wenlock Christmas Fayre.

As in the previous year, the Committee had to be mindful of not only the current regulations but also the extent to which we would invest in cleaning (using a local firm), advisory signage, and PPE, such as hand wash. Our industrious Bookings Secretary invested many hours in accommodating hirers as the guidance changed, and as their attitude to using the hall evolved. A description of our challenges may be found in the book published by Much Wenlock Town Council last year - 'Wenlock's Covid Chronicles'.

It is testament to the Committee members' focus that, in addition to coping with the pandemic, time and effort was found to replenish some essential kitchen items, investigate the best way in which to ensure that we had a robust public address system, appoint a lead member for safeguarding, and acquire a defibrillator. This should be installed on the exterior of the building by the time of the AGM. A troublesome leak in the roof of the entrance hall was located and a local contractor appointed to cure the problem. And, of course, essential maintenance has continued with up to date lighting fitted. and safety checks to the boiler, fire extinguishers and electrical items carried out.

Despite all of the setbacks, the hall has been used for a number of purposes including as a polling station for Local Government elections in May 2021 and again for the Town Council by-election in February 2022. Regular hirers have all returned to Priory Hall. Several children's and adult parties have taken place and, for the first time, a funeral was live streamed from Priory Hall. The Annual Meeting of Much Wenlock Town Council was also held here in May because social distancing was achievable, when it proved difficult at their usual venue.

During the year there was some local controversy – a very 'lively' evening party drew adverse comments from some neighbours and a noisy daytime session held by one of our regular organisations also created some tension locally. We have therefore revised advice to hirers, emphasising the terms of our lease. We greatly value the support we receive from our immediate neighbours and we wish to maintain a very happy and peaceful coexistence with them.

Substantial government grants which certainly enabled us to help hirers by discounting our usual rates. As with other community halls locally, the grants will enable us to invest further in the fabric of the building, making it more energy-efficient and more comfortable for users - and investing in the local economy. We are now scoping a few projects to assess which to progress.

Our neighbour, Holy Trinity Church, has been granted consent to reduce the lime trees on our mutual boundary. As a result of the pandemic, the church's resources are low and, because the project will be of benefit to Priory Hall, we agreed to contribute towards the cost of the tree surgeon.

After some seventeen years as our Treasurer, Karen Wordley, is stepping down at the Annual General Meeting. The Committee is most appreciative of her stewardship of our finances and for dealing with our bank and filing annual returns to the Charity Commission.

I do not intend to stand for election as Chair at the AGM. I hope to remain on the Committee, if elected, for a further twelve months in whatever capacity is needed. In closing I'd like to thank Committee members for making the job of Chair much easier than it might be, and I wish my successor well.

David Turner
4th March 2022