

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**of the Great Easton Parish Hall Fund**  
**registered charity number 295400**  
**on 15 January 2024**  
**Time: 7.00 p.m.**

**Minutes**

**Present:**

**Committee members:** Tristan Martens (chair and councillor), Marie Benterman (councillor), Julia England (councillor), David Hahn (councillor), Claire Hurst (councillor), Peter Neale (councillor) and John Stevens (councillor). Kate Rixson (secretary, taking minutes)

**Beneficiaries of the Hall Fund Trust:** approximately 25 residents of Great Easton and Tilty parishes.

**1. Chair's introduction**

As Chairman, Tristan Martens opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the AGM of the Hall Fund charity. He explained that this had been called in accordance with the requirements of the Charity Commission's Scheme sealed on 10 October 2006 which set out the procedural rules for the operation of the charity by the Parish Council as trustee of the charity. The chairman outlined the evening's business (agenda published 28 December 2023) and the scope of the meeting.

**2. Apologies**

There were no apologies from members of the trustee committee.

**3. Trustee Report on the year 2022-2023**

The Chairman paid tribute to Brian and Audrey Miller who together had worked devotedly over a period of years to look after the hall. They had ensured it was a welcoming place, popular with hirers and in good repair. The committee still felt their absence keenly.

**Summary of Chairman's Annual Report**

**Financial matters**

The charity had been running at an annual deficit of about £5,000 for three years due to a doubling of fuel costs and reduced income from hires. The trustees were now taking steps to increase income. A grant was being sought from the UK

Shared Prosperity Fund to cover at least half the cost of a repair to the roof and refurbishment of the exterior. The accounts for 2022-23 would be reviewed for approval by the trustee committee at tonight's meeting.

### **The hall building**

A structural survey had shown that the hall's condition was sound although it was showing signs of age as it was about 100 years old. The roof was leaking in one place and a twisted beam had been propped up securely pending a full repair. The trust also wished to improve the condition of the exterior.

### **Future management of the hall and the Hall Fund charity**

In 2006 the Parish Council had been appointed as the sole managing trustee of the charity by the Charity Commission. The Official Custodian of Charities remained the legal owner of the land and hall but as holding trustee could take no part in decision-making. The Parish Council must follow both the rules in the Scheme of 2006 and general charity and trust law which included an obligation to keep trust business confidential. The trust could decide to publicise its decisions, but was not required to do this.

The trustee committee in June 2023 had decided to work on a plan to secure the hall's future for the next 2-10 years at least. The committee had concluded that it would be better for the local community if the Parish Council owned the hall outright. This would enable local people to influence its management more directly and the council would be democratically accountable to the electorate. It would also enable the parish council to meet the hall's costs directly through the precept and therefore ensure its financial security. The Charity Commission's permission for this had been requested in October 2023 and a reply was awaited. The committee would keep the community informed.

## **4. Annual Accounts 2022-2023**

The accounts were presented and reviewed by members of the trustee committee and approved unanimously. Income had been £5,106.43 and outgoings £9,813.74. A copy is annexed to these minutes and would be placed on the Parish Council's website.

## **5. Question and answer session**

### **5.1**

During questions and discussions it was confirmed to the meeting that separate trustee committee meetings had started in June 2023, following legal advice received in early 2023. Trustee decisions had previously been taken in Parish Council meetings and therefore recorded in council minutes. In the interests of openness the trust had published its minutes since June 2023 on the parish council website.

## 5.2

Interest was expressed in setting up a working group to manage the hall on a day-to-day basis and the chairman welcomed offers of support to the trust. Most work for the hall was now done by councillors as volunteers or by the parish council clerk.

## 5.3

Advertising to increase the number of hirings of the hall was suggested. It was noted that the purpose of the charity is to provide a hall for the use of “inhabitants...of Great Easton and the surrounding neighbourhood.....with the object of improving the conditions of life for the inhabitants” and the trust was required to prioritise this. It was suggested that if the hall were owned outright by the Parish Council, the hall could operate in line with business principles. However there was a risk of causing a nuisance to local residents by increased noise, traffic and parking around the hall. Local organisations were encouraged to use the hall.

## 5.4

The hall’s facilities were discussed and whether these should be upgraded alongside the repairs which were needed. Community fundraising to support the hall was suggested. It was noted that future housing development could produce a Community Infrastructure Levy or other funding which could be devoted to enhancing the hall. The trust was open to all options to provide what was best for the community, whether by rebuilding the hall or refurbishing and adding new facilities.

## **6. The Annual General Meeting was closed by the Chairman of the trustee committee.**

NOTE: a copy of the Scheme sealed on 10 October 2006 by the Charity Commission and copies of the trust minutes from June 2023 are on the website <https://greateastonparishcouncil.co.uk/governance-documents/> and <https://greateastonparishcouncil.co.uk/meeting-minutes> respectively.