

Stisted Village Hall Charity – proposed changes explained as background to the 2013 Annual General Meeting of the Village Hall.

The Village Hall was a gift from George Douglas Fairhead, who was the founder of the Hall. The arrangements for the use and management of the Hall were set out in the 1939 deed by which he gave the Hall to trustees of the Stisted Village Hall Charity for the benefit of the local community. A copy of that deed is available on the Village Hall website and is referred to as “the governing document”.

The Charity Commission recognizes that “Founders aim to ensure that a governing document serves the charity well for the foreseeable future and allows for changing circumstances. However, it is likely that, with the passage of time, new needs and unforeseen eventualities will develop and that the governing document may need updating to reflect these changes.”

Much has changed since 1939 and it is not surprising that those original arrangements now need review. After careful consideration the trustees of the Charity have passed a resolution which amends the administrative arrangements for the Hall. A copy of that resolution is also available on the Village Hall website. There are no changes to the purposes of the Charity, which remain as set out in 1939. The changes are intended to bring up to date, simplify and make more clearly democratic the administration of the Charity. This explanation does not give a complete explanation of all the terms of the resolution but is intended to flag up what are seen as the major changes. A detailed comparison of the 1939 deed and the resolution will show the full effect of the changes.

The freehold of the Village Hall and the freehold of other land more recently acquired (part of the allotments and the car park) are now vested in the Official Custodian for Charities as “holding trustee” for the Charity. This saves the need for legal documents and consequent expense when trustees change and means there is no longer any need for separation of functions between “trustees” and “management committee” as set out in the 1939 deed. All relevant functions will now be carried out by the management committee and there will be a staggered transition to an elected management committee of 6 members, though there will be power for the committee to co-opt up to 3 other members. This will replace the original arrangements where up to 6 trustees (unelected) were to be members along with 8 elected members, some elected by the Stisted Parish Council, some by the Stisted Women’s Institute, and some by the long defunct Stisted Men’s Institute. After the disappearance of the Men’s Institute, in accordance with the 1939 deed its right to appoint members was split between the Stisted Parish Council and an election at the Village Hall AGM. These arrangements for appointment and election are regarded as too cumbersome and impracticable.

The Stisted Parish Council and the Stisted Women’s Institute have agreed to give up their right to appoint management committee members. At the AGM of the Village Hall those present will be asked to approve the changes set out in the resolution and consequently to give up the right of the AGM to appoint 2 members of the management committee which has passed to the AGM. Instead, the existing committee will progressively retire between 2014 and 2017 and starting in 2014 the AGM will be asked to elect at least 3 members. All members will hold office for 4 years though they may offer themselves for re-election.

These changes need to be approved by the AGM in order to comply with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011, which effectively require a two thirds majority of those present to approve them.