



## RISTON PARISH COUNCIL – VILLAGE HALL INFORMATION

Riston Parish Councillors are aware there has been a significant amount of discussion within the community regarding the future of the Village Hall. We are also aware that some of the information shared on social media and word of mouth is out of context, incomplete or inaccurate.

**We must state from the outset that Riston Parish Council does not support the closure of the Hall and wishes to see it continue to serve the community's needs.**

To fully explain and inform the community why the Parish Council has decided to step away from maintaining the Village Hall and hand back the responsibility to the PFC, a meeting has been arranged in the Village Hall on

**Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2026 at 6.30pm**

In the interim, we provide below some context and key information to help residents understand the Council's position and enable them to ask relevant question at the above session.

On taking office in May 2023, the new Councillors identified several historic governance and compliance issues which required correction to ensure the Council operated fully in line with lawful requirements. We have undergone training and spent a lot of time with auditors, added policies to strengthen governance, and have managed to turn the Council around. We are proud of our achievement! However, to meet these standards, the Council has had to pay for its own website, email system, employ a capable Clerk, pay national insurance and a lawful wage, and ensuring staff are employed and remunerated in accordance with national employment and tax requirements.

We also inherited the management of the Village Hall, and following a near-miss incident, professional inspections were commissioned which identified several poor safety and legal compliance issues. The independent survey concluded that the Hall would require significant investment to remain viable in the future for the community. Nonetheless, we spent around £2200 on urgent remedial work and energy efficiency improvements.

In trying to obtain clarity from the PFC regarding ownership and responsibilities of the Hall, it has transpired that the PFC had been given access to documents that were withheld from the Council despite repeated requests to recover them. This resulted in Councillors having to devote a significant amount of time in researching archives held by the East Riding Council to establish a clear understanding of the ownership and legal obligations relating to the Village Hall and Playing Fields facilities. It also necessitated seeking specialist and independent legal advice at a cost of around £1000 to guide our decision making.

We, therefore, want to draw your attention to the PFC's published Constitution, which can be found at <https://www.riston.co.uk/community/riston-20021/playing-fields/>

To help residents understand the complexity of the arrangements binding the Council and the PFC in the above document, it is important to clarify that all the land and properties in question are managed by the PFC but are held in custodian trust by the Parish Council. Parish Councillors are the custodian

Trustees of the assets (and should not be confused by the PFC charity trustees). These are common legal arrangements that are put in place when un-incorporated charities purchase land. The reason being is that these charities may cease to exist requiring the custodian trustees to take on the responsibility “until such time a properly constituted management committee is reformed in accordance with trust deed”.

Item 2 of the Constitution makes it clear that the management of the trust land “**shall be vested in a Committee of Management, which shall indemnify the Trustees and keep them indemnified against all liability in respect thereof**”. This Committee of Management is known now as the PFC.

Crucially, it is important to understand why this binding clause was written in the Constitution. It is specifically included to protect the Parish Council, and therefore, the Parish taxpayers from any liability related to the trust assets. Since 1991, the Council has taken on all the Village Hall liabilities and funded them from the precept which was a voluntary arrangement.

The Parish Council, on behalf of the taxpayers, should be working in line with the Constitution and not continue to incur risk. The Council's decisions have been rooted in protecting the taxpayer from these liabilities.

We are aware of a repeated claim that a £30,000 fund is ringfenced in the Council's budget for the refurbishment of the Hall. We can find no evidence, neither has any evidence been presented to us, to substantiate this claim. But even if this were the case, neither this Council nor its predecessors would have the funds to run its normal business.

It is claimed that the Hall is not aligned with the PFC sporting and recreation objectives, yet we have obtained some evidence that shows that it was used as a changing and showering facility before the pavilion was built and bookings have shown its use for table tennis, kick boxing, yoga, kettlebell classes and similar sporting activities.

We also read that the Council should continue to fund the Hall from a reassessed precept. As explained above this would conflict with our obligations to protect the taxpayers from exposure to risk.

We fully recognise the importance of the Village Hall to the community and the groups that rely on its continued availability and are heartened to hear and read that many in the community are prepared to take an active part in fundraising and managing the Hall. We have already made a commitment to the PFC to play an active part in supporting these efforts where we can.

**We wish to make it clear that we do not support the Hall's closure and are committed to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to achieve a successful outcome.**

We, therefore, urge the PFC to re-establish a Village Hall Sub-committee in accordance with its Constitution to enable community-led progress and work towards a viable and successful Village Hall.

We look forward to seeing you on Wednesday but if you cannot make it and have questions, please contact the Parish Clerk on [clerk@ristonparish.org](mailto:clerk@ristonparish.org).

Riston Parish Council.