

Longparish Village Hall

Charity No. 301877
FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT

Policy statement

The Village Hall Committee will ensure that the hall is a safe environment so far as is reasonably practicable.

Users and volunteers should take care and exercise common sense.

Background

We provide a warm, welcoming and well-equipped village hall in Longparish which is available at reasonable rates to anyone who wishes to hire it.

It is well used for events including baby and toddler group, youth club, craft group, two weekly exercise classes, film shows, talks, gardening club, parish council meetings, coffee mornings, parties, wakes, plays, live entertainment and so on.

The hall was extensively refurbished in 2012 to bring it up to modern standards. Fire safety was an important part of the design. The risk of fire is low.

Legal framework

The main emphasis of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 is towards reducing the risk of fire and preventing fire. The Village Hall Committee is the 'responsible person' and is required to:

- appoint 'competent person (s)' to prepare this risk assessment
- put fire precautions in place where necessary and where it is reasonable and practical to do so.

We appointed Brian Sanders and Jeremy Barber (trustees) who reviewed the hall in October 2016 and prepared this risk assessment. Members of the committee have reviewed it and it is published on our website. We will review it as necessary and at least annually at the committee meeting after our AGM.

The five steps of a fire risk assessment are:

- identify fire hazards
- identify people at risk
- evaluate, remove, reduce and protect from risk
- record, plan, inform, instruct and train
- review

People at risk

All hirers and users: The hall is hired out to a diverse range of people. The age of hall users ranges from children to the very elderly and users have a wide range of physical ability.

Disabled Persons: There is a ramp to the front door providing wheelchair access but the other two emergency exits have steps. All hirers should ensure that wheelchair users are aware of this. Hirers should also note people who are hard of hearing, have limited eyesight or are very elderly. These people may need extra help in an emergency.

Children: Hirers who hold events attended by children should make sure that they are supervised at all times. Hirers must provide help to those children present in the event of an emergency.

Trades People: The committee employs local trades people on both an ad-hoc and scheduled basis for the purposes of cleaning, safety checks and building maintenance. People who are familiar with the building may gain access to the hall by borrowing a key from the bookings secretary or other committee member, while others are always escorted by one or more committee members.

Volunteers: Volunteers carry out maintenance work, painting, cleaning, etc. All volunteers know the hall well.

Staff: The Village Hall Committee does not employ any staff.

Fire hazards and how we manage them

For a fire to occur it needs three things: fuel, a source of ignition and oxygen. If these three potential hazards can be kept apart, removed or reduced then the risk of a fire is minimised.

We have summarised risks and how we manage them below. In all cases the source of oxygen is the air.

General: The materials we used in the refurbishment and the equipment we have installed all meet modern safety standards.

There are three emergency exits which are clearly marked and lit in the event of a power cut. Users must take care not to obstruct them. In the event of fire the assembly point is the drive of Orchard House next door to the hall.

We have a good fire alarm system, safety lighting and suitable fire extinguishers all of which are regularly tested and maintained by qualified contractors. There are smoke detectors in all rooms including store rooms.

Smoking is strictly forbidden in the hall and candles are not allowed. Smokers can use the area outside the main entrance where a sand bucket is provided for cigarette ends.

Electrical equipment and wiring is tested every five years. The next test is due in October 2017. Clear instructions are provided for users.

Bins are emptied regularly to prevent build up of combustible materials, particularly paper towels.

Cupboards are spring cleaned annually to ensure that clutter does not accumulate and cause a fire hazard.

Heating is by wall mounted electric heaters turned on by controls in the lobby. Users are not permitted to adjust individual heaters and must ensure that inflammable materials are not put near them.

All curtains and blinds, including stage curtains, are fireproofed.

Three doors (lobby to hall, hall to corridor and committee room to corridor) have turn button locks to stop small children straying. These are always unlocked unless there are small children present when the accompanying adults know how to operate them in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Our insurance cover is reviewed and renewed annually.

Lobby: The main fuse panel and the fire alarm control panel are in the lobby.

Fire instructions are displayed here.

Main hall and stage: Emergency exits are via the main entrance and the side door which has a crush bar. There are water fire extinguishers and alarm call points by each exit. There is also a CO2 extinguisher by the side exit.

For fire safety reasons, the maximum number of people permitted in the hall is 100 seated theatre style or 200 standing.

There is a fan heater over the main entrance. The ceiling mounted acoustic panels are constructed to modern fire safety standards.

The audio visual system is controlled from a locked cupboard to the left of the stage. Hirers are only permitted to use it if they are trained. It must be turned off after use.

The stage lights get hot. They may only be used by arrangement with the committee. Users must take care to ensure that they are not close to inflammable materials, including curtains.

The stage is wooden. There are four cupboards underneath it which are kept locked. There is a loft hatch giving access to the main loft. Access is limited to committee members and accompanied contractors.

Servery: Equipment includes two ovens, two portable induction hobs, a microwave oven, a wall mounted water boiler, a fridge, an extractor fan, a hot cupboard, a kettle and two water heaters. The first aid kit is to the right of the door. There is a fire blanket and a foam fire extinguisher. The bin is used for combustible materials.

Chair store: The chairs are upholstered to modern fire standards. The tables are made of HDPE. There is a dehumidifier which is occasionally used elsewhere in the building.

KidzZone store: This store is kept locked. There are combustible materials in the store but no ignition source. The door has an intumescent strip which will cut off air in the event of a fire.

Cleaner's store: There is a vacuum cleaner and a water heater. Toilet rolls and paper towels are stored here.

Other stores: There are combustible materials, particularly in the Toddler Group store but the rooms are kept locked and the doors have intumescent strips.

Toilets: There are water heaters and extractor fans in each toilet. All three have bins for paper towels which are inflammable. There is an emergency pull cord alarm in the disabled toilet.

Committee room: There is a crush bar exit. Beside it are an alarm call point and a water fire extinguisher. There is a kettle. The bin is used for paper towels.

The loft above is accessed from the room and contains the inverters for the pv cells on the roof. Access is limited to committee members and accompanied contractors.

Outside store: Tables and chairs for use off site (mainly at the fete) are stored here.

Outside: The bins are kept on the hard standing outside the kitchen. They contain combustible material but the risk of fire is low and a fire in the bins would be unlikely to spread to the hall.

Smokers use the area outside the main door. A sand bucket is provided for cigarette ends.

In the event of fire the assembly point is the drive of Orchard House next door to the hall.

New storage extension: A new store is being constructed at the rear of the hall. It will be included in this risk assessment when it is occupied.

Review

This Risk Assessment was prepared in October 2016 and reviewed in June 2017. It will be reviewed as necessary but at least annually at the committee meeting after our AGM.