

## **The Charter Hall**

In light of the comments about Charter Hall hire rates which have recently appeared on Facebook, the Trustees would ask you to read the following statement.

The Trustees also wish to confirm that the Charter Hall is a registered charity and receives no funding other than from hiring out the Hall, and any occasional grant it is able to obtain.

For a number of years the Charter Hall Trustees have maintained the Hall's hiring rates at a relatively stable level with only minor charge increases. Since the lock-downs, brought on during the Covid-19 epidemic, the 'Hall' has been subsidising **all** bookings made by village residents and groups. Initially this was to assist groups to re-form post Covid, with a 50% reduction for 3 months. Additionally, substantial discounts were given to charitable organisations booking the Hall, to assist with their fund-raising. Whilst these subsidies may be considered commendable they can no longer be sustained in the current financial climate and with the increased maintenance costs for running the Hall. During the 2022 -2023 two year financial period there has been a net deficit of £22,992.55p, primarily due to increased utilities. For January 2023 alone energy costs were £3,154.48p. The Trustees' Management Committee has taken what action it can to reduce these energy costs, such as moving to a new energy supplier, and closely regulating the Hall's central heating. The hot water – central heating systems have been separated to ensure the Hall can be kept warm but at a lower cost. This latter undertaking has only been possible due to generous donations from a few village organisations and individuals, for which the Trustees are extremely grateful.

Despite these actions it is no longer possible to continue subsidising the Hall rates to the current extent. It will therefore, with regret, be necessary to increase hire charges, and these will be implemented from the 1<sup>st</sup> April. The new rates will be posted on the Charter Hall website in March and in the meantime anyone wishing to be advised of specific hiring costs should contact the Hall's Administrator.

A discount of 10% for village residents for one-off bookings will be applied. Village organisations, which book regular, weekly or monthly sessions will also receive a 10% discount, and those which pre-book and pre-pay, in full, for the 9 months from April – December inclusive will receive a 20% discount.

Whilst these changes will go some way to redress the Hall's financial position it is important that additional funding is realised. The Charter Hall Management Committee is again organising the Charter Hall Lottery, and it urges everyone to purchase at least one ticket for this monthly draw. We continue to canvas for new bookings, and please encourage groups or individuals to make use of the Hall's excellent facilities. Additionally, the Committee is organising one major event, and a quiz night, for later in the year. Details will be announced in due course and we look forward to your support.

As most will be aware, our Charter Hall is one of the great assets of Smarden, and the envy of many visitors to the village. Please help in any way you can to maintain it to its current high standards.

**Support the Charter Hall**