Minutes of Smarden Charter Hall Annual General Meeting

Saturday 13 June 2026 : 10.00 am Charter Hall

Present: Roger Craig, Angela Wilson, Eric and Barbara Spear, Mick Price, Carol Barkway, Owen Ling and Forest McCarthy.

Trustees: Mike Barkway (Chair), Brian Bristow, Geraldine Dyer, Adam Green, Annie Jeffrey, Paul Ryan. Administrator: Lou Gibbs

Apologies: Carly Mitchell, Clare Walton.

1. Mike Barkway (Chair), welcomed the residents and trustees to the AGM. He then welcomed Forest and Owen from TODS and explained that the pre-AGM meeting of trustees had agreed to nominate Owen as a CH trustee.

2. The minutes of the last AGM, held on 14 June 2025 were noted. Sharon Naden's name had been mistakenly spelt as Sharon Maiden. This was noted.

3. Mike talked the listeners through his report (attached)

- The CH finances show a healthy balance of income and expenditure, making any increase in hire fees unlikely.

- Smarden WI, a regular Hall hirer, has folded after 106 years. Smarden Players have also formally closed after 70 productions in 40 years, 1982 having been the first performance in conjunction with Smarden Primary School.

- An archive of village and CH activities is being developed.

- Looking forward, Tenterden Drama (previously TODS) has adopted the CH as its base, and has already staged 2 productions, with a 3rd planned for September 2026. This is a very welcome partnership and provides good income.

- New activities would be of great benefit and easier to recruit in view of the updated stage-lighting, sound system and many other improvements facilitated by Tenterden Drama: a film club, travelling theatre groups, photography competition evenings, village amateur dramatics, tribute performers were mentioned.

- In the past the Hall has helped new groups with discounts and advice on grant-funding. This support is ongoing.

- Hall running costs have been vastly reduced, thanks to the installation of LED lighting in the main hall. In addition, local water heating has replaced the uneconomical boiler use, and when needed, the boiler can be controlled remotely. S106 funds may be available if the application for 77 houses in Smarden is successful and this would provide a much-needed replacement boiler, to reduce heating costs even further. Trustees noted however that refusal of the application would be preferable.

- The Hop Pocket and the corridor have been painted, and the Main Hall will be done in the Summer holidays as more time is required.

- A keypad system for access has been installed, which allows hirers to open independently of trustees. This has reduced the need for trustees to open for regular events.

- Over time a great deal of clutter and paperwork has been amassed, and work is ongoing to reduce this, particularly in the roof space. There is an electronic document system in place to enable digitisation of many still relevant papers. An archive of important original documents is being created.

- Mike thanked Lou, the CH Administrator and Natalie the cleaner for their work throughout the year. He also thanked village clubs and societies, CH Lottery supporters and those who help to fundraise. He then thanked the trustees.

- There will be a quarterly update on Hall matters which will go out to those who regularly support the CH Lottery and other Hall events.

4. The report of the Trustees , including the Examined Final Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2025 together with a one-page summary of the accounts, “Financial Headlines 2025” were received. Expenditure is broadly in balance with income, as expenditure on improving assets accounts for a £7504 deficit.

- The trustees are the Management Committee.

5. Mark Bickerton stood down as a trustee , as his circumstances have changed since he was appointed. Six trustees were elected – Mike Barkway, Brian Bristow, Geraldine Dyer, Adam Green, Annie Jeffrey and Paul Ryan; Carly Mitchell and Clare Walton were co-opted. It was agreed at a previous trustee meeting that Owen Ling would be nominated for the role of trustee, and he was duly elected at the AGM. Owen will be added to the WhatsApp group to enable greater efficiency when quick decisions need to be made.

- Mike extended a formal welcome to Owen. He also thanked Mark for his 6 years as a trustee, and the value of his input over that time. Mark offered his help if needed at any time.

6. To authorise the Management Committee to select an Independent Examiner for the 2026 Accounts. This was agreed.

7. Roger Craig asked whether the car park markings can be redone as there is some confusion, particularly with the disabled spaces.

Legislation pertaining to the size of spaces has changed, allowing for larger vehicles. There is room for 35 spaces at present. It was suggested that the present lines could be renewed. Adam would attend to it, including the situation with disabled spaces.

Roger also asked whether a pull-down screen could be provided in the Hop-Pocket. This was agreed.

Roger thanked the trustees on behalf of village societies for their work and congratulated them on bringing the finances back to a healthy position.

The meeting closed at 10.40am