At the community meeting on 18 November 2021 in Norton Village Hall, and the Parish Council meeting on 8 December 2021, questions were raised about the current status of the Norton Village Hall Management Committee (NVHMC). There were also complimentary statements made by councillors about how effectively the NVHMC had functioned over the years. It was heartening to hear views that the village hall had been well looked after and improved.

This email is intended to clarify the current status of the NVHMC and its commitment to continue supporting the long-term viability of Norton Village Hall.

Immediately after the open forum referred to above, the NVHMC met to review its status. The following day that committee informed the Parish Council by email that the remaining 5 members of the village hall team would rescind their earlier resignations of 5 October 2021. This was offered ‘in principle’ and subject to the Parish Council making a loan application to the Public Works Loan Board. In the interim, the team of 5 committed to manage basic village hall functions, and this has continued throughout. The group recognises that without this support the short and long- term future of Norton Village Hall would be at risk. This group of 5 also happens to include the building management group of 4 which began the first stage of the development project by scoping the potential for improvements based on customer feedback. The same group commissioned architects plans and made them freely available for scrutiny. They are also close to obtaining quotations from contractors based on building regulation information. The commitment of this group to continue with this project work remains intact.

We confirm therefore that bookings for the village hall are still being managed effectively, and payments associated with the smooth running of the village hall continue to be paid on time. Unfortunately, this smaller but effective group does not have the capacity to sustain the important and well attended fund raising activities associated with the village hall. However, some members of the community are offering their time to become part of the NVHMC and the committee is actively seeking new members, so the potential to renew fundraising activities in 2022 is strong.

The current NVHMC is committed to working with the Parish Council to pursue the appropriate options necessary to sustain a comfortable and adaptable village hall for the Norton community. The Parish Council as Custodian Trustee owns the hall with the NVHMC members acting as trustees of the charity which manages the village hall.

The NVHMC recognises that there must be repair or development of the village hall and has made suggestions about a range of possibilities to the Parish Council. The Parish Council is now part way through the process that will decide the funding mechanisms for any work. The NVHMC recognises that the Parish Council have stated the likelihood that the precept will be raised in future to fund the village hall repairs or development.

The current documents (Trust Deed etc) setting out governance of the NVHMC are old and require updating. The NVHMC proposes that this re-constitution of governance should follow the decision that the Parish Council makes following their consideration of the feedback from the community regarding future development of the village hall. Once the Parish Council has shared their decision, the new NVHMC and governance can be drawn up commensurate with the future upon which the Parish Council have based their financial decisions.

The NVHMC welcomes discussion about the role, accountability and constitution of a new management committee. This discussion should, of course, cover any fund-raising activities.

The NVHMC proposes that their resignations are fully rescinded as of now, and that the interim arrangement of 5 active members continues until 31 March 2022 (FY end). New recruits will be welcomed during this period. By this time the Parish Council will have completed their due diligence regarding any application for loans or grants to develop the village hall and it will be clear what is required of any NVHMC. The new constitution and governance of the NVHMC can be updated to align with actions required by the Parish Council and the NVHMC in working together to achieve the future that is planned for the village hall. A newly constituted NVHMC could be in place for 1 April 2022. This would ensure seamless governance and management and avoid delays with any building project work.

The current members of the NVHMC repeat their commitment to working transparently and professionally in collaboration with Norton Parish Council over the future development and management of Norton Village Hall.

We intend to share this email on the Norton Village Hall web site in a spirit of transparency and regular communication with the community. The NVHMC is committed to ensuring that the community is informed about the current status of its membership and activity. It is also important that the community can read what we write about the future intentions of the NVHMC, the genuine commitment to working with the Parish Council and the time scales that influence the next steps for the NVHMC.