

ORAC Chairman's Report

June 2010

Following the May AGM held in the village Hall and Steven Tarrant's resignation, I find myself acting once again as Chairman of ORAC.

First of all I would like to thank Steve for all of his support, energy and enthusiasm during the period of his time on ORAC and also as Chairman. Steve was in post during the period for delivery of the new village hall, and has taken the lead in the building and associated activities in the last 2 years since we obtained core funding from the National Lottery Fund and other secondary funding providers, including Mid Suffolk District Council, which enabled us to see a new hall built at last.

We have a number of outstanding issues to address during the 12 month defects liability period on the New Hall and will be looking to resolve these in the near future.

BUT in the short term we have a more pressing issue, namely pending actions against us to improve the hall's acoustic performance or the requirement to limit noise breakout to the levels detailed within the planning consent conditions.

These conditions limit noise emissions from the hall (measured over 30 minutes) to levels of 42dBA in the day time and 38 dBA (measured over 5 minutes) after 21-00hrs in the evening. As a comparative reference normal speech at 3ft to 5ft can generate levels in excess of 60dB and a whisper 30dB, so it can be seen that these conditions are extremely onerous. No such conditions existed on the old hall and or the previous planning consents granted by Mid Suffolk District Council, but were only imposed on the latest final application dated 2006.

On the weekend of the recent School Disco organized by ORAC as a fund raising event, we were subject to a monitoring visit by Mid Suffolk Environmental Health Department (MSDC EHD), acting on a complaint from a village resident living close to the new hall. Subsequent to this we have now received a formal notice of alleged breach of planning conditions.

Bearing in mind the above we have written to all hirers advising them that they should not play any recorded or live music at any event scheduled for the next few months, and have now cancelled all private bookings that may have planned to play amplified music, to mitigate the risk of enforcement and whilst we meet with and review the conditions discussed above.

One option we may have is to apply to vary the planning conditions relating to the use of the Hall. This will take some time to resolve. In the short term we are engaging with the builder on the acoustic issues within the hall, and particularly looking at finding a solution to the excessive internal echo and noise passing through and generated by, the extract system fan units (that ironically were approved by MSDC Building Control as part of our Building Regulations submission).

All members of the ORAC committee are committed to seeking to find a way of reconciling what we believe to be the community interest in use of the hall to its full potential, considered with the concerns

of any residents who feel that their own rights are being infringed. Above all, we do not want to put at risk activities such as our fete, use of the Children's Play Area, and events such as the Christmas Dinner that have been supported by our community for many years.

If you have any questions on the above subjects please do not hesitate to contact me by phone (evenings) or by email please.

Thank you in anticipation of your support

Rob Richardson
Committee Chairman for 2010/2011

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