

Mileham Village Hall

Health and Safety Policy v1.0

Purpose and Scope

Organisations which employ five or more persons are legally required to have a written statement setting out their policy with regard to health and safety.

The Mileham Village Hall has no named owner and no employees. The Mileham Village Hall Management Committee, (hereafter referred to as the Committee) consists only of unpaid volunteers. Thus this policy is not produced as a response to any legal requirement but as a matter of good practice in order to set out and clarify the Committee's approach to health and safety.

This policy is also intended to ensure that all users of Mileham Village Hall are aware of their responsibilities, either personally or jointly, with regard to health and safety.

It is emphasised that this policy is not intended to be read in isolation and any relevant provisions contained in other Mileham Village Hall policies and documents should also be taken as forming part of the the Committee's approach to health and safety. This includes the provisions contained in the Hire Agreement and its supporting documentation, the Lone Workers Policy, the Child Protection Policy and the Equal Opportunities Policy each of which should be carefully taken into account.

This scope of this policy encompasses anyone using the hall and/or its premises for any reason. It applies irrespective of whether or not they have paid to be on the premises or their reasons for being there.

General Statement of Policy

The general statement of this over arching policy is to set out that it is the intention of the Committee to maintain the village hall and its premises in compliance with relevant health and safety legislation, in order to provide an appropriate safe and healthy environment for all users.

Responsibilities

The Committee will be jointly responsible for ensuring that as far as 'reasonably practical' the hall, its external premises and any supplied equipment will be safely provided and maintained in line with legislative requirements. This includes fixtures, fittings, furnishings, substances, appliances, guidance notices, fire equipment and emergency lighting.

With regards to events (hires), the responsibility for ensuring activities are appropriately assessed and delivered in such a way as to cause no detriment to participants or any other person present, shall sit with person who has hired the hall for the event. This is in full accordance with the written terms and agreement of the hall hire documentation. This will include the need for the hirer to ensure that all necessary risk assessments are carried out and recorded in advance, that remedial action is taken where needed and that any person involved in delivering the event is qualified and/or an appropriate person to do so.

Full compliance with the contents of this policy (and with all notices/information displayed within the village hall and/or its premises) is a condition of any booking or use of the village hall.

All users of the hall are expected to take personal responsibility for ensuring that they act at all times with due care and attention with regard to their own health and safety and that of others. This will include, but is not limited to, not handling/moving items in the hall (such as chairs and tables) unless they are certain of their ability to do so safely, obeying all guidance displayed in the hall (such as those regarding food safety), safely using items only for the purpose for which they intended (such as cutlery and other kitchen items) and making appropriate use of any provided safety items (such as using the chair trolley).

Whilst the main hall is used for a number of purposes, which must only be as agreed at the time of booking, other areas of the hall and its premises are not multi purpose. These areas (kitchen, toilets, store rooms, foyer, car park and other outside areas) should only be used for the purposes for which they are intended. None of these areas are designated or suitable as play, sport or gathering areas and should never be treated as such without the express permission of the Committee.

Furthermore, the Committee regards anyone entering the hall and/or its outside areas without being invited either by being part of a formal booking or by being regarded as invited by a Committee member, for purposes such as deliveries or maintenance, as trespass. Trespassers are still expected to take all due care of themselves and others and not to cause any damage. It is not reasonably practical to expect the Committee to be able to risk assess the unforeseen actions of persons misusing the premises without their knowledge. Therefore, the Committee does not accept any responsibility or liability for any injury/damage to trespassers and/or their belongings.

Any hall user who discovers a fault, damage or any situation that might give rise to any injury or unsafe situation is responsible for taking appropriate action. In the event of a minor event, such as a small spillage that can be safely mopped up, such action must be taken immediately by the person who discovers it. Any event that cannot be safely and immediately addressed, such as a broken piece of equipment, must be reported to the Committee, who will assume responsibility for dealing with the issue, as appropriate. As a short term interim measure, hirers may be asked to place a warning on the item stating that it is faulty and should not be used. Any such item will be taken out of general stock until repaired/replaced/discarded.

It is emphasised that no user should ever place themselves or others at risk in order to address any perceived fault, damage or situation. If such a situation arises then the priority will be to ensure the safety of themselves and others and to raise the necessary alarm or warning.

In order to meet their responsibilities under this policy, in particular with regard to contacting the emergency services, all hirers are required to have immediate access to at least one mobile phone throughout the duration of the hire. Hirers should be aware that the mobile signal at the hall varies according to individual network strength and that therefore they may need to exit the hall in order to obtain a viable signal. Hirers are advised to establish that they have a viable signal strength before their hire commences.

Delivery of Responsibilities Including Contractors

Whilst the responsibility for health and safety will be as set out above, it is recognised that in order to meet these requirements it may be necessary for some services to be delivered by other people.

Examples of this may include, but are not limited to, the engagement of appropriately qualified/experienced contractors to undertake services such as appliance testing, cleaning, plumbing work, electrical installation and other forms of maintenance.

Whilst present at the hall or on its premises contractors will be regarded as 'users' and subject to both the full provisions of this policy and any such additional legal or organisational requirement that may be applicable to them, either as self employed workers or as the staff of an employer. This will include the use of safe equipment and systems of work, risk assessments and any associated adjustments. Contractors must have their own personal and public liability insurance.

People hiring the hall will be responsible for ensuring that any services that they personally provide or engage for their planned event, for example catering, equipment hire or entertainment are provided in full accordance with the above.

Risk Assessments and Annual Maintenance Schedule

The Committee will endeavour to address any urgent health and safety concerns as a matter of the highest priority.

Routine issues, such as fire extinguisher testing, whilst vital to good health and safety practice, can be timetabled in advance and built into the Committee's annual maintenance schedule.

The Health and Safety Executive has published a Health and Safety Checklist for Village and Community Halls, covering the most common areas of risk, to help managing committees comply with health and safety law.

The Committee will complete this checklist annually and incorporate the results into their annual maintenance planning process. This will enable the Committee to identify and appropriately prioritise any potential risks/hazards that, as the law requires, may be 'reasonably practically' addressed. The resultant maintenance schedule may also be supplemented by the inclusion of any other hazards/risks identified by any other means.

Where this schedule includes any actions that need to be regularly repeated, such as checking the first aid box, the frequency of such checks and the person responsible for ensuring they are performed will form part of the schedule.

From time to time, as required, the Committee may also seek an enhanced professional risk assessment (either generally or for a specific purpose) and incorporate the findings into the planning process, as described above.

Part of the maintenance of the hall will be to ensure that any health and safety related guidance displayed in the hall is up to date and pertinent and all policies are reviewed and amended, as appropriate.

Where the Committee identifies a training need, for example in the use of security alarm systems, all users identified as needing the training must co-operate fully with the Committee in undertaking such training.

First Aid Box and Accident/Incident Book

A suitably stocked first aid box is sited in the kitchen. This will be checked on a regular basis by a Committee member and restocked accordingly.

In addition, all hall users are expected to notify a Committee member if they use any of the contents of the box so that it can be swiftly restocked.

An accident/incident Book is kept in the kitchen and an appropriate entry must be logged and a Committee member notified when anyone using the hall/premises suffers any type of injury/incident. The contents of the accident/incident book will be regularly checked (as detailed in the annual maintenance schedule) and acted on accordingly.

Health and Safety File

The committee will, along with the accident book, maintain within the village hall a health and safety file in which all the key documents relating to health and safety matters are kept, This file will be accessible to all and its location should be brought to the attention of any contractors or hirers.

This file will contain, as a minimum

- Records of all risk assessments, maintenance schedules and any associated documentation.
- The full set of village hall policies and other relevant documentation, such as the hire agreement terms and conditions.
- The fire evacuation procedure
- Pertinent maintenance schedules, for example those showing the dates of fire extinguisher inspections
- Building plan
- Up to date list of emergency contacts
- Details of the nearest hospital accident and emergency department

Fire Precautions

The Committee will ensure that the following provisions are met:-

- A completed fire risk assessment showing adequate fire safety measures are in place
- An evacuation plan that has been implemented and tested – including a yearly fire drill
- Regular fire alarm testing
- The provision of appropriate fire-fighting equipment which is tested regularly in line with the manufacturer's guidance
- Checks are regularly made to ensure escape routes and fire exit doors are clearly signposted, unobstructed and adequate for the number of people using the hall (including those who are disabled or vulnerable)

- Provision is made for the safe storage of any known highly combustible substance or waste

Smoking/vaping is forbidden throughout the village hall. A bin suitable for extinguishing smoking materials is sited by the main entrance.

In case of fire it will be the responsibility of the hirer to urgently implement the evacuation plan and to contact and liaise with the fire and rescue services. If a committee member is on site when the fire arises, then they will assume responsibility for these actions.

Electrical Equipment and Testing

All electrical equipment provided by the hall must only be used for the purpose for which it is intended and in a safe and secure manner. Leads must not be allowed to trail in a manner likely to cause a trip hazard. Equipment must not be left unattended.

Any electrical equipment where there are signs of damage including exposure of components or water penetration must not be touched or operated. Any potential risks reported to the Committee will be regarded as urgent and investigated and prioritised as appropriate.

Electrical testing will form part of the annual maintenance schedule. This will include annual Portable Appliances Testing (PAT) and five yearly electrical installation testing, both to be carried out by an appropriately qualified professional.

Heating and Plumbing

The committee will ensure that the annual maintenance schedule includes provision for any necessary maintenance of water, sewerage and heating systems by suitably qualified professionals.

Any repair or replacement needed outside of the annual maintenance will be addressed as a matter of priority.

Water heating other than through the heating or plumbing systems may only be carried out within the kitchen area using the hall kettles and/or urn. These appliances may only be used for heating water and in full accordance with their instructions.

Access, Lighting and Signage

As far as reasonably practical, all surfaces including external ones such as car parking, paths and ramps will be maintained as far as reasonably practical to minimise the risk of slip and trip risks.

Access/egress points, assembly points and emergency exits will be clearly and appropriately signposted (including use of the 'running man' symbol for emergency exit routes) and kept unobstructed.

Emergency exits will be checked on a regular basis to ensure that the opening mechanisms are in full working order.

All areas will have appropriate lighting, including emergency lighting, which is tested monthly and/or annually in accordance with the hall maintenance schedule

Car Park

The committee is responsible for ensuring that the hall car park is, as far as is reasonably practical, fit for purpose with regards to providing an area designated for parking and allowing suitable on foot access/egress for the hall. Although there are no marked bays, a small area near the main entrance of the hall will be signposted indicate a disabled parking area.

Cars must be safely parked in such a way as to ensure that emergency exits are never blocked and that there is clear, unobstructed access to and from the hall.

The car park surface is loose laid material and therefore potentially subject to some movement. This may vary according to usage and/or weather conditions which are beyond the reasonable control of the Committee. All users must personally assess whether the surface is safe and appropriate for them to use given their individual mobility/balance/visual or any other needs before entering the car park

Drivers, including the drivers of heavy goods vehicles and/or oil tankers are responsible for assessing whether the parking arrangements (including access and manoeuvring space) are suitable for any vehicle they may be using, before entering the car park.

Users of the car park do so at their own risk. The committee does not accept responsibility for any loss (including by theft), damage or accident caused to any vehicle or person using the car park.

Consumable Supplies and Storage

Dispensers for paper hygiene items such as toilet rolls and hand tissues will be kept stocked. Spares will be stored in a readily accessible area within the main hall. Everyday consumables such as rubbish bags, washing up liquid, surface cleaners, cling film and foil will be kept in the kitchen area and/or adjacent to the hall rubbish bins. Hirers are responsible for ensuring that these items are used only for their intended purpose and only by responsible adults.

Cleaning items, such as drain cleaners, that are not intended for use by hirers will be kept in the store room, including where applicable in locked storage.

When not in use, large items, such as tables and chairs will be safely stored in a manner that does not cause any obstruction within the hall.

Sufficient storage will be maintained within the kitchen area to house clean crockery, cutlery and any other kitchen related items so that work surfaces are kept as clear as possible when not in use.

Items stored in the hall shed or situated above head height in the store room of the main hall should not be accessed by anyone except the responsible Committee members or designated hirers.

Users who have been given permission to store items in the store room are responsible for ensuring their items are safely stowed in their designated areas when not in use.

Additional Information

National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (NFHRS)

The local NFHRS is administered by Breckland Council. Under this scheme, any food business is inspected, assessed and awarded a 'hygiene rating' reflecting how closely the business complies with food hygiene law.

In the past, the Mileham Village Hall has always received the highest (best) rating available. Changes to the scheme mean that it is now limited to businesses that actively produce/sell foodstuffs and therefore the hall is no longer eligible for regular assessment. Irrespective of this, the Committee intends to ensure that the kitchen areas of the hall are still maintained to at least the same standards that previously attracted the highest rating.

Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)

As the Mileham Village Hall does not employ any staff, it is generally exempt from the RIDDOR requirements which only apply to workplaces. However, should a contractor suffer a work related injury and name the Mileham Village Hall as the site where he/she was working when the injury occurred, then the Committee would expect to fully co-operate, as required, in any subsequent Health and Safety Executive investigation.

Village Cardiac Defibrillator

The village cardiac defibrillator is sited on an external wall of the village hall. The Committee is happy to accommodate the defibrillator but recognises that it was purchased by, and remains the property of, the Mileham Parish Council who are therefore responsible for ensuring it is properly maintained and stocked.

Review

This policy was formally agreed by the Committee on the 17th November 2024 and will be reviewed on an annual basis.