**THE PARISH COTTAGE LEASE**

**The Parish Cottage (and other Parish land) is jointly owned ex officio by the current Chair of the Parish Meeting and the Proper Officer of Mid Suffolk District Council (together known as The Parish Trustees). The Cottage has historically always been let; initially to Estate workers and subsequently to other tenants, with occasional periods when it was empty or, more recently, undergoing major renovation to preserve the cottage and make it fit for letting for which purpose a Cottage Committee was set up and did an amazing job of gathering funds and enabling the proper renovation of the cottage, including compliance with all Listed Building requirements. The role of the Committee has in recent years effectively fallen to the current chair and the Treasurer. The day to day running of the cottage is done by GD Estates who were appointed some years ago.**

**The Parish cottage consists of the cottage itself, the garden immediately surrounding it, 2 parking places in front of the cottage and an ’orchard’ at the west (Stowlangtoft) end which is fenced off from the cottage and cottage garden.**

**As the existing lease does not define what is included in the lease and there is no plan attached to it, the Chair and Treasurer feel it sensible to bring clarity to this when the lease comes up for renewal in July. The present arrangement between the agents and the tenants leaves the arrangements regarding the ‘orchard’ somewhat loose which is not ideal for either party.**

**At the 2012 AGM the Cottage Committee recommended that the ‘orchard’ (land to the west of the cottage garden) be excluded from the tenancy. There is no further reference beyond this so it seems safe to assume that the settled position has been that the ‘orchard’ area is excluded unless or until the Parish Meeting on recommendation from the Cottage Committee decides otherwise.**

**The present tenants were given permission earlier this year to fence the orchard in (for dog safety reasons) and the cost of materials was divided between the tenants and the village, with the cost of labour being borne by the tenants.**

**It is the view of the Chair and Treasurer that the most sensible and practical approach is to formally bring the ‘orchard’ into the lease, with appropriate covenants in relation to maintenance and upkeep.**

**Finally, as we have good, reliable and proactive tenants the Chair and Treasurer will not be recommending a rent increase this year (if the tenants agree to a full year’s tenancy) nor do they believe that any rent adjustment is necessary if the orchard is to be brought formally within the lease. The rent is reviewed annually so will next be considered in July 2024.**

**CONNECTION OF ELECTRICITY TO NEW SHED**

**Earlier this year it was agreed that the tenant could put in a replacement shed in the cottage garden and that the Parish Trustees (as Landlord) would bear the cost of connecting electricity to the shed.**

**Before this can be done we need to check what building regulation Notice and appropriately certified electrician we may need for this. We are also checking with the cottage insurers both what requirements they may have about the structure of a shed with an electricity supply and what effect, if any, this may have on the overall insurance premium for the cottage. We will also be obtaining 2 quotes from appropriately registered electricians for doing the work. We hope to have these in time for the Meeting**

**THE COTTAGE COMMITTEE**

**As referred to above, a Cottage Committee was set up in about 1998 to deal with the clearance and extensive renovation of the cottage. Much hard work was put in by many in the village and others supported the effort by giving loans to allow the work to go ahead. It was a difficult and stressful but ultimately successful task from which we are now benefiting in terms of having a rental property fit for the market. Our sincere thanks should go again to those involved.**

**However, since the renovations were completed and the successful rental begun the structure of the Committee has drifted somewhat leaving the Chair and Treasurer alone in charge and with no clear general or financial mandate from the Parish Meeting.**

**We suggest that there be a Motion officially to disband the old Committee and a Resolution to establish a new Cottage oversight Committee comprising the Chair, Treasurer and one other volunteer from the village.**

**A mandate needs to be agreed for the Committee**

**Proposed General Terms of Reference**

1. **The Committee shall have the power to delegate the day to day administration of the tenancy of the Cottage to agents appointed by the Committee, with the prior approval of the Parish Meeting, from time to time.**
2. **The appointment of the agency shall be reviewed every 3 years.**
3. **The Committee shall have the power to agree to any works relating to general maintenance of the property as advised by the agents to a maximum of £3,000.**
4. **The Committee shall have the power to consider requests from the tenant to undertake work to enhance the garden or orchard areas of the property and to approve any contribution to such works to a maximum of £500.**
5. **Any repairs or improvements relating to the fabric of the property or exceeding the sum of £3,000 will require the prior approval of the Parish Meeting unless it is deemed by the agents to be emergency work, in which case the approval of the work and cost shall be approved by the Parish Meeting as soon as practicable.**
6. **In no circumstances shall the Committee exceed a total of £6,000 in any year without the formal approval of the Parish Meeting**
7. **The Committee shall undertake at least one inspection of the property each year along side the agents.**
8. **All income relating to the Cottage shall be kept in a separate account to other income of the Parish under the control of the Treasurer.**
9. **The accounts relating to the cottage shall be produced by the Treasurer to the AGM of the Parish Meeting each year.**