

## **STATEMENT BY SHAVINGTON-CUM-GRESTY PARISH COUNCIL**

### **RESPONSE TO COMMENTS IN THE MEDIA ABOUT THE CANCELLATION OF SHAVINGTON DRAMA GROUP'S PRODUCTION OF 'TIPTOE THROUGH THE TOMBSTONES'**

Shavington Drama Group recently posted a statement on-line making reference to a 'dispute' with the Parish Council and commented that as a result of the Council's refusal to install a batten on the wall of the Village Hall to replace the one which was removed, it has now cancelled its upcoming production. The post on Shavington Drama Group's Facebook page is entirely inaccurate and misleading. Read the Parish Council's response in our article.

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This statement has been prepared by the Parish Council in response to comments in the media made by Shavington Drama Group, and various individuals, in respect of the refurbishment of the Village Hall.

Shavington Drama Group posted a statement on-line making reference to a 'dispute' with the Parish Council and commented that as a result of the Council's refusal to install a batten on the wall of the Village Hall to replace the one which was removed, it has now cancelled its production of 'Tiptoe Through the Tombstones'.

The post has many inaccuracies in it. Although this matter has not yet been considered by the Parish Council, individual Members of the Council have expressed their disappointment that a local village group which has been supported by the Parish Council over many years, has now chosen to air its unfounded grievances on social media.

At the Parish Council meeting on 1 August 2018, Members discussed the Village Hall projects. Arising out of discussion, a councillor made an 'in passing' reference to the Drama Group enquiring if the batten (rail) was to be re-installed as part of the refurbishment. The Parish Council had no plans for this and the councillor was asked to meet with a representative of the Drama Group to show them around the village hall and discuss their requirements. This could then be brought back to the Parish Council for discussion and decision.

The Parish Council acknowledges that the Drama Group makes a great contribution to the community and one of the ways that support has been provided over the years is to let the Group hire the Village Hall each year at a significantly reduced hire rate. For several years, the Group has only paid £350 for its September productions; the correct hire fee for the period should be £910.

Shavington Drama Group is loosely affiliated to Shavington Festival Committee. To ensure that there is a liaison role between the Parish Council and Shavington Village Festival Committee, a Member of the Parish Council is appointed each year to Shavington Village Festival Committee. For the past few years, this Member has been Councillor Rene Hancock. If Shavington Drama Group had any concerns about the refurbishment in the Village Hall and the potential impact on the Group's ability, or otherwise, to continue to stage its productions, these concerns should have been referred to Councillor Hancock, as the liaison, or to the Clerk to the Council. Neither Councillor Hancock nor the Clerk were notified of such concerns. If these issues had been notified to the Council in a timely manner, an item could have been added to the next Parish Council agenda and would have been dealt with at that meeting.

The Parish Council wishes to address the inaccuracies and some of the comments in the post by Shavington Drama Group itself, and in respect of an e-mail to the Clerk which was sent on 10 August 2018.

- Shavington Drama Group has expressed its 'amazement and dismay at the ill-considered decision made by the Parish Council to refuse our request for the reinstatement of the dado rail in the village hall. On more than one occasion, we have communicated the importance of the rail to individual parish councillors and our members have addressed the Village Hall Committee on this matter.'

**Response:** As the matter was not brought to the attention of the Parish Council, either through the Clerk, or Councillor Hancock as the liaison Member, there has been no consideration of the matter by the Parish Council and, therefore, no decision has been made.

Minutes of the Village Hall Committee show that representatives of the Drama Group addressed Members in 2013; the last occasion was 14 August 2013. There have been no such representations since that date, including throughout the period of refurbishment works at the Village Hall.

- ☐ 'This is the 29th year Shavington-cum-Gresty Drama Group has put on a play in the Autumn, but this may well be the last for want of a picture rail! We have entertained the village with sell-out productions for almost 30 years and our own public servants have put an abrupt end to our community-based activities and charitable donations by dismissing our request for reinstatement of a picture rail.'

**Response:** Members are very disappointed. This statement is unequivocal as it states that the Parish Council has refused a request from Shavington Drama Group, but this is not the case. No such request has ever been submitted to the Parish Council. As noted above, had Shavington Drama Group notified the Clerk in a timely manner, it could have been possible to try to resolve this matter to the satisfaction of both parties.

It is disappointing that this action was taken by Shavington Drama Group and it would not be unreasonable to take the view that it is Shavington Drama Group itself which is letting down its audience by cancelling its production without giving the Parish Council the opportunity to try to reach an accommodation to enable the production to be staged, as planned.

- ☐ The Parish Council is in breach of its duty of care on the basis that the Village Hall is no longer a safe environment.

**Response:** The refurbishment of the Village Hall has been carried out to a high standard, in accordance with all appropriate building regulations. It is a safe environment and does not pose any health and safety risks.

- ☐ Shavington Drama Group wishes to appeal the decision (not to reinstate the batten).

**Response:** As no decision has been taken, there is no decision to appeal.

Subsequent to the above, the Chairman of the Parish Council has spoken with the Chairman of Shavington Drama Group and offered to meet with the Group to hear their issues for the first time; however, it should be noted that only the Parish Council can make a decision about any changes to the Village Hall and such a decision must be taken at a properly constituted Parish Council meeting where there is a specific item on the agenda.

In conclusion, the Parish Council continues to support many village organisations, all of which provide a valuable service to the village itself and beyond, and they all contribute to the general well-being of the community. It is extremely disappointing that the first official notification the Parish Council received about any critical issues regarding the staging of Shavington Drama Group's production within the Village Hall, was only received at 21:28 on 10/08/18, which was approximately 70 minutes before they proceeded to air their unfounded grievances online. Owing to the notification being sent out-of-hours, it wasn't picked up until the following morning.

Moving forward, if Shavington Drama Group has requirements that they wish the Parish Council to consider which will enable them to continue with their performance this year, this will need to be at a Parish Council meeting with an item on the agenda. The next Parish Council meeting is on 5 September; however, the Chairman has agreed that, owing to the time-sensitive nature of the issue, it would be possible to expedite finding a solution by discussing any requirements the Drama Group may have, at the forthcoming Extra-ordinary Meeting on 20 August. The Clerk has informed Shavington Drama Group of this option to find a solution, should they wish to continue with their performance at the Village Hall this year.

Members of the Parish Council hope that when residents read the social media posts about this matter, they will also take into consideration the Parish Council's response. No doubt they will reach their own conclusions and may share Members' disappointment at the loss of this valuable annual social event, a loss which could have so easily been avoided.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Carol Jones, the Clerk to the Parish Council either via telephone, on 01270 262636, or via email on [clerk@shavingtononline.co.uk](mailto:clerk@shavingtononline.co.uk).

On behalf of Shavington-cum-Gresty Parish Council  
14 August 2018