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<i>This policy authorised by:</i>	KEN WATTINGHAM	<i>Date: MAY 2024</i>
<i>Designation:</i>	CHAIRPERSON	<i>Review Date: MAY 2027</i>

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

In the following the word ‘user’ means anyone who uses the services of the Houghton Regis Memorial Hall directly or indirectly, whether being an individual or another organisation. ‘Staff’ refers to paid staff and volunteers.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies, in particular Data Protection Policy.

1. Introduction

The Trustees recognises that the principle of confidentiality should comprise any information about its service users and the internal affairs of the committee and should be adhered to by all members and members of staff.

Houghton Regis Memorial Hall service users have a right to privacy and confidentiality and it is essential to ensure that users have trust and confidence in Houghton Regis Memorial Hall and The Trustees and are treated with respect and dignity.

Staff will be made aware that their duty of confidentiality is a main term and condition of their Contract of Employment and will be asked to sign a statement of confidentiality indicating that they have read, understood and will abide by this policy. Trustees and volunteers will also be asked to sign the statement of confidentiality. Confidentiality is not just a contractual requirement but a requirement under the Data Protection Act 2018.

2. Aim

The aim of this policy is to:

- Ensure that users approach the Houghton Regis Memorial Hall with trust and confidence.
- Ensure that all Trustees and members of staff of the Houghton Regis Memorial Hall understand and carry out their duties to safeguard a user’s rights to confidentiality by avoiding careless or wrongful disclosure of information entrusted to the Houghton Regis Memorial Hall or Trustees by the user.
- Ensure that all Trustees and members of staff of the Houghton Regis Memorial Hall understand that their knowledge about internal affairs or the financial status of the Hall, its Trustees and staff is confidential.

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3. Practical Aspects

- An enquirer's approach to the Hall may be with a member of staff or volunteer and discussion of information with a member of staff or volunteer of the Hall who deals with a query, must not breach confidentiality.
- Under no circumstances should details of a user be discussed outside the Hall by anyone representing the Hall or Trustees in such a manner that it is possible to identify the user. The exception to this is where written or verbal permission is obtained from the user first.
- A user may request that information should not be divulged to anyone else. This wish should be respected. The only exception would be where such information contravenes the law, endangers others, or in an emergency "life and limb" situation. In these circumstances the member of staff or volunteer should consult the Chairperson or in his/her absence the Vice Chairperson, first advising the user that this action is necessary.
- The user will have the right to complain if information is divulged without his/her permission. The complaint will follow the procedure set out in the Complaints Policy of the Hall.
- The Chairperson will monitor this policy and bring it forward for review as required.

4. Procedures to be followed

- Under no circumstances should details which enable an individual to be identified be made public or passed to a third party without the user's informed consent verbally, or in writing.

5. Keeping and Safeguarding Records

- Correspondence and other records, minutes, files, pertaining to a user should not be left in places where access to the information cannot be controlled.
- All enquiries should be kept in lockable cabinets or cupboards.
- Personnel files for staff should be stored in locked cabinets. Staff have the right to see their own files on request.
- Old records and files should be monitored and information destroyed when it is no longer necessary to keep it.
- Information on time limits for file retention is set out in the Control of Records Policy & Procedures.
- The same principles should be applied to confidential information in minutes of meetings.

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6. Use of Telephone or text messaging

- It is important that care is taken over the use of the telephone. Where a telephone conversation is taking place, the individual must ensure that confidentiality is not breached.
- Confidential information should not normally be sent by text messaging. If it is necessary to do so, the first page must indicate clearly that the material is confidential and who should receive it. Prior arrangements should be made with the recipient to ensure that confidentiality is not breached.

7. Removal of Information from the Premises

- It is sometimes necessary for an individual to carry with them away from the Hall, paperwork relating to individuals. If this is the case, the individual must exercise due care and attention to ensure that such material is kept to a minimum, is safe and in their possession at all times. Particular care should be taken with diaries where appointments indicate the name and address of a user.

8. Trustee Committee Members

- Trustee Committee members will be expected to make themselves aware of this policy.
- In respect of confidential agenda items at meetings and confidential minutes, Trustee Committee members will be expected to adhere to the policy and guard against any breaches intentional or unintentional.
- Where there may be a conflict of interest between individuals or users and Trustee Committee members, some matters will remain confidential and the procedure at meetings may therefore exclude individuals who seem to have an 'interest'.

9. Breach of Policy

- Any breach of this Policy may result in disciplinary action and could lead to dismissal. See Policy P005 Disciplinary.

10. Review

- This policy will be reviewed as required.

Issue	Date agreed by Trustee Committee	Review Date	Next Review Date
1	First issue – April 2023	April 2024	
2	Reviewed – May 2024		May 2027 or as required.