

HADLOW DOWN COMMUNITY CENTRE

Minutes of Committee Meeting 5th July 2012, 7.30pm

PRESENT: Bob Lake (Chair), Janet Tourell (Secretary), John Thomson (Treasurer), Richard Boswell, Vicky Richards, Paul James, Eddie Westfield (Village Web site), Graham Terry (Parish Council)

1. APOLOGIES: Rachel Lewis, Fiona Shafer, Sandra Richards

2. MINUTES : Minutes of meeting held on 10.5.2012 agreed as a true and accurate record-signed by the Chairman

3. MATTERS ARISING:

i) the situation re. topsoil on the playing field to be discussed later.

ii) the Business Plan Group, Fiona Shafer, Nigel Hellewell, BL and J Thom has met regularly with their latest meeting focusing on preparation for the display and information giving at the Village Summer Fayre which unfortunately had to be cancelled.

iii) the Volunteer Group has met and come up with a series of fund-raising ideas was also busy with ideas – minutes of its meeting to be circulated with these

iv) the Funding Group's application to the Community Builders' programme for £10k was unsuccessful and now it will try to secure the funding for the feasibility study from other sources.

v) Richard informed the Committee that the Design and Planning Group had not met; BL offered to attend the next meeting. As a result of the Ashdown Forest of the proposed '7km zone of influence', Wealden Planners have decided to put all planning applications on hold – it was felt that this was an obstacle to arranging surveys and it was agreed to discuss this issue later in this meeting.

4. DISCUSSION : The Ashdown Forest 7km 'Zone of Influence' . BL said that subsequent to Wealden Council's submission of its draft Core Strategy Development document to the Secretary of State, the appointed independent inspector Michael Moore has endorsed the approach of limiting and reducing impacts of development on the Forest (under the EU Natural Habitat Directive, a protected area). In response to the Inspectors' comments, Wealden DC Council has proposed to introduce a 7km restricted building zone around the Forest ostensibly to combat high nitrogen levels produced as a result of increased motor traffic and restrict severely the construction of buildings within the 7km area. BL said that WDC claimed to have consulted widely yet when first mention of the 7km zone of influence was made, it came as a complete surprise to many, not least our own Parish Council. It is clear that many organisations and individuals are writing to WDC – BL has written to Charles Hendry, SE MEP's and Cllr Ken Ogden and encouraged others to do the same. EW suggested having a bulk email on the web. The reply from Charles Hendry emphasised the need to be active and lobby the Inspector.

BL said that at the moment permitted planning would only be 'like for like' – the same 'footprint' and disposal of existing assets would be limited, which in Hadlow Down's case would make selling the current hall a problem. From information he has gathered, BL felt that the decision to implement the '7km zone' was WDC's reaction to the Inspector's findings rather than imposition on his part.

PJ said that he'd read it as the only thing that could be done with the current site would be to revert to grassland.

GT said that Buxted PC had been told that as part of their new hall development, the current Reading Room could become a 'car park'! Buxted Parish Council has a critical meeting with Wealden DC in 10 days time and Sandra Richards (Hadlow Down PC Chairman) also is in contact with Buxted PC.

Given the situation, RB questioned if we should be pursuing costly feasibility studies on the Playing Field site. However BL felt that we should go ahead with our plans to build a new hall despite this ongoing difficulty, if nothing else the Committee needs to demonstrate that it is doing something. It is imperative that the carrying out of a Natural Habitat (Ecological) Survey should be conducted during the summer months as this is the only time of year that they can be done. Also, with the possibility of top-soil being transferred from Uckfield Community Technology College, a geo-tech survey be done on the football pitch and the site where the proposed new community centre is to be built. The survey of the football pitch will indicate if anything can be done to remedy the drainage problem – if it is indicated that nothing can be done, it will prevent the unnecessary transfer of soil and wasted effort in completing applications to various sports funding organisations. RB & BL had costed each of surveys - £550-600 for the Natural Habitat survey and £2k for the Geo/Technical.

EW asked if the 7km story had been picked up in the press and perhaps we should investigate a local slant, VR agreed that BBC South East should be contacted.

Also BL has raised with Wealden that many local village halls are of a similar age to Hadlow Downs' and will need replacing - sports clubs wishing to improve their facilities will be caught up in Ashdown Forest issue.

RB has spoken to the Planning Officers at Wealden and confirmed that the situation was having a significant impact on their daily business - all planning applications are being 'put on hold' and once the situation is made clearer, there will be a massive backlog to deal with thereby causing considerable delay. BL said that we wouldn't be thinking about putting in an application until the New Year and at any rate, only when all the surveys have been conducted would we be able to do so.

ACTION – At RB's suggestion, BL to write to the Planning Inspectorate; however we need to find out who this is.

BL asked the Committee to consider how the situation was to be presented to the Village. GT quoted the relationship of Buxted's Hall Committee to their Parish Council, the PC seems to be 'driving' their bid.

PJ said he thought a way round it might be to apply for an extension to the current hall to enlarge the foot-print and abort the idea of relocating to the playing field site! BL pointed out that further land would be needed and that this flies in the face of the advice given by ESCC Highways and what local people have told us.

The question of how we lobby was discussed. VR felt that we should liaise with other Parish Councils and village halls. BL said that in view of a certain degree of both apathy and cynicism within the Village i.e. 'told you it would never happen', some sort of explanation was required and that an article should appear in the Parish Magazine and on the web. He proposed writing it soon for discussion in Committee. GT and EW said that it should have a positive tone.

PJ questioned if we should stop work on the hall. BL said no, the natural habitat survey and a geo-tech survey should go ahead and therefore when writing in the magazine etc we should ask for donations. RB disagreed and said he thought it might be a waste of money and possibly irresponsible. BL felt the surveys needed to be done anyway. GT observed that we need to do something regardless, because it needs to be done in view of the fact that we have an amenity i.e. the playing field, that can't be used.

VR thought that the Playing Field Committee should be involved. PJ suggested that it should apply to the Parish Council for a grant towards the costs of carrying out the geo-tech survey. GT informed the Committee that there was £23k in Parish Council reserves but that much of this money is already committed. BL questioned if the cost could be split three ways, i.e. HDCC, Parish Council and , Playing Field Committee.

With regard to the transfer of the topsoil, PJ was concerned about limited time and 'technicalities' e.g. if the work was carried out during late Autumn, it would become a swamp in winter. J Thom agreed that the playing field would need to be in a 'fit state' for next year. It was pointed out that only the football pitch area would be affected and that for one year the Village Summer Fayre could be held at Tinkers Park – after all, this was the contingency

arrangement for this year, given the saturated nature of the playing field. PJ pointed out that any work done on the playing field would need the permission of the Parish Council as landlord. VR asked JThom how much money was in the Committee's account – JThom to check. Also she asked JT if the Variety Club had contributed money from the Murder Mystery to the HDCC as she thought that this had been discussed at the last VC meeting – JT didn't know.

Action: VR to contact Variety Club.

Action: BL to liaise with Playing field Committee and approach the Parish Council. GT felt that this should include an explanation of the financial situation of both committees.

5. POSTPONEMENT OF THE FAYRE: BL thanked JThom for all the work he'd done towards the presentation intended for the Village Fayre and said that he needed more help! VR suggested using the presentation material at the Autumn Market on 22nd September instead and BL suggested likewise at the Rail Gala on 4th & 5th August.

JThom said that he'd been trying to present a visual depiction of the survey and he would like to put this in the Parish Magazine and on to the web site – he proceeded to show the Committee what he'd done. BL requested that an appreciation of John's hard work be recorded for the minutes - all agreed that it was excellent and he was thanked.

Action: EW agreed that JThom's work was transferable to the web and JThom and BL to liaise re. putting it in the Parish Magazine August edition.

6. REPORTS & FUNDING:

Fundraising Group: BL reported that he'd asked Tinkers Park for funding. EW suggested trying for the Waitrose Green token scheme. JT said that she had received approximately £200 from the scheme in 2010 for the Old Hall and it was probably best if someone else from the group applied this time!

Action: JT will get form from Waitrose and hand over to BL.

BL reported that the Community Builders grant for the feasibility studies had been turned down, probably because we weren't in a sufficiently deprived area. He continues to research funding organisations and had found the Resource Centre in Brighton particularly helpful.

The Millenium Book Fund – JT said that at the Business Plan Committee's request she'd contacted Peter Gillies to find out more about the fund. Peter told her that he hoped the fund, which he'd built up over the years from judicious investing, would be 'Something of tangible benefit for the Village'. He'd offered it to BL after the last AGM because he felt that it would provide an impetus for the committee to get on with things. However as the offer wasn't accepted immediately he'd re-invested the money and it was now tied up for two years. JT said that she felt Peter should be commended for his resourcefulness on behalf of the community.

BL and JT reported that Rachel Lewis informed them that she would have to step back from direct fund-raising because of the pressure of work but that she would be happy to continue as vice-chair and advise on funding. BL would continue with trying to source grant-giving bodies and JT said she would help out with the 'form-filling'. Everyone agreed that we needed more help from within the Village. GT suggested contacting someone who'd recently moved to the village and had expressed an interest in getting involved

Action: GT to contact this person and report back to BL

Build and Design Group: BL said that he would like a meeting with this group. PJ and RB said that they were still keen to survey the current hall.

Business Plan Group: BL said that the group was close to providing a design brief but they needed more feedback; the postponement of the Fayre hadn't helped. PJ said that the business plan needs information from other halls.

Currently, BL and JT are working on a questionnaire to send to similar halls in the vicinity of Hadlow Down. BL also said that he'd been in touch with Chantelle Wilson, an AiRS Trustee and a member of Sussex Village Hall's advisory group; JT said that she was seeing Joanna Harper from AiRS on Monday. GT suggested a roundrobin of Parish clerks to find out what other villages are proposing to do to their halls.

Fund raising Group: VR reminded everyone to start taking photos of the village as part of the fund-raising campaign.

BL said that re. the 'Memorabilia' auction he'd managed to get tickets for a Brighton Hove Albion home game and possibly a rugby international as well.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Media: EW suggested that the HDCC needs promotion within Wilderness Wood. Also he said that he'd written something to put on the web site about what the Committee was doing but much more publicity was needed. JT said that she would undertake to send the minutes of meetings to EW to publish on the web.

Action: In an effort to address criticism BL said that he will write a two page 'letter' about the progress of the Committee for inclusion in the Magazine and on the web site.

All agreed that the committee had got to improve communications within the Village.

Communications within the Committee: PJ asked why he hadn't been emailed information about the work of the sub committees and the date of this meeting. JT asked the chair for clarification on this point for the benefit of herself and PJ. BL explained that it wasn't strictly necessary for members of the sub committees to be at main committee meetings but the sub committees should report via their minutes to the main committee before every main meeting and those minutes emailed with the agenda.

Action: JT to send the minutes of the sub committees as well as information about main meetings to ALL committee members.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 2 August 2012 – Village Hall at 7.30 pm

Meeting closed: 9.25 pm