

## **Hadlow Down New Village Hall Public Meeting**

**Monday December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2018 at 7.30 pm in Hadlow Down Village Hall**

### **Welcome and Introduction**

Bob Lake, Chair of the new Village Hall Committee, welcomed attendees and introduced Mike Barber, architect and designer of the New Village Hall, also members of the committee.

He emphasised that the purpose of the meeting was to share the latest information on the progress towards the new Village Hall, not to discuss the disposal of the current hall, a matter which would be revisited in 2 to 3 years time when the PC would organise a meeting for this purpose at the appropriate time.

### **Janet Tourell, Chair Hadlow Down Village Hall**

Accompanied by illustrative slides, Janet's presentation outlined the current situation regarding the Village Hall which, although well-used, has multiple inadequacies as follows:

- too small for needs;
- deterioration of fabric – bricks, leaking roof, problems with drains – an issue which had caused the cancellation of several events during the odour problem;
- inadequate storage for equipment belonging to regular users;
- under stage storage too small and unhygienic;
- lobby constrictions;
- meeting room too small and inadequate in particular when used as a dressing room for Variety Club and school productions/performances;
- kitchen too small;
- frequent parking congestion blocking potential access of emergency vehicles.

Janet concluded that it was a struggle to keep the hall going in its present state and that the new hall would address many of the matters outlined above.

### **Nigel Harrison, Chair Hadlow Down Playing Field**

Also using illustrative slides, Nigel listed the inadequacies of the existing sports pavilion as follows:

- current pavilion not built to any particular specification. It measures 6.27 by 3.28 metres – an area of 20.58m<sup>2</sup>. The current technical specifications drawn up by Sport England require a changing room area of 20m<sup>2</sup> for one cricket team let alone two and the Football Foundation insists of 16m<sup>2</sup> per junior team;
- inadequate provision for children – safeguarding and spatial issue. The safeguarding of children is very important and therefore the interior of the changing room itself should not be visible by anyone on the outside. Currently the verandah doors are made of steel and fitted with non-safety glass; they provide no privacy. Also they open inwards thereby taking up much needed space;

- there is no provision of a space for showers;
- cricket team members have to erect a gazebo for changing purposes as the current main space is barely adequate for two adult teams let alone for one;
- we are required to move equipment outside in order to get at the piece of machinery/equipment needed. The current combined floor area of these two spaces measures 36m<sup>2</sup>. However, if we acquired our own cricket outfield mower, where would we store it?
- security issue as both undercrofts now house expensive machinery;
- the area of the current kitchen is 6.80m<sup>2</sup> (2.95 x 2.30 metres) – can you imagine trying to prepare cricket teas for 24 – 26 people?
- toilet provision of 2 cubicles and one hand basin does not meet particular spec - no disabled access to pavilion or toilets;

Nigel concluded by stating that whilst the pavilion was a great asset to the village, it was not fit for purpose and that the planned new pavilion would address all the issues listed above.

### **Mike Barber, Architect and Designer of New Village Hall**

Mike said that he had been involved in many projects of this nature concerning local village halls e.g. Five Ashes and High Hurstwood Village Halls and that the problems faced by Hadlow Down were common to many.

He stated that:

- the dimensions of the New Hall and pavilion would meet all Sport England requirements – an important issue when applying for funding;
- the new building would meet all planning criteria and specs;
- the diversity of the new building would allow for multi simultaneous use, therefore generating more income;
- Wealden District Council is not the easiest of planning authorities to deal with given that the Ashdown Forest and the AONB are sensitive issues;
- negotiation with the Planning Authority has taken place and pre-application discussions have confirmed that all criteria have been met;
- one can see that the location of the proposed new building allows for continued use of the existing pavilion until it is ready for use at which stage the pavilion will be demolished. If raising the funds within three years becomes a problem i.e. a significant shortfall, the construction of the building could be phased;
- there will be 43 parking spaces with permeable surfacing and charging points will be made available for electric/hybrid cars;
- the proposed building has been positioned (orientated) in such a way to minimise impact on neighbouring houses;
- renewable energy PV panels will be installed;
- there will be ground source heat pumps;
- sound and heat insulation to be installed;

- a great deal of legwork had been carried out during statutory consultations with the planning authority.

Mike concluded by stating that the whole process would now be time governed by the date of submission of the planning application and subsequent relevant mailings. Usually it takes the planning authority 2 weeks in which to validate the application and if this runs smoothly, an application number will be assigned. As this is deemed to be a major works project, it will be considered by the Planning Committee (North) and most probably it will take up to 13 weeks before a decision is announced. Given the volume of applications that the Wealden planning team is having to deal with, April would appear to be a realistic assessment.

Bob Lake pointed out that as far as HDCC trustees are concerned, this is an inclusive and transparent process; all parishioners will be informed of the application number and advised of the start and end dates for the 3 week consultation period.

Attendees then asked questions relating to:

The children's play area, pedestrian access, sprung floor, light pollution, security, speeding traffic, drainage management, sound pollution,

These were answered by Mike Barber as follows:

- the design specification for the sports accommodation, including the main hall, are the current ones adopted by Sport England; these could change in the future but this is hard to predict;
- the Children's Play area would be fenced in – Mike indicated that it would be re-sited to the current ball park area as shown on the plans;
- a sprung floor could be installed in the hall if required but one has to bear in mind that such provision would be costly;
- dark skies requirement is a pre-requisite – glazing should be installed so that light pollution is minimised – an overhang can be installed to shield light so it's dissipated downwards - must comply with AONB, wildlife and eco requirements. There would be low level lighting to ensure hall users would get to their parked cars safely;
- the gates to the site need to be managed to ensure security – designated job for someone;
- a drainage strategy is a pre – requisite of planning submission there would be a soak-away, a run-off attenuation system with a water storage tank and capacity designed and provided to allow for future climate change. Furthermore, we will not receive planning approval unless the lead local flood authority is satisfied that rain water run-off will not affect nearby properties;
- sound pollution would be managed by conditions relating to hours of use as prescribed in the planning consent;
- Sandra Richards, Chair of the Parish Council, stated that a request for a speed limit extension further down School Lane had already been made to East Sussex CC Highways Department but had been declined.

## **Business Plan:**

Bob Lake stated that the current Business Plan has stalled at the point at which we need to provide reasonably accurate construction costs – based on the design that we have before us, now we can commission the services of a Quantity Surveyor to provide such costings.

He asked for experienced Business Plan writers to come forward to assist in the process

It was estimated that the Business Plan would be prepared in March or April 2019 and that comment would be invited and welcomed. An important aspect of the plan will be the Funding Strategy and once again, help would be appreciated to put this together.

Bids for funding would be submitted synchronistically and the challenge will be to achieve some degree of synergy between all the different funding sources such as the Big Lottery ‘Reaching Communities’ (£500k), Sport England’s ‘Community Asset Fund’ (£150k), the Football Foundation (£500k max), charitable trusts etc. It is recognised that such bidding is highly competitive.

The current estimate is £1.2 million but over the next three years, it is inevitable that this figure will rise – fundraising ideas would be welcomed, but it was not intended that these should compete with other village organisations. It was suggested that some events could be held outside the village to avoid competition. One note of optimism is that as HDCC is a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) and as it will be a new community building, it will VAT zero-rated for construction materials and costs.

Help is going to be needed with the fundraising. Attendees were asked to come forward to help and lend their expertise when required.

## **Further Q and A session:**

**Question:** Does the project have any funds in addition to anticipated funding from grants? Will the Community Centre receive any funding from the disposal of the current village hall site?

- the Parish Council owns the land on which the current hall is sited and the Village Hall Committee owns the building;
- the PC is the current applicant for planning permission for the new Village Hall;
- The PC will discuss disposal of the existing hall and cannot sell the land without permission from the village.

**Question:** Given the real difficulty of synchronising funding applications, is there a danger that funding could be lost if a funder feels that other funding is slow to materialise?

- Funders usually understand the limitations of beneficiaries providing they are kept in touch with progress and can see evidence of attempts to attract other funding.

**Question:** Has the possibility of fund-raising by taking out a loan been considered with the repayment met from an increase in the precept?

- In the past parish councils have borrowed money from the Public Works Loans Board and such a future decision would have to be taken by the parish council at the appropriate time and approved by a majority of parishioners.

**Question:** What has been learnt by researching other village halls?

- During 2012 HDCC committee members visited several halls – High Hurstwood, Barcombe, Pett, Scaynes Hill and Punnetts Town. They met with members of the respective management committees to discuss issues such as bookings, marketing and promotion, management and lessons learned. One common theme was the issue of adequate storage.

**Question:** How will the new building be managed?

- At the appropriate time the 3 existing committees of the Playing Field, current Village Hall and Community Centre will be merged into one organisation and of course, will depend greatly on attracting new volunteers to carry on the good work. The new building will be owned by the newly formed organisation and the land will continue to be owned by the Parish Council.

**Question:** Is it realistic to imagine that we can raise in excess of £1.2 million?

- As stated earlier, it will be a challenge but it should be remembered that Five Ashes Village Hall was successful in securing £450k from the Big Lottery and more recently the Playing Field received £80k from Sport England and Veolia for the drainage project. We have to remain optimistic and recognise that there will be local people with a particular skills set and knowledge who might be able to secure funding from other sources – we need them to come on board once we have been awarded planning permission.

**Question:** When will construction begin?

- Nothing can and will happen until all funding is secured; however, the matter of phased construction will have to be discussed should we fall significantly short of our target towards the end of the three years.

**Question:** What will happen to the bonfire site?

- We have looked at the idea of having a granite set laid into the car park area similar to the Battle car park but this will require further research – it might be that we have to look for another site.

There being no further questions, Bob Lake assured attendees that they would be kept well-informed and thanked them for their attendance.

