

Extra-Ordinary Parish Council Meeting Minutes

Held in the Village Hall, Lambs Lane, Cottenham on Thursday 20th October 2016 at 7.00pm

Present: Cllrs Morris (Chair), Berenger, Collier, Collinson, Graves, Hodson, McCarthy, Mudd, Nicholas, Ward, Wilson, Young, SCDC Cllrs Edwards and Harford, CCC Cllr Mason and the Clerk and RFO

In attendance: 11 members of the public

16/237. Chairman's Introduction and Apologies for absence – Cllr Morris outlined the purpose of the meeting.

Core decision for tonight is:

- Do we proceed to planning permission with this design? (taking total spend to date to approx. £42k)
- Then, for transparency:
- We are indicating the probability that we will borrow around £2 million over 25 years on an annuity basis which will probably require a precept supplement of around £135,000pa, equivalent to an increase of less than £1 per week per Band D home.
 - There is also a possibility that we begin detailed technical design costing around £180,000 later this year (from reserves) in order to ensure that we can commence construction during the next Summer school holiday period.

These latter decisions will be made at future Council meetings. During the time allocated for questions from the public we will take short questions related to the project which:

- if they relate to tonight's key decision, will hopefully be answered while Councillors are debating the issue.
 - If they relate to later stages of the project, the Working Party will note them and respond later.
- Apologies accepted from Cllrs Bolitho (work) and Wotherspoon (work).

16/238. To accept Declarations of Interest and Dispensations – *i. To receive disclosures of pecuniary & non-pecuniary interests from Councillors on matters to be considered at the meeting. ii. To receive written requests for dispensation. iii. To grant requests for dispensation as appropriate.* None received.

16/239. Public participation – Standing Orders suspended 7.05pm.

Resident 1 asked: 1. How many of residents expressed the willingness to increase the Parish precept by almost 50% to see this project through?

2. Just how much County Council S106 money does the PC expect to receive and why was it not highlighted as a source of funding?

3. Why is the PC engaging in the Nursery Project (which is either a County affair or a commercial consideration) when barely 2% of the community will draw any benefit?

4. The PC has NOT prioritised the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) wish list yet it sees fit to proceed with this project whilst suggesting affordable housing needs a Community Land Trust and a legally ratified NP before such can be progressed. Why? What is the difference? Either the wish list is part of the NP and needs ratification (in full) before proceeding or it does not, either way differing rules for different projects is hardly supportive of transparency.

5. Revenues as predicted show a minimum of £100k and a max of £150k from 2020. Losses until then. The costs to be covered need only be running costs and interest on the loan, total circa £83k pa. The capital cost, then, is merely contributed to via any surplus generated by the 'activities'. From this plan how do you justify the possibility of demanding a precept increase of 50% when the project plan suggests:

- a) from projected income streams, that it is to subsidise at least one if not several commercial projects including a private members (drinking) club
 - b) offers little or no additional facilities to the broader residential base than is currently available from other venues i.e. College and Community Centre
 - c) puts the affordability of commercial rentals for the few before the financial impact on the many; how?
- Cllr Richards arrived at 7.07pm.

6. Finally: how do you retain the integrity of the space on both floors when the height of the building has been reduced by two metres and why if this takes £450k from the cost was it not the original plan? SCDC Cllr Edwards stated that it was a big decision for the Parish Council to make. There are 200 households in Cottenham in receipt of benefits. In November the government will be putting a cap on these benefits so any increase will be difficult for those residents (including SCDC/County/Police rises). The District Council are also helping 10 houses in Cottenham from avoiding homelessness. Hope that the Councillors will take this into consideration when making their decision; how many people will be put into poverty by these plans?

SCDC Cllr Harford applauded the Council for their energy in getting things done. She understood the reasons for pursuing the project was due to Neighbourhood Plan responses. 68% said they'd like an improvement to leisure/recreational facilities and the NP has highlighted 5 points under this heading. People may not want just a Hall. Believe that 91% wanted improvements to medical facilities and those for older people. Some people in the village are very poor so she urged the Council to think again about what the village wants and needs. Cllr Morris responded that the analysts for the NP considered the responses statistical.

Resident 2 said that they shared previous concerns of the expensive project. To what extent would the parish be subsidising the nursery and Sports & Social Club? Cllr Morris commented that the model for the preferred operator for the nursery would be a charity and that County have committed £100k to the nursery project. It is not intended that CPC will subsidise the operation. Resident 2 said that of the £150k predicted income, £30k is based on unquantified demand. How will CPC attract new business?

Resident 3 asked how the design will resolve the issue of traffic problems in the car park? The feeling is that more parking is needed and very few buildings in the village have suitable parking facilities. Also wanted to know if having the function rooms upstairs was suitable; how would bands etc. take equipment upstairs? Is this is the right time to make a decision about this project with all of the speculative developments hanging over us?

CCC Cllr Mason spoke as a resident. When looking at the plan there are a whole range of facilities for both floors. How much research has been done? Will they be in competition with other facilities in the village? Doesn't question the need for a new Hall but is the proposed design 'OTT'? Queried the number of toilets (these are a requirement of building regulations). Urged CPC to consider if there is a business case for all of the uses. Residents could be left with a building that is empty most of the time and he doubted that we would be able to achieve mass bookings. Need more research on the business case so that operating costs aren't left to the tax payers. Standing Orders reinstated at 7.25pm.

16/240. Village Hall – to consider terms of reference for next steps by the Village Hall Working Party – Cllr Morris clarified the summary document. Both the Gladman and Endurance planning applications have recognised the need for community space and our deficit in terms of open space. The ground floor design takes safeguarding issues into consideration for both young (after school club) and elderly (day centre). Costs have been exposed in the village newsletter, online and at various events. There is an issue with timing which will affect interest rates and building costs. We have spoken to potential users who have expressed an interest in renting the space. First floor income is an unknown so not yet factored into the figures too highly at the moment. We don't yet know if we'll get planning permission. As per pre-application advice we have reduced the height and countered noise issues. If we want to start in the summer (to minimise disruption to Ladybirds and the Primary school) then timing is an issue. We don't know if we can borrow the money but the research has shown that it would be favourable. We have to get the building right and weigh it against increasing costs. We now have 3 choices:

- Stop and costs won't exceed £40k.
- Minimise risk by applying for planning then take next steps, completing by 2019.
- Apply now – do some technical design ahead of getting planning permission but complete by 2018.

Existing building: The new building could potentially serve a lot of residents. It doesn't do well for rental currently due to the condition and lack of facilities. It is also impractical for the current users from a safeguarding point of view and is generally regarded as not being fit for purpose.

Refurbishment: Cllr Richards ran through the reasons why it would be impractical to refurbish the existing building. Previously we looked at refurbishing the toilets and adding disabled facilities which would have cost approx. £15k. Queried whether we needed the specification of the proposed replacement. There are sound arguments both to go ahead with the proposal and stop now; very difficult decision to make.

Survey: Questions raised on how to get a better response to a possible survey? The Neighbourhood Plan survey had a very high response rate by survey standards and is considered statistically significant. How many surveys do we need to do to get a clear answer on whether Cottenham wants a new Village Hall? Need the support of the village.

Design: Queries on how difficult/expensive would it be to change the proposed design once planning application is submitted? A: if the changes were external then it would be a problem and possibly require re-submission of the application.

Business plan: Need a better, more robust business plan, think about operating costs and income.

Costs: Is there the potential to use village tradesmen to help out as per the existing building? General consensus that we need a new building and that costs, both interest rates and building costs, were going to go up given the economic environment. Cllr Collinson queried the difference between going down the annuity route rather than interest only. Cllr Morris responded that the loan itself shouldn't be a problem in principle. The Public Works Loan Board loan is an unsecured loan with payments made every 6 months. Rate is currently 2.2% and increased by 0.5% in the past couple of months. If we went for interest only it reduces the amount paid initially but we would still need to demonstrate how we would pay the capital. Concerns raised on the operating costs and whether the building would be viable without the nursery. Query on where the £2.5m figure had come from based on our experience with the pavilion whereby the tenders were much higher than expected. Cllr Morris confirmed that nothing was certain. Grants may be available for some of the internal finishing off. If we set up a trust to run the building, then we may be able to get additional grants but would lose the PWLB loan for the building work. Lottery may be an option for up to £500k but Cottenham doesn't factor highly because it is considered an affluent area. S106 contributions from developers, should the speculative developments be granted permission, wouldn't become available for several years.

General: the building would offer something different from other facilities in the village and be an asset. Cllr Collier confirmed the real costs for childcare are £80 per day for a child under 2. There is no current facility in Cottenham available and the majority of parents have to drive to other villages which is unsustainable. Cllr Collinson didn't entirely hold with the District Cllrs comments regarding the likely effect of a precept increase and it is the fault of the government's benefit cap, not the Parish Council; surely District Cllrs should be lobbying government on this matter.

Resolution that having considered the merits and risks involved this Parish Council authorises the Village Hall Working Party to apply for planning permission. NB: recorded result requested. Proposed by Cllr Collier, seconded by Cllr McCarthy. 10 votes for, 3 against. **RESOLVED.**

Resolution that having considered the merits and risks involved this Parish Council authorises the Village Hall Working Party and others to carry out a village wide survey on the merits of the proposal and to further develop the business case. Proposed by Cllr Nicholas, seconded by Cllr Young. 13 votes for.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY.

16/241. Close of Meeting – 8.25pm.

Signed _____ (Chair) Date _____