

HORSPATH PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Parish Council Open Public Meeting held at Horspath Village Hall
on 10th January 2023 7.30pm.

Present: Mrs B Oakley (Chair), Mr D Burgess, Mrs P Cook, Mr L Coolman, Mr P Ewart, Mr I Harris, Mr B Igoe, Mr P O'Brien, Mr E Parker, Mrs H Kogel (Clerk). Mr B Lowe.

Apologies Mrs C Riley

Absent:

Public: 64

Mrs Oakley welcomed all residents and asked that everyone sign in. All Councillors were introduced to members of the public.

20/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE. – Apologies were made on behalf of Mrs Riley.

21/23 PROPOSAL FOR A NEW VILLAGE HALL.

Mrs Oakley reported that a questionnaire has recently been delivered to all households in the village to seek the opinions of residents on the need for a new village hall for Horspath village. There are several reasons for the need of a new village hall, including the insulation in the existing hall which is inadequate, the central heating is extremely costly, the boiler and the changing room facilities need replacing, and the floor in the main hall also needs to be replaced.

The questionnaire asked if residents would like a new village hall. The results to date are 5-1 in favour of a new village hall. There were several other suggestions received back on the questionnaire, such as a new play area, refurbishing the existing hall, an all-weather pitch, work in the conservation Wildlife Area, tennis courts, and the winter fuel allowance. Some residents have also asked for more detailed information on a new village hall. Those residents in favour of a new village hall have stated that the existing hall is poorly managed, the booking system is not fit for purpose, and it is impossible to speak to someone with regards to booking the hall.

Mrs Oakley stated that we cannot have plans for the new village hall drawn up until we know that this is what the residents want. Mrs Oakley invited questions from residents.

Q. Mr Whitlock asked if existing grants that are pending will still be actioned if the new village hall goes ahead.

A. Mrs Oakley stated that if the new village hall goes ahead we will be applying for grants to help towards the cost. Mrs Oakley stated that she would like to see a new play area. Mr Parker stated that we need to determine if residents want a new village hall first, and then when that decision has been made we can look at costings and how that money will be raised, so at this stage we can't answer what other projects will be funded.

Q. Mrs Wyles stated that she was not aware of any votes, she understood that residents were being asked if they were in favour of a new village hall or not. Mrs Wyles liked hearing the other options that have been put forward and it would be helpful if the other options were listed and circulated to residents to decide what is most important to them. Mrs Wyles stated that there is a climate emergency at the moment and we need to look at how we can use our resources.

Q. Mr Murray asked how many responses have been received.

A. Mrs Oakley stated that 610 questionnaires were delivered and 103 responses received.

Q. Mr Goodliffe stated that he would support the proposal to improve village amenities. He was surprised by some of the contents of the letter particularly the section that said that HSPC money is not being spent wisely and then to be presented with a single option of a proposal for a new village hall. Mr Goodliffe is involved with some organisations that have received grants from HSPC. Mr Goodliffe stated that there

needs to be greater engagement to see what the residents want to see in the village. In terms of sustainability, the issues with the existing village hall could be addressed with a refurbishment. The most unsustainable thing to do is to knock the existing building down, and urged HPC to seek greater engagement with residents and canvas some of the other options.

- Q. Mrs McManus thought that residents either had to respond to the questionnaire or attend the meeting. It would be interesting to take a vote to see how many residents responded, and how many people haven't responded that are in favour of a new village hall.
- A. Mr O'Brien stated that a vote will take place tonight.
- Q. Mrs Lloyd-Jani stated that various things in the existing village hall could be refurbished, and asked if any costings have been sought.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that we cannot obtain any costs until we know the views of the residents of the village.
- Q. Mr Burn asked who owns the Village Hall.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that HPC own the village hall but it is managed by a separate committee.
- Q. Mr Burn asked if all members of HPC are Trustees of HSPC.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that HPC is the Trustee for HSPC. There is only one Trustee listed on the Charity Commission website for the village hall, and that person has recently resigned from the village hall committee. This position has been replaced by the same person who is the booking Clerk for the village hall. Mr Burgess stated that HPC is the Trustee to HSPC, but there is also five Independent Advisors who have a valuable input, the District Councillor, County Councillor and three representatives from the village. Mrs Oakley stated that Independent Advisor have a valuable input into any grants awarded.
- Q. Mr Keeling stated that the questionnaire stated that those unable to attend the meeting can complete the questionnaire. Mr Keeling thought that by attending the meeting tonight it would be to discuss the options.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that votes will be collected this evening.
- Q. A residents asked if everyone present at the meeting votes one way, will that over-rule the paper result.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that she has received some duplicated votes, but as she is collating the results, the votes have only been counted once.
- Q. Mrs Gray asked if residents could have comparison costs for refurbishing the existing hall and building a new hall.
- Q. Mrs Amos stated that she is in favour of a new village hall or a refurbishment. The acoustics in the existing hall are terrible in this hall. Also, to get full use of the hall it needs to be affordable.
- Q. Mr Drew stated that residents will have a problem with a simple yes or no to a new village hall. Everyone can see that the village hall either needs to be replaced or a large investment in refurbishment. Given the amount of money coming into the village from HSPC, building a new village hall is a realistic proposal, but there are other things that need doing first, in particular the Hub which is used far more than the village hall. Mr Drew urged Trustees to give high priority in assisting the Hub with clearing their outstanding debts to people who lent money to set up the Hub. There needs to be more work in asking residents about the other options.
- Q. Mrs Keeling asked if the votes are per person or per household.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that votes are per household.
- Q. Mr Choudry stated that he totally agrees with the comment about the Hub which is an excellent facility and is widely used by residents, and asked do we need a new village hall and the Hub or could they be combined.
- A. Mr Drew stated that the service provided by the Hub is not the same target audience as the village hall, it is a smaller place, more intimate, for small groups. There is room for a new village hall and the hub.
- A. Mrs Oakley agreed that there is room for both the Hub and a new village hall.
- Q. Mrs Tiling stated that she agrees with Mr Drew's comments. She is not in favour of a new village hall as it would be far too expensive. It would be a good idea to obtain quotations to refurbish the existing hall.

- A. Mr Burgess stated that as far as he is aware the foundations in the existing village hall are safe, but there is asbestos in the roof of the village hall and with all of the other areas that are in need of refurbishing, it is likely to be cheaper to build a new village hall.
- Q. Mrs Tiling stated that living at the top of Gidley Way it is like Horspath is two villages, and sometimes residents there do not feel part of the village. Residents are still waiting for the noticeboards.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that the noticeboards are on order.
- Q. Mr Bennett stated that if there is asbestos in the roof, it will be the same cost to remove it whether the hall is being refurbished or re-built.
- A. Mr Whitlock stated that it will depend on what type of asbestos. Mr Burgess stated that there is a report on the asbestos.
- Q. A resident from Blenheim Road stated that she did not receive a questionnaire. The existing hall is dated so the new village hall should be a statement by being more modern and sustainably good for heating. Also, she would like to see improvements to the burial ground, and suggested a working party of volunteers to plant some shrubs to make it more inviting at a low cost.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that most of the plants are eaten by the wildlife. The Clerk will email a questionnaire to the resident.
- Q. Mrs Lloyd-Jani stated that the questionnaire did not make it clear that residents could include other suggestions, so suggested that another questionnaire is circulated to give residents that option. Ecologically knocking down the existing building does not make sense, so a cost to refurbish would be her preference.
- Q. Mrs Horsley thought that the village hall was going to receive a grant to improve the village hall.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that the village hall committee did receive a grant from HSPC to replace the kitchen facilities, but as the grant was un-spent it has now been returned to HSPC.
- Q. Mrs Horsley asked where the money will come from to build a new village hall.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that there are organisations that offer grants, particularly for village halls.
- Q. A resident asked how often the village hall is used by Horspath residents. It's not worth building a new hall if residents do not use it.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that the booking system is a difficult to use and is affecting the number of bookings.
- Q. A resident stated that it is not just the booking system that is a problem, the rental cost of the village hall has been out-priced and has been increased again recently.
- A. Mrs Cook stated that the cost of everything has increased, including utility costs.
- Q. Mr Whitlock stated that it will cost a lot less to re-build the village hall rather than refurbishment. Mr Whitlock stated that it is a legal requirement to complete an asbestos register every year. Mrs Oakley stated that there are several files that have been mislaid, including the sustainability of this building.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that the new village hall will be exceptional. Mr Burgess stated that the existing village hall is not sustainable or maintainable as it is. Mr O'Brien stated that to refurbish the existing village hall would not meet the modern building regulations, and ecologically it doesn't make any difference as in the long term it would use less energy.
- Q. Mr Goodliffe stated that there has been a range of views for refurbishing and re-building the village hall, but there is a lack of information available for residents to make a decision, and he would like to see costs for both options. On HSPC website the 10 year plan shows other options on how the money will be used, including a new village hall, so more could be achieved.
- A. Mr O'Brien stated that he agrees with the costings option, but to do everything suggested by some residents tonight, to obtain that information would cost £35k - £40k to do which we do not want to spend. Residents do not seem concerned that to date over £400k of HSPC money has been spent, and now we have come up with a new concept people are concerned that we are spending money. A resident stated that the village has not had any say on how that money was spent. Mr O'Brien stated that there were organisations being awarded grants of £4500.00 every year with no questions asked, there was also a concept in place that all of the village organisations could get a grant of up to £75k, but the new committee objected and stopped it.

There is a feeling that HSPC has not been spent wisely in the past and the new committee want to ensure that the money is spent wisely in the future. Residents need to put their trust in the new committee. If residents want us to spend up to £40k gathering the information on all options, then we will do it, but in the absence of that, we think we are doing it the correct way by involving residents.

Mrs Oakley stated that the 10 year plan was posted several years ago, and there are now new Trustees that were not part of producing the existing 10 year plan. At the end of January HSPC will be holding a workshop to discuss future grants and how HSPC should be safeguarded, so the 10 year plan will be reviewed. The outcome of the open meeting this evening will also be discussed.

Q. Mrs Wyles stated that there seems to be struggles around making decisions at times, and suggested that and outside organisation be brought in to assist with coming up with a plan.

Q. Mr Burn stated that a new village hall will cost in excess of £1 million and will take around 18 months to complete. With the income coming in during that time, other options in the 10 year plan will also be able to be carried out.

A. Mr O'Brien stated that the HSPC lease is up for review in 2026, so the income is not guaranteed. If Stagecoach give notice in 2025, there will still be an income of £750k. Residents should be mindful that this a brilliant opportunity for Horspath village. Some of the other suggested schemes could be covered in a 5 year plan over several phases, but to start with the village hall would also give an income. Mr Burgess stated that the annual income of HSPC is £250k. All HSPC meetings are open to residents. Mrs Oakley stated that all grants will be discussed in an open meeting, but the identity of individuals will not be disclosed. Mrs Oakley stated that there will no longer be sub-committees or closed meetings to discuss grants, everything will be open to the residents of Horspath. Mr Parker stated that he has only been a member of HPC for a few months, and as a retired chartered accountant he has spent a lot of time analysing how the HSPC funds have been used over the last few years. It seems that some organisations are using HSPC as a wishing well for grants and the website also needs updating. Mr Parker has received several comments regarding the lack of transparency, but the new committee are looking to address that. We need to concentrate on the future and make HSPC more accountable, we are looking to revamp the grant application process and if residents support the building of a new village hall, this will impact on the future plans.

Q. If residents vote for a new village hall, what are the next steps?

A. Mrs Oakley stated that if there is going to be a new village hall, there will be further meetings to share more information with residents, such as viewing plans, costings and grant information. Mr O'Brien stated that people need to be mindful that it is possible that the planning department might reject the plan, so the first step is for the planning department to agree and then negotiate the final details. Trustees are mindful that they are spending residents' money, so this should be done wisely. Mr Coolman stated that whether it is a refurbishment or a re-build of the village hall, residents will be asked what facilities they would want to be included.

Q. A resident suggested that other village halls could be looked at for ideas.

A. Mr O'Brien stated that Mrs Kogel informed Trustees of the new village hall in Marcham, which has put their village on the map.

Q. Mrs Frankum asked if the loan to the Hub which has been on-going for five years is still going to happen.

A. Mrs Oakley stated that there are some things that are still on the table, including the Hub and the Church. Mrs Oakley stated that she is hopeful that at least 50% of the cost of a new village hall will be covered by grants.

Q. A resident asked about the income of the new village hall, is the intention that the income will pay the running cost of the village hall or will any surplus money go to HSPC.

A. Mr Burgess stated that we would hope that there would be surplus income but village halls are very expensive to run. The income has not yet been discussed.

Q. Mrs Horsley stated that this should be part of a feasibility study.

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- A. Mr Burgess stated that at the moment we are seeking views of residents, but if residents want a feasibility study, this can be carried out in due course. Mrs Oakley stated that Horspath is one of the richest villages and should have a village hall that is better than anywhere else.
- Q. Mrs Wyles stated that the Hub has a lot of debts and a lot of expense and is used widely by the community.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that the management of the Hub is excellent. The Hub had to raise money quickly to purchase the building. There are some people that are still owed money, but this is not the correct forum to be discussed. Mrs Oakley stated that HSPC is looking at loaning money to the Hub to enable them to pay off their debts.
- Q. Mrs Wyles stated that the Hub is a community asset and asked why HSPC cannot just pay off the loans on behalf of the Hub.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that the Hub is totally independent and not part of HPC. Mr Burgess stated that as the Hub is a charity and HSPC is a charity we are not permitted to do this. Mr Igoe stated that this conversation is not relevant, the meeting is to seek resident's views on whether or not they support the building of a new village hall. Mr Parker stated that transparency is very important to him and in the future with any grants awarded, there will be transparency and residents will have an input on decisions that are made. This is not a HSPC meeting, it is a meeting to determine if residents are in favour of a new village hall.
- Q. A resident stated that HSPC has a lot of money to spend, so why can't residents have an input as to what the money is spent on. The resident asked if a new village hall be viable, you will have to invite outside people to use it, so it won't just be for the residents of Horspath.
- A. Mrs Cook stated that grants will be used towards the cost of building a new village hall, it will not just be HSPC money.
- Q. Mr Murray stated that he is delighted at the ambition to replace the whole building and build something that the village can be proud of. Mr Murray stated that he is impressed with the transparency.
- A. Mr Parker stated that with regards to transparency, residents need to be aware that as members of HPC and Trustees of HSPC we are barred from profiting as individuals. There is no self-interest, we all give up our time to try and do our best for the village. It is frustrating for residents with how long things take, but as an example, the two new noticeboards, it takes time to obtain the quotes and then make a decision on which company to use, and then have to wait for the work to be carried out.

Mrs Oakley asked residents who have not already voted by using the questionnaire to raise their hands if they are in favour of replacing the existing village hall, with a new state of the art village hall.
Mr O'Brien stated that the questionnaire clearly states that a public vote will take place on 10th January 2023. The number of responses already received to date will be added to the public vote tonight.

Residents in favour – 25. Against – 3. Require more information – 18.

Mrs Oakley asked residents who have not voted or have not completed the questionnaire to do so in the next 7 days.

- Q. Mr Whitlock asked if the number of people voting in favour of a new village hall out-number the people against a new village hall.
- A. Mrs Oakley stated that there are more votes for residents in favour of a new village hall.

Mrs Oakley thanked residents for attending and stated that we will now look at the next steps. Everything will be totally open to the residents before any decisions are made. All information will be posted on the HPC website and on the noticeboards.

Mr O'Brien stated that with regards to feasibility, 18 people requested more information so they need to come back and tell us what they want in that information, and are they willing for us to spend the money to

obtain the information. A resident stated that you cannot have 18 people decide whether to spend £35k+ to obtain this information.

Mr Lowe stated that he fully supports the proposal of a new village hall.

Mr Igoe and Mrs Cook thanked residents for attending.

Mr Ewart stated that a feasibility study would be good.

Mr Burges stated that we will work on this but it will take several months before we can come back to the residents with more information.

A resident stated that the running of HSPC has been a mystery for many years, and the fact that this meeting has been held to seek the views of residents is a very worthy thing, and thanked the Trustees for changing the way that things are being done.

Signed.....

Date.....