

SOUTHERY PARISH COUNCIL
Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council
Monday 15 March 2021 at 7.05 pm
Virtual Meeting Held via 'Zoom'

Present:

Cllr Alison Youngs (Chair)
Cllr Annette Osler (Vice Chair)
Cllr Crispin Copsey
Cllr Chris Edwards
Cllr Christine Feltwell
Cllr Javey Osler
Cllr Roger Whitehead
Helen Richardson, Parish Clerk & Financial Responsible Person

In attendance:

Members of the Public: 0

38/21 To consider apologies for absence

There were none.

39/21 To receive Declarations of Interest on Agenda Items.

There were none.

40/21 To Discuss the Structural Inspection Report of the Southery Village Hall Commissioned by the Southery Village Hall Management Committee and Approve Any Action of the Parish Council

Following the Parish Council's ordinary meeting in March where the Chair of the Village Hall Management Committee had attended to provide an update and had agreed to share a structural report they had recently commissioned regarding the Southery Village Hall. The following issues were highlights from the report:

- The floor needed repair and maintenance.
- A wall towards the back of the wall required repair.
- The flat roof required repair.
- A new heating system was required.

The Village Hall Management Committee had asked the Council's support in a project to build a new hall on the playing field, they had advised the Council that repairs to the current hall was projected in the report as being around £300k.

Following a query from the Council on the basis of how the current village hall site could be sold, the Clerk advised that this was enshrined within the Village Hall Management Committee's constitutional document that was a set of rules to be followed in disposing of assets and the governance arrangements around this document needed to be in place and followed by the Committee. The Village Hall and land was held in trust based on the Constitutional document for the benefit of those living in the village and surrounding areas. The Village Hall Management Committee were answerable to the village through an vote at an AGM or SGM and agreement from the Charity Commission. The Clerk explained the nature of the Village Hall Constitution was that the Parish Council were 'custodian' trustees which only meant that they were 'holders' of the land titles on behalf of the charity and not owners of the land, and this was because they were a statutory body that existed forever they were used for this purpose and was common place for village hall's kept in trust, and in fact the Charity Commission could also be used for this purpose under the Village Hall Management Committee's current constitutional arrangements. They further explained that the Village Hall Management Committee as per their governing document were trustees of the charity responsible for the day to day management of the hall and all liabilities, and should consist of a certain number of elected members by the village through an AGM, co-opted where required by the

management committee and represented groups on the Committee that wish to put themselves forward.

The Council agreed that the following be provided to the Village Hall Management Committee in response to their enquiry:

- The flat roof required repair, though the Council wished to understand from the Committee what steps they had taken in regard to the 35 year guarantee they understood have been provided when it was last maintained which reportedly had twenty years left?
- The Council wished to understand why the report had suggested electric heating being a replacement rather than something more sustainable?
- The Council felt that outline planning permission would have to be granted in order to reach an understanding of how much funds the current site could generate in order to know if any new build project would be financially viable on land other than the current site, and suggested that the Committee explore this in much more detail with the Planning authority.
- The Council felt that the Village Hall Management Committee should conduct an option appraisal for all possible avenues that could be taken for all project areas, and one should include viability and costs regarding building a new hall on the site, such as consideration of building over the structure of the current hall whilst keeping the current hall open. It was felt that there was already a car park and services on the current site which there would not be potentially at other locations and inevitable costs around that.
- The Council felt that the Committee should explore in detail any tax implications for such a project based on all options open to them such as capital gains tax.
- The Council felt that the Village Hall Management Committee should explore further advice provided on costs and work needed to the current hall, such as alternative quotes and reports usually three in most cases.
- The Council wished to understand the terms under which the insurance company advised them that they were not able to make a claim for the back wall and other repairs and wished to understand more of why that was the case?
- The Council felt that post covid the Committee also needed to explore and understand the impact on the facility in the short term and longer term, of its sustainability and finding out what the community needs were.
- The Council suggested that the Village Hall Committee review their governance arrangements seeking appropriate advice, and ensure they were as robust as possible and all in place to ensure they were compliant where applying for funding.
- The Council felt the Village Hall in their appraisals needed to understand any competitive markets locally and understand more of what the purpose of the building was and what they would be looking to specifically provide.
- The Council suggested that the Village Hall Committee needed to document a cash flow forecast and their long term financial plans.
- The Council felt that the Village Hall Management Committee needed to get comparable quotes for the work to keep it open and up to date. The existing hall needed ongoing management cash flow plans and for funders investment.

The Council discussed the nature of gifting and selling any parish land and it was felt that at the appropriate time they would need to seek legal advice though it was felt that this was not something it would take action at this time for the above issues needing to be explored and resolved in more detail by the Committee. The Council felt that based on the above points there was comprehensive ground work that needed to be documented by the Village Hall Management Committee specifically around governance and financial implications much before the Council could be in a decision to consider anything in relation to the playing field land and therefore would place the Parish Council in a better position to understand the projects needs. The Chair summarised that everyone did need to work together to find a solution as it was an important asset to the village, but it was important that issues were worked through in the best way possible, and where possible the Parish Council were happy to offer guidance where they were able to.

RESOLVED: That the Clerk respond to the Village Hall Management Committee with the points outlined in this minute, but only after each Councillor has confirmed on email that they are satisfied with the final wording.

41/21 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 6th April 2021 at 7 pm.

Closed 9.00 pm