

NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE VILLAGE HALL REFURBISHMENT

SUB-COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 24TH JANUARY 2023

Present: Cllr Nick Fowke

Cllr Mark Hargreaves

Lesley Harding

Annie Gray

Discussion

This refurbishment sub-committee has been set up by Pauntley Parish Council to progress the refurbishment plans for Pauntley Village Hall and to present options to the Council for a decision as to how to proceed.

Notes of the Meeting

The existing refurbishment plans were discussed, with the main concern being the amount of funding (around £550,000) that would be required in the current economic and funding climate. Few sources of funding are available at the present time for projects such as this.

- The best option would be the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund, which would consider applications for £10,000 or more. For larger projects of £200,000 or more, there is the National Lottery Bringing People Together Fund but looking at the criteria, this is designed for much larger projects with a wider scope than just one community. The application would need to be clear about how the project would benefit the community and what support there is for it from them.
- Mark had investigated the Village Halls Jubilee Fund, which could provide a maximum of 20% of total costs for eligible projects up to a total of £75,000. Although the dates for this had closed it seemed that take-up had been less than anticipated and a further round was opening again on 20th February.
- A few other smaller grant sources might be accessible, such as The Garfield Weston Foundation, who will consider applications for up to £30,000 but no more than 30% of the project cost.

We need therefore to be aware that these plans would therefore be likely to involve multiple applications for such a large sum.

The possibility of breaking the project down into smaller projects was considered – toilets, kitchen, store etc. which might be more manageable and for which it might be easier to source smaller amounts of funding.

This led to a discussion of what was in fact desirable and feasible for the hall. Annie, as bookings secretary, has a good knowledge of the type of bookings the hall receives, and was of the view that most hirers don't in fact require a shower or a larger kitchen, and that a less **ambitious refurbishment would provide the improvements needed and still retain what**

is an old but small and characterful village hall. There was some discussion as to the merits of adding fairly large, new and modern constructions to an old building, and whether this would in fact add to its attraction for users. It was felt that consultation with hall users would be necessary to aid a decision on this, and also to provide the evidence that would be required by grant providers that the plans were supported by the community.

Nick pointed out that the plans for the full refurbishment had been drawn up by the architect to the parish council's specification and that he was concerned about abandoning these, especially given the money that has already been spent on this. He was also of the view that it could not be said that a grant application to an organisation like the National Lottery is not likely to be successful until it is tried.

After further discussions, the group considered that there are three options open to the Parish Council for discussion and consideration.

Full refurbishment as per the existing plans

This involves construction of a new entrance and toilets, to include an accessible toilet and baby change, new kitchen, conversion of the old toilet block to storage, and French doors to an external decking area at the rear of the hall. The projected cost for this was around £550,000, and it is possible that in the six months since this costing was obtained, that this is likely to have increased.

Full refurbishment as above but taken in stages

This would be likely to involve construction of the new toilets and entrance first, followed by conversion of the old toilets to storage, then a new kitchen and finally other planned changes such as the rear decking. The advantages of this method are that it would require smaller, separate grant applications, which may be more likely to succeed. Disadvantages are that some economies of scale would be lost by breaking the plans down into smaller units, particularly in the installation of services such as plumbing and drains.

Targeted refurbishment and improvement of those areas considered to be in need

There was discussion of the possibility of specific refurbishment that would add value to the hall, by providing those improvements that would be most important to users and improve the facilities and appearance of the hall. This could include:

- Completely refurbishing the existing toilet area, removing the unnecessary internal partition walls and making better use of the available space. Making use of the existing plumbing and piping may bring further economies.
- Construction of a smaller entrance way with accessible toilet and baby change. This would presumably be less expensive as on a small footprint. Alternatively the existing toilet area could be reconfigured and possibly extended into the hall space to provide more space and allow the accessible toilet and baby change to be in the same area, and so save on the costs of building. The necessity for a shower also needs to be considered

– it would be useful to attract more guide and scout camping groups but Annie pointed out that someone will need to clean it.

- Installing decking to the rear of the hall as planned, to make best use of the view, and installing a hatch from the kitchen for access to it. A built in barbecue here would add value.
- Purchasing a new cooker for the kitchen and looking into ways of better insulating it to prevent damp. Regular users did not generally feel that a larger space was required.
- Installing a new (and more manageable) hatch cover for the kitchen to the main hall.
- Installing solar panels and investigating ground source heating to reduce electricity costs.
- Renewing the exterior cladding of the hall to improve its insulation and appearance and to repair areas of damage.
- Looking at an external storage unit to provide more storage space.
- New internal doors, interior decorating and sanding and sealing the floor to be more hardwearing.

Advantages of this option are that the costs would be considerably less and would be likely to make the improvements that most users would like to see, with applications to more organisations viable where these only provide small grants. No additional planning permission is likely to be required as all would be internal alterations apart from the new entrance and accessible toilet, which may be allowable on a smaller footprint. Disadvantages are of course that this deviates considerably from the original plans and that the costings already obtained are of no real value.

NOTES OF FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON 31ST JANUARY 2023

A follow-up meeting took place on 31st January to look in more details at possibilities for refurbishing the toilets. If we could avoid construction work outside the hall this would be a considerable saving and so other options were discussed.

Removing the internal partitions in the toilets would provide for more usable space, providing none is load bearing. Several options were considered:

- Extend the gents toilet, which has more space, into the main hall to allow an accessible toilet to be installed here with a separate entrance from the hall. The gents would then be reconfigured. Advantages are that extending in this direction would not require planning permission. Disadvantages are that it would encroach on the skittles area.
- Extend the ladies toilet into the main hall and reconfigure the area to allow for an accessible toilet and one ladies toilet.
- Reconfiguring the ladies toilet to provide just one accessible toilet which would also be the ladies toilet. Advantages are that this would not require any structural alterations but disadvantages might be that one ladies toilet may not be sufficient, particularly for guide/brownie camping groups.
- Reconfigure the whole toilet area to provide one accessible toilet where the existing ladies toilet is, and install two unisex toilets (in separate units with handwashing and drying facilities) where the existing gents toilet is (or one ladies and one gents).

Advantages are that this would provide additional facilities for the ladies. Disadvantages are that some users may not feel comfortable with unisex toilets.

Other suggestions for improvements were also considered:

- Rewiring would be necessary and the coin meter could be taken out, especially if we can have solar panels and perhaps ground source heating. Now that we have broadband, we could also look at timers for the heaters to save someone having to come up to put them on in advance. Hall hire for the winter months could then include a heating supplement, as some halls already use, to be included in the hire charge.
- More electrical sockets would then be possible in the hall and we could also consider moving the AV equipment box to the top of the hall to avoid long cabling – additional sockets would make this possible.
- Another possible funding source is the Bernard Sunley Trust, which will part-fund projects such as this.

Conclusions

The sub-committee would ask the Parish Council to consider the options presented and resolve on the preferred way forward.

Next steps would be to hold consultations with users, as support for any project will be vital, especially since the hall belongs to the residents and not to the Parish Council. Discussions as to the best way to achieve this are ongoing.

Lesley Harding
1.2.2023