

Village Hall Working Group

Report to Parish Council April 2022

1. Introduction

At its February meeting the Council considered various issues regarding the Village Hall project. Amongst other matters it asked the Working Group to revise the scheme to produce new proposals. The report to the Council in February noted the need for further public consultation. This report addresses both those matters together with related issues.

2. The Brief

The Council asked the Working Group to produce a scheme within a budget cap of £500k and indicated that the revised facility should be able to accommodate as required-

- a location for the library
- an internet capability for those members of the community who do not have access to their own connection or technology or who need access to the fibreoptic speed available on the Saxon Meadows development.
- a location for the Post Office should that again become an issue.
- COVID has fundamentally changed the way many people work but not all will have the necessary resources to effectively work in new ways so, subject to determination of demand, the site could offer the option of a small “rent-a-desk” business centre for hire on a non-profit basis.
- a meeting place for Parish Council and other village groups
- modest gatherings which did not require a bar.

3. Criteria

The Working Group developed the following criteria to guide their consideration of what a revised facility would look like-

- the facility should have the ability to accommodate more than one activity simultaneously with adequate sound insulation between these areas.
- costs of build should be reduced to an achievable level within the sum identified by the Council.
- the exterior appearance should be suitable for the location.
- location on the site should enable use of the existing prepared car park area.
- the facility should allow for the designated uses contained in the brief from the Council.
- the internal construction should enable reconfiguration in the future should that become desirable.

4. The Plan

The plan attached to this report does, in the view of the Working Group, allow for the functions listed in 2 above. One of the schematics meets the criteria

listed in 3 above in that it allows for multiple use. Should the Council decide that multiple use is not required the other schematic gives an example of that layout. The Working Group's recommendation is for the multiple use option as this increases flexibility.

The originally approved plan produced a facility with a floor area of 326 sq m. This revised plan floor area is 135 sq m.

5. Cost

Application of the cost of the original plan (£885,444) to the revised plan proportionately on the basis of floor area produces a cost of £366,671. This includes fees and a modest estimate of year 1 inflation. It excludes any VAT liability but on the other hand, it takes no account of the fact that the part of the original plan which has been removed is essentially the higher and therefore potentially proportionately more expensive part (the "old" big main hall). Whilst this is a crude estimation the Working Group does not consider the Council needs to seek a further detailed costing and should instead test the cost of the scheme by tendering at the appropriate time.

6. Timescales

The Working Group is mindful of the fact that any month of delay from now adds, probably conservatively, £2,000 inflation to the cost of the scheme. It will therefore be seeking to enable the Council to ensure that the various elements of the scheme proceed concurrently rather than consecutively wherever possible, certainly up to the stage at which the Council has a firm tendered cost.

7. Planning Consent

If the Council approves this revised plan the Working Group will need to consult with NSDC to establish if a new planning application has to be submitted. At this stage the working assumption is that it will be needed and, in that event work to produce the planning application could commence immediately. Subject to confirmation by NSDC, a fee estimated at £462 will be payable.

8. Consultation

If the Council approves this revised plan, it is proposed that new display boards be produced at a cost estimated at £200 + VAT and interested residents be encouraged to attend the next Council to view the plans and contribute to a discussion on further uses to which this facility could be put.

9. Recommendations

That the Council-

1. Considers and if appropriate approves the revised plan referred to at 4 above and as attached to this report and, if so-

2. Approves the expenditure to seek planning approval if needed and to produce display boards for use at the next meeting
3. Considers how the Council wishes to publicise the availability of the plans at the next meeting.