

## **FREELAND VILLAGE HALL WORKING GROUP**

### **NOTES OF THE OPEN VILLAGE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, AT 8.00PM IN THE VILLAGE HALL, FREELAND**

**Village Hall Working Group Members Present: Bill Pinkerton (Chair), Peter Newell, Martin Shann, Mary Ann Canning, Robert Crocker, Colin Smith, Ray Tollady (Architect)**

**Approx 70 Freeland village residents were present.**

**The notes of the meeting were taken by the Parish Clerk, Lisa Smith.**

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#### **WELCOME & BACKGROUND – BILL PINKERTON**

Bill welcomed the residents and thanked them for coming along to the meeting. He then ran through the agenda for the evening and advised residents there would be an opportunity for them to ask questions and give feedback via discussion groups with representatives from the Working Group during the coffee break – these responses would then be fed back to the meeting. A timetable of next steps would then be presented.

#### **HISTORY – BILL PINKERTON**

Bill gave a brief presentation on the history of the village hall and the current situation. The Hall was built in 1965 and was funded at the time by the village. In the late 1980s a rebuild attempt was made which would have cost approx. £200,000 – this unfortunately failed due to lack of funding. Another rebuild attempt was made in 2000 - 2006, when the cost would have been in the region of £600,000 – £700,000 but again this failed due to lack of funding.

In 2008/09 some proposals were put forward by the Parish Council at the Annual Parish Meeting regarding refurbishing the village hall with 3 different schemes – a minor, intermediate or full refurbishment scheme which would in reality be a partial rebuild. However, the village decided at that meeting and the subsequent open village meeting held in July that the refurbishment was not the way forward and that it would be better to build a new village hall. In response to that, a Village Hall Working Group was formed, and the members of the group were introduced. Bill explained that the remit of the Group was taken from the residents' input at the open meeting in July.

The new hall had been designed from the brief given to the architect, which was based on the requirements gained from the feedback from the village meeting in July. These requirements included having a hall of the same size and similar shape, with the same amount of storage with a kitchen and toilet facilities, and from these requirements the drawings provided tonight were produced.

Bill then handed over to Robert Crocker to provide an overview of the current proposals.

#### **PRESENTATION OF CURRENT PROPOSALS – OVERVIEW & USER'S VIEWS – ROBERT CROCKER**

Rob explained that the Village Hall Working Group had tried to organise an evolved system of consultations whereby each member of the Working Group liaised with users and groups to obtain feedback. The users and groups that had been consulted included:

Football Club, Cricket Club, Parent & Toddlers, Parents/ Primary School, Scouts, Guides and Brownies, Gardening Club, Oxfordshire Yeoman, Tuesday Club, Orchestra and the Art Club.

A great deal of time had been spent by the Working Group working out ways in which to address all of the requirements of the users, and the minutes of the Working Group had been placed on the village website.

Rob advised the residents that the Working Group were delighted to have Ray Tollady as the architect, who had a great understanding and passion for the project. The past attempts to build a new hall had failed due to the increase in building costs, which had increased faster than funds could be raised.

Now, he hoped the village would be keen to support borrowing the money needed to start the project whilst the interest rates were particularly low. This would give enough capital to start the project and there were also funds available in the Parish Council reserves, plus a few pledges of donations had been received.

The sports clubs that used the hall had over 200 members, and although the project had been subdivided, it was one whole proposal to borrow the money. The reason for this was because the Parish Council cannot borrow money unless it can prove that everyone benefits. The sports clubs have access to grants, but need to apply before the work is started, otherwise the application may be void. He advised the residents that they were now at the point that if the village still supported the proposal, then these funds could be targeted by the sports clubs to help with the costs.

He also advised that there was a group of residents (Khadj et al) who were doing lots of work in researching funding possibilities and were trying every possible avenue, including the lottery.

Rob concluded his presentation by saying that the evening was not just about bricks and money, it was about how a community functioned and that Freeland was a great place to live. The church bells were ringing again, bulbs were being planted by the Gardening Club, there was a great community at work who deserved better facilities – every person would benefit from the project.

Rob then handed over to Ray Tollady, the architect for a presentation about the architecture.

## **ARCHITECTS VIEW – CURRENT PROPOSALS – RAY TOLLADY**

Ray opened his presentation by saying how grateful he was in being allowed to work on this project, which was so important to the village.

He gave a brief background about himself – he had been a partner in Scott & Tollady for many years and had done lots of work for the Witney Town Council including building the cemetery, so he had lots of prior knowledge about this type of project.

He explained that he had been approached initially to have some fresh eyes look at the village hall site, of which he had no prior knowledge. His initial thoughts were that it was hidden behind a great expanse of tarmac and thought that it could be moved forward so that it was more visible from the road. He felt strongly that the building could not be refurbished without having a complete re-build as the current location would make this difficult.

The village hall served 2 purposes – social facilities and sports facilities. He advised that the Working Group wanted unity in the 2 purposes so the sports and main hall had been joined together and the obvious place to site the hall was in the middle of the current plot. He explained that the plans did not show a particularly grand building, after all it was a village hall, not a town hall, and it needed to fit in with its surroundings. The plans showed traditional English architecture overall, and the main hall had

been made taller. When he met the sports clubs, they had been pretty clear as to what their requirements were, especially as there were certain standards that had to be met to gain national funding, so this part of the plans had been relatively easy to produce.

Ray explained that the elevations were all built from natural materials, the advantage of this being that these would mellow with age. He had kept a low wall around the hall to be in keeping with the low walls that were evident throughout the village. The roof was made of blue slate, and the gap between the roof and walls was made of glass to make it light and airy. Then there was cedar boarding which would start off golden in colour and after a few years would gradually turn grey.

He felt the space at the front that had two lawns and some benches, would create some lovely quiet open space. This open space he saw as the heart of the village, and hoped it would be used and enjoyed by everyone.

Ray then handed over to Mary-Ann Canning to talk about the landscaping.

## **LANDSCAPING – MARY-ANN CANNING**

Mary-Ann Canning spoke to the residents about the planned landscaping for the new village hall. She explained that the Working Group had wanted to make it look welcoming for visitors at the front, so there were two lawns which could also be used for things such as table top sales. There were benches placed around the lawns which could be memorial benches for village residents, which were also somewhere villagers could sit on a sunny day and enjoy the tranquillity of village life. The Working Group felt it was better to remove the hedge at the front of the hall by Wroslyn Road to open up the front of the site. There were two Amelanchier trees that had been planted this year by the Gardening Club which would be retained but perhaps replanted to an alternative location, and smaller trees could be planted in a row along the front of the lawns.

The terraces at the back opened out onto the field and benches around the oak tree to provide a shaded seating area could be considered.

The parking layout was done to provide one area on one side at the front of the building that would be tarmac and have spaces marked out for regular users and a cycle park. The back of the car park would be kept locked and would be used for additional parking for main events, and there could be removable bollards to stop cars driving onto the field.

A query was raised as follows:

*Has any parking space been lost in these new plans?*

No, it provides the same amount of parking as now.

The play area would be moved from its current location to the other side of the field, round the corner from the toddler's garage. This was decided from feedback from the toddler group, which had stated that the play park should not be near the road. The village at the open meeting in July had also said that the back of the hall should open out onto the field, so the play park could not be sited behind the hall as it would block the view. Mary-Ann went on to say that there was the potential to improve the play park with bamboo planting/willow walls etc and the village could be involved in the design.

## **PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF THE SPORTS CLUBS - DARREN PATON**

Before Peter Newell presented to the village about the project costs, Darren Paton from Freeland Football Club had asked to say a few words to the residents, which had been agreed.

On behalf of all the members of the cricket and football clubs, Darren thanked the community for all their hard work behind the scenes. He confirmed that the clubs had started the process of trying to raise a £200,000 - £300,000 grant from various sources. This grant, he explained was dependent on the presentation, planning and business plan of the relevant community applying. Once these proposed facilities were finalised, the clubs could then apply for even bigger funding to develop the sporting arena, which would in turn increase the revenue for the village.

He advised the residents that the clubs were ready and willing to support the initial funding to start the project. With 260 members that use the facilities 52 weeks a year, he stressed the importance of building new changing rooms so that they could comply with the standard that they had worked so hard for. On the strength of what was currently proposed, they were already planning for a ladies football team that would play to raise money for charity, and that in itself he felt was a worthy reason to continue ahead with the project.

He advised that the funding from the loan will not be enough to build both the hall and the changing rooms, but with the clubs' support, he could guarantee that the new build would be possible and would take the community into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He confirmed that the funding may only be awarded once the project has been started, ie once the old building has been demolished: the new build fund would be released in stages.

Each stage of the build is pre-calculated to be cost effective. He advised residents that to demolish only half of the present building whilst keeping the other half in use, and then demolishing the second half at a later date was not cost effective and would add a further expense to the project. He also felt that building the changing rooms in a proposed phase 2 would also incur a further cost for the drainage needed and so this should all be included in phase 1. At the very least he felt phase 1 should include the demolition of both hall and changing rooms, the drainage laid and the footings completed. He wished the group a quick resolution to the project, thanked the village for their time and assured them that with the new hall, the community could set a new standard not just for their children but for future generations.

Bill Pinkerton then asked if there were any other users of the hall who wished to say anything, and no-one wished to speak. He then handed over to Peter Newell to go through the project costs.

## **PROJECT COSTS – PETER NEWELL**

Peter explained that there were 3 main elements to the project, which were as follows:

- The “Social Element”– which includes the main Hall and associated kitchen, store rooms and toilet facilities.
- The “Sports Element” – which includes the changing facilities for home and away teams (or male and female teams), referee’s room and a tea/meeting room.
- The “Shop Element” – which is a community style village shop of 80 square metres that could be built when there is sufficient support for such a facility. A feasibility study would need to be carried out.

### **Costs of the Social Element:**

The Quantity Surveyor’s estimate was **£326,000** plus fees & VAT, although VAT should not be payable by the Parish Council as this is reclaimed.

The Fees would be approximately **£40,000** (Architect 7.5%; QS 2.5%; H&S 1% = 11% of total costs, plus site survey and drawings: £1,000)

The demolition of the existing hall would cost approx. **£7,000**

A contingency had to be built in and this was set at 10% = **£36,000**

**Therefore the total costs for building the Social Element = £409,000**

#### **Proposed funding of the Social Element:**

1. Loan of £350,000

It was proposed that the Parish Council apply for a loan from the Public Works Loan Board of **£350,000** currently available to Parish Councils at 4% per year over 25 years (repayable via the Precept at around £22,000 per year = 80pence per week per household)

Peter explained that the Parish Council first had to gain permission from the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils to apply for the loan and there was no guarantee that this would be successful, but if the village supported the loan then they stood a good chance of getting it.

2. Parish Council earmarked Village Hall funds of **£30,000**.

3. Funds held by Village Organisations/private donations/un-earmarked PC funds: **£30,000**

**Total = £410,000**

Peter advised the residents that as long as the loan application was successful, then the project could proceed with the Social Element.

#### **Costs of the Sports Element:**

- Quantity Surveyor's estimate: **£160,000** plus fees & VAT (again, VAT should not be payable by the Parish Council as it is reclaimed)
- Fees: **£18,000** approx.
- Contingency (at 10%): **£18,000**

**Total cost of Sports Element = £196,000**

#### **Proposed funding of the Sports Element:**

It was proposed that the funding for the Sports Element would come from fund raising, principally from sports-related granting bodies.

#### **Costs of the Shop Element:**

- Quantity Surveyor's estimate for an 80 square metre shop: **£73,000** plus fees & VAT (again, VAT should not be payable by the Parish Council as it is reclaimed)
- Fees : **£8,000** approx.
- Contingency (set at 10%): **£8,000**

**Total cost of Shop Element = £89,000**

#### **Proposed funding of the Shop Element:**

Funding for such a shop would need to combine commercial funding and/or special grants that might be available for such community shops. A separate group would have to be set up to look at this in more detail.

**Some questions were raised as follows:**

*If the shop went ahead, where on the site would it go?*

It would go on the side of the building closest to the Methodist chapel.

*Would you have to close a bit of the car park for that?*

Yes, this would have to be discussed as part of the planning process.

## **Landscaping**

The estimated total cost for the landscaping was **£100,000**

Proposed funding for the landscaping:

- £20,000 of this was already built into the Social Element costs
- Fund raising
- Village contribution eg clubs/volunteers etc

Peter then handed over to Colin Smith who explained the timetable of the next steps following the village meeting.

## **NEXT STEPS: TIMETABLE – COLIN SMITH**

Colin explained that assuming the Village Hall Working Group left the meeting with the backing from the village to go for the loan, the following timetable would show the next steps in the process:

- Submit scheme for planning approval: 20<sup>th</sup> November
- Start fund raising for Sports Element
- Form Village Shop Working Group
- Consultation on detailed plans for Social and Sports Elements
- Planning Consent: Mid January (8 weeks?)
- Submit Loan Application (following planning consent)
- Loan Approved: Mid March (8 weeks?)
- Send invitations to tender Social Element: Mid March (following approval of loan)
- Appoint contractor, Social Element (8 weeks?): June
- Social Element completed (16 weeks?) : August
- Sports element
  - Timing dependent on funding
  - Ideally build at the same time as the Social Element
- Shop will be a further build

## **Questions were raised as follows:**

*Why are you waiting for planning permission for the loan to be agreed before putting the work out to tender?*

We can't ask the contractors unless we have the money there. If we had to change elements of it, it's not fair on the contractors to keep changing things. Plus there is a time constraint on the drawings, as the builder's price the work from the drawing specifications. So we have to prepare detailed construction drawings for a contractor to be able to tender for it.

A tea/coffee break was then taken at 9.00pm for 30 mins where the residents were invited to take part in 3 discussion groups, each group having two members of the Working Group present to discuss any concerns or queries. Question sheets with ideas for discussion were made available.

The meeting was then reconvened at 9.30pm and the Working Group members reported back their findings.

In Colin Smith's and Bill Pinkerton's group, the overall feeling was that the hall was in the right place. A suggestion was made of whether cars could be parked at the far end of the field.

The external appearance of the hall broadly met with the group's approval, however the issue of maintenance was raised. Ray Tollady responded to advise that no maintenance on the external walls would be necessary.

The group were also comfortable with the height and appearance of the hall and felt that the front gable was about right.

A few concerns were raised about the play park being moved and whether it was too close to the cricket pitch causing a possible danger from cricket balls. Plus as the park would not be visible from the road, concern was raised about the possibility of vandalism. This was duly noted, however Bill Pinkerton did advise that this had so far not been the case with the swings at the far end of the field that were not visible from the road but had not been subject to vandalism.

In Peter Newell's and Mary-Ann Canning's group the comments were as follows:

- Need some access for cars to be able to unload close to the village hall entrance.
- Need to consider emergency access to field.
- Storage – is it enough? Possibly need to consult with users re storage. Eg do the chairs and tables have to be dragged out of the cupboard each time? Consider another working group to look at storage. Possibly abandon the current tables and chairs and purchase light weight new ones like the ones at North Leigh.
- Village shop – is it not practical and desirable to build it into the main structure even if it is not used as a shop straight away? Could use as storage temporarily.
- A coat room is not conducive to security – perhaps could use the store room wall instead.

In Martin Shann's and Robert Crocker's group the comments were as follows:

- Car parking – will the pub still have open access to the car park as it does currently? Yes.
- Will there be lighting in the car park? Yes, there will be low level lighting.
- Safety round the corner – have to be careful how design.
- Need a hard surface path from the hall to the play park (in its new location) so that pushchairs may be wheeled to the play park.
- Consider one big lawn at the front of the hall rather than two small lawns.
- Front entrance of hall could be made more visually obvious from the road.

Bill Pinkerton then addressed the residents and advised them that they had all had a chance to discuss the plans and asked if there were any further questions or comments.

### **Further questions and comments raised:**

*Has there ever been a need to get coaches in the car park – will the car park surface be sufficient to allow coaches?*

There has not been a need as yet to allow coaches in the car park but this was a valid point with regard to the sports teams. Historically the surface was not considered suitable for coaches but the working group would consider this.

*The whole project is very exciting and we love the public garden at the front. The whole aspect at the front is fantastic and we like the different levels of the roof.*

*At a previous village meeting you mentioned about slightly lowering the angles of the roof to reduce the costs – has this been done on these plans?*

No, this was mainly regarding the full refurbishment scheme where this might make a difference, but not on the complete rebuild. The angles were set at standard angle for slates at 50°, but changing them to 35° or 40° would not make any difference to costs on these plans.

*If the roof was made higher could there could be the possibility of having other sports such as badminton in the hall?*

With the current proposals, the hall would not be large enough for Badminton. However, if the project goes ahead, there is the potential to develop the current outdoor baseball court area on the playing field by closing it in and having some downlighting for games such as hockey, tennis and possibly badminton etc.

On a final note Bill Pinkerton then recapped to the residents that the village's consent and support was required in order for the Parish Council to be able to go ahead and apply for the loan of £350,000 for 25 years which would equate to approximately 80 pence per week per household. He wanted to ensure everyone was happy with this. He asked all members present and no objections were raised.

He then thanked the members of the meeting for their time and comments and advised that because of their support, the project was able to proceed with the application for the loan and this would be prepared for submission. Colin Smith advised that a note regarding the outcome of this meeting would be placed in the Grapevine and if anyone wished to take part in the Village Shop Working Group to let him know.

*Meeting closed 9.50 p.m.*