

**CODSALL PARISH COUNCIL  
MINUTES**

**Planning Meeting held in the Parish Council Chamber,  
Station Road, Codsall on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2010 at 7.00pm.**

**PRESENT**

**Parish Councillors** M Ewart (Chair), Mrs M Barrow, Mrs E Forster, P Kenyon, Mrs C Millar, **District Councillor** Mrs P Campbell, J Michell, Mrs S Oatley

**1. APOLOGIES**

**Apologies** for absence were received from Councillors Chapman, Marshall (County Duties), Holland, Owen and Etheridge.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**None**

**3. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Planning Meeting held on the 10th March 2010. Approval proposed by Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Oatley and unanimously approved by the meeting.

**4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**None**

**5. PLANNING DECISIONS**

**To receive** the following Planning Decisions from South Staffordshire Council:

**None**

**6. PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

**Resolved** that the following recommendations be made to South Staffordshire Council:

**APPEAL**

**APP/C3430/A/10/2123354**

09/00357/COU      Change of use to dog training business Lot 6 Hushpins Lane, Codsall Wood  
Appeal against Condition 1 and condition 5

**The Clerk** was asked to write to the Planning Inspectorate in support of the Planning authority's decision.

**PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960**

**In pursuance of the powers contained in Section 1 of the above Act I move that the press and public be now excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the business about to be transacted is of a confidential nature and that publicity will be prejudicial to the public interest.**

**7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30pm**

**Planning Meeting Minutes,  
Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2010**

**Confidential**

**Village Hall Management Committee**

*To receive and approve Minutes of Sub-Committee Meeting held at the Parish Council Chamber, Monday 22 March 2010 at 19h00 to discuss Codsall Village Hall cashflow difficulties and agree recommendations to assist the VHMC.*

**With only 2 members of the sub-committee present this evening it was not possible to formally receive and approve these minutes.**

**However in view of the urgency to meet with the VHMC and start discussions to help improve the running of the Village Hall it was agreed to discuss the recommendations made by the sub-committee and if approved to allow members to proceed with discussions with the VHMC.**

**For clarity the sub-committees minutes are printed below.**

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**Sub-committee Minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2010 (subject to sub-committee approval)**

Present – Councillors J M Ewart (in the chair), Mrs V Chapman, B Holland, R Marshall and J Michell. (Cllr Michell joined the meeting at 19h25.)

**Current Position**

The Chairman opened the meeting with a number of introductory remarks. He drew attention to the note from the Clerk that outlined the circumstances under which the payment of the half-yearly grant to the Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) will be made in advance. This was to cover a predicted cash-flow shortfall to the end of June (but excluding expenditure on major repairs).

***This arrangement was conditional on the following stipulations –***

- A.** Immediate action to be taken in conjunction with the Parish Council (PC) sub-committee;
  - 1. Review costs, particularly wages
  - 2. Improve Income
  - 3. Increase usage of hall facilities
  - 4. Produce a realistic business plan and means of delivery by end June 2010
  
- B.** Joint committee (representatives of the Parish Council and VHMC) to assess and document capital expenditure needs for the remainder of the year, recommending any immediate support that may be required from the PC by;
  - 1. Prioritising urgent replacements
  - 2. Providing competitive quotes
  - 3. Assessing available grants
  
- C.** Revision of cash-flow and new projection to end September 2010, to be produced for the June PC meeting for consideration of on-going support.

The Chairman noted that many of the matters surrounding the present position of the village hall, and its future, were complex involving interactions between people and the events that inevitably follow from the current unstable position. He confessed to a limited understanding of all of the issues and suggested that few people outside of the

VHMC were likely to be much better informed. He cautioned against perceptive decisions and actions.

The positive aspect of the current position was that the intervention suggested and arranged by the Clerk (as set out at A to C above) did allow some time during which the opportunity was available to seek a viable long-term solution.

There followed a discussion of the issues. Cllr Holland suggested that the meeting should attempt to identify the 'barriers to success' that are believed to apply to the village hall. The following emerged;

1. Possible limitations in the make-up of the management committee. The constitution of the committee allows for a wide range of interested parties to participate by annual invitation. The list of such organisations is out-of-date and the consequent drift in committee membership may be in part due to this.
2. There may be cause for concern over the experience and skills of the current incumbent in the post of hall manager.
3. The building itself may no longer be appropriate to the range of uses which might be optimal for the requirements of the present day. In addition its age and design are problematical.
4. The current and likely future of the market for some of the facilities offered might be questionable. This must be seen in the context of the number of similar facilities in the area, such as church halls and dedicated resources like Pendrell Hall.
5. Volunteers are essential to the functioning of the village hall. There is a risk that, should the current review of finance and management be seen as applying pressure, some volunteers will withdraw.

As part of the work the PC must carry out in conjunction with the VHMC, each of the above 'barriers' will have to be addressed with the intention of defining the best solution that can be reached in the prevailing circumstances. The next stage in the process would be a meeting between representatives of the PC and the VHMC at which the above could be addressed.

Given to complexity of the problem, and the limited resources of the PC, the possibility of employing a full-time manager was considered. The cost of this was uncertain, but a figure in excess £20k p.a. was mooted. Given the likely response of existing staff and volunteers to such a change, the change would have to be implemented with care. Indeed, working with the VHMC to attempt to assure the future of the hall and the associated playing fields can only be seen as a relatively short-term activity. The meeting was concerned that, in the event of this failing to achieve a sustainable outcome during the next 6 to 9 months, there is a need, to consider alternative solutions.

### **Possible Future Developments**

Whilst the immediate problems with the village hall require urgent action, as noted above, the meeting also considered possible future developments.

There was support for a proposal to plan the removal of the Parish Council from the present location in Station Road to a new building on the site of the Village Hall. A number of variations on this proposal were considered, including;

1. Demolition of the existing, and erection of a new building which would be appropriate to current community needs, and provide a new location for the PC.
2. Incorporating a wider range of uses in the building which would be a 'Civic Centre'.

3. Facilities for users of the playing fields would, or could, be separate building(s).
4. The Wheel field could be considered for the provision of additional or alternative sports grounds.
5. In the event of a 'Civic Centre' project being evaluated with a view to development there may be the possibility of combined use by Bilbrook residents as an alternative to their existing village hall (itself in current financial difficulty) and Bilbrook Parish Council. There could be issues of public perception of this and such an arrangement would require careful presentation and subsequent management.
6. Financing all or any of the above would require investigation and realisation of a range of funding sources. This could include sale of existing sites/buildings (PC offices and, possibly, the existing Bilbrook village hall). The sale of some land to development was also seen as a means of raising funds, although was not universally accepted by the meeting.

The above is a synopsis of the matters discussed. It may not fully reflect all of the issues and options considered. In summary, the present proposition is that the process now in place should continue in the hope that a long-term improvement in the position can be achieved.

If a favourable outcome is not achieved then other courses of action, possibly including some of the alternatives listed under 'Possible Future Developments', above, may have to be considered.

It was suggested that these 'alternative' solutions may benefit from exploratory investigations at an early time, so that feasibility might be established. This could include meetings with District Council and Bilbrook Parish Council.

Matt Ewart  
23 March 2010

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24<sup>th</sup> March 2010

The meeting then discussed in some detail the 5 action points recommended in the sub-committees report, with additional support from several members to these action points.

Cllr Barrow advised the meeting that the VHMC had met with a consultant/mentor who had experience in assisting struggling village halls.

Cllrs Stovin and Michell recommend that it will undoubtedly benefit discussion if this consultant could be present at the first joint PC/VHMC meeting.

The Clerk advised that he would endeavour to arrange this meeting, if possible, for the 1st Joint Meeting, scheduled for Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March. Should it not be possible for the consultant to attend the 1st meeting, this will be re-arranged providing the delay is acceptable.

Cllr Oatley seconded by Cllr Campbell recommended adoption of the short term action program, with **Possible Future Developments** only to be considered should it become apparent that the Village Hall cannot be saved. This was unanimously endorsed by the meeting.

The Chairman Cllr Matt Ewart asked for a volunteer to lead this sub-committee in discussions with the VHMC as he had too many commitments at present, but will stay on the committee in a low profile role.

Cllr Lewis Stovin agreed to lead the sub-committee in the discussions with the VHMC and was unanimously endorsed by the meeting.

An invitation was made to any member who would like to join the sub-committee in addition to the current members. Cllr Megan Barrow agreed to join. The Chairman asked any additional volunteers to advise the Clerk accordingly.