

GOTHERINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

Extraordinary Meeting Church Building

Minutes of Extraordinary Meeting Held on 6 April 2017 at 7.30pm

Venue: Rex Rhodes Building, Gotherington.
Present: Councillor Hearn (Chairman), Councillors Sylvia Stokes, Howard Samuels, Bev Osborne, Eddie McLarnon, Rodney Churchill and Brian Cosgrove.

Attendees: Clerk/RFO, Jules Owen and 28 members of public

Minute Details

Ref.

6.4.17.1 Received and accepted apologies for absence from Cllr. Ryman.

6.4.17.2 There were no declarations of interest and chairman confirmed meeting was quorate.

Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated as he wanted to maintain complete impartiality and to enhance transparency and fairness during the meeting, he asked permission of members of the parish council to hand over to vice-chairman for the meeting.

Members agreed so chairman duly handed over to vice-chairman.

Cllr. Stokes outlined the way the meeting would proceed and then adjourned the meeting and the following questions/comments were received from members of the public:

- As Church Centre was surrounded by private land, would emergency exit be accessible?
- Precept had risen by 50% this year, big rise for those who could not afford it
- 2 or 3 people at Coffee Morning had completed survey form anonymously and hoped these had been included in results?
- Survey form did not state 'only one survey form per household'
- Car parking – what would expectation be if project went ahead?
- Survey form did not give an alternative i.e. war memorial
- Passionate supporter was very keen to list past uses including lunches, coffee mornings, remembrance services - iconic building
- Church is willing to give one third of cost – funding will be withdrawn if building is not bought or is knocked down
- Someone living in Long Furlong Lane reported no-one collected her survey form
- With regard to parking, when parking for village hall, often if there was something happening on Freeman Field you could not park anywhere near village hall, you had to park near Shutters Inn. At Church Centre you would be able to take a disabled person and they would only have to walk a very short distance to go in – at village hall you would not get anywhere near the entrance and that had a car park!
- It would be prudent to think ahead and recognise the expansion of the village during the next 5-7 years and more pressure on public

buildings – if you waited 5 or 6 years the opportunity would not be there

- Who will use the Church Centre? Village Hall had plenty of availability and RRB had plenty of evening availability
- People would not walk there and with no parking, it was an issue
- What was the mandate to undertake the work?
- If it went ahead, it should be at least 50% in favour of the initiate
- Survey should be in inhabitants and not per household, it should be a transparent initiative, a rigorous process
- Concerned about the costs – Grand Designs always overran. If PC thought it was confident, PC as individuals should underwrite anything over budget
- 50.7% increase in Precept was notable. Being able to afford it did not mean it should go ahead
- Scare tactics being used – what if PC did not take it on? He did not think it was worth saving
- PC Should have asked for comments from people who were not in favour
- Supporter had made a list of it's previous uses by villagers which included film shows, concerts etc. all who had walked there

6.4.17.3

Cllr. Cosgrove gave the result of the survey:

226 responses received back

148 for Yes to buy and content to pay

9 for Yes to buy but not content to pay

61 for No

8 unattributed – 6 No, 2 Yes

Overall numbers was

- 70.8% Positive
- 20.9% No

Total number of returns 51% returns

Cllr. Cosgrove gave a presentation based on a report which had been circulated to parish councillors prior to the meeting.

Cllr. Cosgrove stated he was asked to speak to the Trustees who originally approached the Parish Council, to negotiate the price.

He had addressed the following six points:

1. to examine the extent of the works required - Alderman King had been employed to carry out a survey
2. to negotiate the price – Trustees confirmed happy to accept a payment over 2 years
3. to identify potential building companies who may be suitable to do the work – very specialised work. They have had 3 quotes, all very extensive quotes – includes 15% contingency
4. Asked to find potential uses for the building – Cllr. Osborne will do this later
5. to find how we can fund it? PWLB provides loans is available if we wish to go ahead
6. Finally, what do the village think? Hence the survey

Cllr. Cosgrove confirmed he had done all six items but still a lot more to be done having completed them did not mean the parish council would go ahead but they can proceed to the next step. Also, cash flow could not be completed until an 'in principal decision' was made.

Total costs circa £150,000

If the parish council borrowed £100,000 via PWLB the impact for band D

properties would be an increase of £11.48 per year.

Cllr. Stokes gave some background information with regard to the precept: Alderton which had 5 parish councillors, last years precept was £10,300 this year increased to £13,000

Gotherington which had 9 parish councillors, last years precept was reduced to £8,000, probably unwisely, having been £12,000 for many years.

This year, we found many things we had to pay that TBC no longer funded so we had to increase back to £12,000 again.

Cllrs. Osborne and McLarnon both commented on the expansion of the village in the coming years and lack of scope for a new village hall, pointing out this could be the only option. Also the fact that in 1964 the parish council purchased the Freeman Field using public money, further highlighting the responsibility of the parish council to plan for the future.

Cllr. Hearn stated the advice on the emergency existing emergency exit is adequate and would limit number to 66 people. Also confirmed survey form was 'one per household' as rates were paid per household and not per person and also it would not need change of use as it had D1 classification.

Cllr. Stokes asked for questions/comments from councillors not in working group.

Cllr. Churchill stated that he thought the extra facilities would be good for the community but felt there was still a lot of risks with funding and the build, would need to move forward in a very managed way.

Cllr. Samuels stated an income plan was required as on day one receipts would not be there, indeed not until much later. Cllr. Cosgrove stated that with a project of this size you have to take expert opinion and also look over a five year period, he gave the Shutters as an example.

Cllr. Samuels also asked if the project used S106 funding and the building was later sold, would the parish council have to repay the S106 monies? Cllr.

Cosgrove did not know the answer and would need to check.

Cllr. Stokes was concerned that if the cost to buy is £150,000 and the proposed loan is £100,000 where would the difference come from?

Cllr. Cosgrove explained it would be staged payments and that he is working on detailed cash flows for £100,000 with Cllr. Ryman.

He also confirmed the details of PWLB – rate of interest is 2.19% fixed for 20 years. Depending on interest rates applicable at the time it would be possible that early partial / full repayment could be made without any penalty. It would be estimated that a rise of 1% in interest rates would trigger the 'no penalty' benefit.

Member of public stated PC should allow £10,000 for legal fees and project manager.

Cllr. Stokes reassured a member of the public that if the project did go ahead the village would have four community buildings – all unique buildings with different characters and offering different facilities.

We should be responsible as to how the village would look in five years time with new residents.

A representative from PCC stated that when they moved out of Church Centre they removed a very large TV screen and it would be returned to Church Centre and could be used for lectures, talks, film shows, cinema club etc.

A member of public raised question of grants and Cllr. Cosgrove asked anyone with information about grants to contact him directly.

A member of public asked if he was confident in employing a building firm

and how he would guard against them going bankrupt

Cllr. Cosgrove confirmed parish council would guard against this.

A resident pointed out there were no new residents at the meeting but councillors confirmed new houses were to be built and also they would be wrong to consider age of village is getting older – Brownie Pack had waiting list and Freeman Field is always busy.

Cllr. Osborne also confirmed that she was regularly turning away bookings for the village hall and people did not want to book RRB.

Cllr. Stokes stated there was a feeling in the village and parish council that it was right to buy the Church Centre but it did not mean the parish council would buy it, they would need more information before proceeding.

Cllr. Stokes concluded that with over 50% return of the survey form and over 70% in favour of Church Centre she therefore made the following proposal:

To approve the acquisition of the Church Centre by the parish council provided that more financial information, cash flow forecasts, funding time line, S106 funding information and a comprehensive breakdown of expenditure along with risks issue and the associate mitigation to cover the overall project and works, are made available.

It was agreed.

Meeting closed at: 9.00pm

Chairman

Signed

Date