

Minutes Buxted Parish Council Working Party: Reading Room/Village Hall ideas

Wednesday 5th February at 19:30 in the Reading Room

Back in 2009 the PC decided not to build a new hall but to facilitate the project as far as possible. We originally had Stepping-Stones preschool on board but when WDC objected to the size of the original hall the separate preschool element was dropped. Recently Stepping-Stones preschool (Buxted) has closed so circumstances do change, and we could have been left with a huge space not being used.

No decision is required this evening, but we need to discuss all options. There was considerable opposition to new hall in recent years. This may have been caused by some users of Reading Room believing that the existing facilities were better than the proposed new one. Some groups spearheaded new hall, but the Buxted Players were not keen when it became apparent that a fixed stage wasn't included, although plans were mentioned for a moveable one. A decision was made not to design the hall with any one group in mind.

1 Keep the current Reading Room

- 1.1 Decide what we want out of the space
- 1.2 Engage architect to make best use of available space (fund out of reserves)
- 1.3 Costs and how to pay for refurbishment?
- 1.4 Will we have users to generate enough income for hall to be viable
- 1.5 Do minimal changes to keep building standing. Some currently in hand

Fiona said she has had a change of heart as she was in favour of new hall but now erring on side of keeping the Reading Room as it is clear that no one wants the hall we have permission for and therefore it would mean building more on Ionides/recreation site and there is no demand for a larger hall.

There are several halls within the parish (lots of small halls) that are not overused. The existing RR loses money and therefore what proof is there a new hall would be used?

David is fond of the RR and says it works well from a small group perspective, but it would also work well if it had some outdoor space. So, limited as to what it can be used for. Works as a standard village hall, but is this what you want? There is a hall for everything in the parish, but not a hall for everyone. However, none of that provides a sense of community.

Vivienne - That was the original idea to provide a Heart of Buxted. It was the right idea, right location but people didn't buy into it.

Is there any appetite for a new hall? We are not aware that there is. David agrees that purely looking at a village hall, there is no point in building a new village hall for the sake of moving what we have to another site (although the alternative site is better).

Peter – has attended an event at Withyham which has a very busy small village hall. Every society takes on various events to support the hall within the community. You need people within the village to drive this.

No point in building a replacement for RR – only worth it if it is bigger and provides for all, but would that be to the detriment to of the smaller halls within the parish?

David said that Plumpton Village Hall is much larger within a relatively small community.

2 Demolish the Reading Room

- 2.1 Demolish and sell on to developer. Use other halls within the village envelope
- 2.2 This would require dialogue with the other hall owners to find out whether there is enough space without a Reading Room
- 2.3 Bank funds for the eventual replacement of a hall

Fiona – would probably upset a lot of people.

David – the Horticultural Society and he is sure others would have no interest in using any other hall other than the RR.

NOT IN FAVOUR – UNLESS THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE IN PLACE

3 Is there anyone within the Village Framework willing/able to build a new hall? Location?

3.1 Is there the demand/need?

3.2 Problems lack of interest and engagement

3.3 Costs, wherever and whatever form the building takes, mainly due to site restrictions.

BCHT – could not find others to take over so there appears not to be a 'will' for people to help.

Toby – got to bear in mind that over next 10 years that the village will probably grow by 10% - therefore do we need a larger venue given the increasing size of the village? He can see benefits and disadvantages in any option. If we go for the new hall option, we have to be realistic that it will have to be led by the Parish Council.

Vivienne – we will have an expanding village. We also have a perfect location of the Scout Hut. We could work with the Scouts and Football Club to provide a new facility on the Ionides site. Potentially

What are our purposes? RR is a village asset. There is no desire for a new hall and no push for one. Hadlow Down have outline planning permission for a new sports facility.

So, the purpose of a new hall is to provide an improved facility.

4 Local consultations

4.1 Liaison with Scouts to ascertain their possible expansion plans

4.2 Talks with Hadlow Down to see how practicable/feasible their plans for a Sports Hall are progressing

4.3 How do we present our initial thoughts to the wider public and current and potential user groups?

More in favour of keeping the RR than providing a new hall.

In conclusion, it would appear that there is no drive at the current time from the community to build a larger facility within the village. For ten years there was a possibility of building a new hall but, for various reasons, some outlined, it appears there is not enough community support to build a new hall. The parish council have an asset which we should update to the best of its potential and market It accordingly.

KEEP THE READING ROOM AND IMPROVE FACILITIES

Need to be creative with what we do with the RR.

Action:

- contact current clubs for wish list
- Annual Assembly in May at which the new and improved RR could be presented
- Create a leaflet questionnaire to be delivered to all properties in Buxted Village together with the same questions on an online survey via Survey Monkey.
- Ask previous users and see if they would use again and what would improve facility.
- What should it be called? It is currently known as the RR – should it be called Buxted Village Hall?
- Need to buy the domain name of Buxted Village Hall that diverts to RR page on website.