

New Clenchwarton Village Hall Review

January 2020

For Clenchwarton Parish Council

Preamble

I would like to start this review by thanking all the people who have spent time talking to me and providing paperwork to help me understand how, when and why this project has progressed over a very long period of time. I would also like to make it clear that I attach no criticism to any of the bodies or people involved whom have all given up a considerable amount of their own free time and effort to try to move this project forward.

A project of this size should have generated a lot of traceable evidence which in part I have been unable to source. This is due to several natural changes of personnel on committees, not having one person having the sole responsibility to coordinate the administration and once again the length that this project has been running.

I started by researching what other villages of a similar size to Clenchwarton had in terms of assets and how they used them. Both Watlington and West Winch have a village hall larger than the Memorial Hall and each hall seems to be used by a greater number of people and from more diverse groups.

Watlington's activities include, Short Mat Bowls, Badminton, Under 5's, Women's Institute (WI), Wednesday Club, Watlington Players, The School of Dance and events are organised by various groups including Bingo, Quiz Nights and a Community Cafe.

West Winch lists the following, Pre-school in mornings, Badminton Club, Ballroom Dancing, Barney's Indoor Flying, Bounce & Burn, Each For All (Over 60s) Club, The Arts Society, Model Car Club, Short Mat Bowls and Thai Chi classes.

The big difference between these two villages and Clenchwarton appears to be the Pre-school. At Watlington it has its own space and at West Winch it is mornings only therefore only allowing for more community events to take place in the afternoon or evenings.

Time Line for Proposed New Village Hall in Clenchwarton

2006

- Nov
 - Plans passed by West Norfolk Council to redevelop the pavilion

2014

- Parish council sets up working party to look at a new pavilion and the role of the Memorial Hall
- September
 - Old 2006 plans were discussed,
 - Possibility of increasing the size of the meeting room
 - Leave the pre-school in the Memorial Hall
- Nov
 - Tim Wall (funding consultant) engaged
- Dec
 - Questionnaire for clubs and groups in the village

2016

- May
 - Another Questionnaire for clubs, organisations and groups.
 - Discussions with Fosters developers over funding
 - CCP to apply for Charity Status
- June
 - Public meeting
 - Fosters developers decline to help with funding
- August
 - Updated business plan, sport/football biased to attract grant from Football association

2017

- Jan
 - Memorial Hall valued at £175 000 to £200 000
 - Parish Council give go ahead for project
 - Outline plans to architect
- Feb
 - Original cost of £950 000 too expensive so plans reworked to get to £650 000
- March
 - move to planning phase
- May
 - Parish meeting plans shown and explained
 - Cost to organise tenders and supervise the build approx. £24 000
- September
 - Planning permission granted (Runs out September 2020)
- November
 - Bowls club questioned lack of own space
 - Parking was mentioned as a concern
 - Some issues over the design

2018

- July
 - T Wall Possible £200 000 grant from Football Association with requirements to introduce one team a year for 5 years
 - Sport England funding dependant on matched funding (Memorial Hall to be put on market)

2019

- Jan
 - Public started to raise issue with the plans
- June
 - Updated Business plan
 - Inspection report on the pavilion

Existing Buildings

Pavilion

The pavilion is an old single brick built building which according to a structural report in 2019 would be cheaper to replace than carry out the maintenance required. Some of these issues have been caused by the lack of maintenance over a period of time, may be as far back as 2006 when planning permission was granted for a new pavilion.

Memorial Hall

The hall is in good condition if not a little dated in places but there is a problem with the roof. In general it appears to be adequate if not ideal for its current use. There are funds of £23 000 in the bank so there appears to be no reason in terms of its structure, why it cannot continue fulfilling its present role in the village. The main issue with the hall is the lack of parking.

Parish Office

This has now been condemned and needs replacing, ideally a permanent building is required preferably not taking up parking spaces at the memorial hall.

Public Involvement

The amount of public involvement in this project is sketchy. While there appears to have been 2 questionnaires 18 months apart, they only appear to have been sent to clubs, organisations and groups in the village. There is no record of the questions asked or the results obtained from them. There is no reference in subsequent minutes of the results driving the decision making process.

Several public open meetings were held but were very poorly attended or not attended at all by the public until after the plans had been passed, which was a little late to influence the decisions that had been made.

For a project of this size and cost to the community it is reasonable to suggest that the important decisions such as including a new hall in the plans and selling off assets would have been made after a fully documented consultation.

Pre-School

The Pre-School is a great asset to the village but using the Memorial Hall does have its issues for both them and the community as a whole. Wrong size toilets, inadequate kitchen facilities and the need to put all the equipment away most days so the hall can be used in the evenings are issues.

As far as the community is concerned this means that the hall is not available for other activities during the day time. As the village has an ageing demographic this is not ideal for helping villagers deal with isolation, lack of inclusion and loneliness often made worse by living in a rural community.

Moving to the new build will solve some of the Pre-School's problems (i.e. the bathroom and kitchen facilities) but not the need to clear up every day but it will also not release the full space for other

activities during the day time. It also has added costs to the new build such as an acoustic folding wall and an extra kitchen & refreshment area.

They will also need a secure outdoor area at the front of the building with storage space (sheds) for their equipment which may spoil the appearance of the new building and has not been included in the plans or costed

The idea of leaving the Pre-school in the Memorial Hall was mentioned once in the minutes (2014) but was never mentioned again. As we are developing assets for the village, was the idea of leaving the Pre-school in the Memorial Hall ever practically considered or the possibility of keeping the Memorial Hall as a community venue and building a new Pre-school attached to the Sports Pavilion therefore reducing the cost of the new build?.

Business Plan

Although the business plan was updated in June 2019 there are some sections which are not up to date. It is however important to remember that a business plan is required to attract funding from outside agencies and therefore is written to highlight areas these organisations focus on.

Sections of the report that are out of date:

- Income and expenditure (running costs) are missing
- Depreciation figures are from 2010
- Management Committee does not fully represent the whole community
- A list of clubs organisations who may use the facilities
- NEET figures from 2011

Finance

If it is thought to be desirable to build a new village hall, then it does make sense financially to build it at the same time as the new pavilion saving money. Although not supported by documentation I think this was a major factor in including a new hall in the plans.

Cost of building

The Business plan quotes the estimated cost of the new building will be £672,450 including all professional fees and excluding VAT. These figures are according to Ian Bix Associates, are estimates and not calculated by a Quantity Surveyor. They are based on a general equation relating costs to the size of the building. I believe the middle value was used although there is no documentation to support this.

Jordan Trundle of Bix's has also suggested that the costs will have risen by more than 10% since getting planning permission. This would make the new estimated building costs approximately £700,000

The original figures (New figures in brackets) are further broken down as:

- Main Hall £223,750 (£246,000)
- 2 x Changing Rooms plus Officials Room and Medical Room £222,500 (£245,000)
- Pre-School Room, Kitchen, Toilets and Clerks Office £192,500 (£212,000)

Capital Building Costs Total £638,750 (£703,000)

Fees:

- Funding Consultant Fees £5,000
- Project Architect Fees Excl. VAT £20,110
- Statutory Consents and Exclusions £8,590

Fees Total £33,700 (these should have already been paid)

The following organisations have agreed to contribute:

- Clenchwarton Football Club £5,000
- Clenchwarton Pre-School £2,000
- Parish Council £12,000

Total £19,000

Funding

The worst case scenario although very unlikely is that the village will have to pay for the whole project. This would have to be funded by a loan from the Government and paid back via the Community Charge.

Below is the estimated cost of borrowing £700 000 based on a Band D property. Other Band properties would be proportional.

Time of Loan (Years)	Cost for Band D property per year
50	£42
25	£59

Memorial Hall

If a new hall is built and it is thought that the village does not need 2 similar assets it makes sense to sell the Memorial Hall to reduce the amount the village will have to fund. It has now been on the market for about 8 months but with very little interest shown.

It cannot be sold until a replacement space is available which may put potential buyers off until it is fully available.

If the Memorial is sold for £175 000 then the yearly costs are reduced to:

Time of Loan (Years)	Cost for Band D property per year
50	£32
25	£45

Grants

Applying for grants means meeting the criteria of the particular organisation we are applying to. In this case the bias towards sporting activities is because these are the organisations most likely at the present time to award us a grant. The Football Association is still very keen to support the project. Other areas are possible including grants for Social Inclusion, rural issues etc., but a lot of these need an application before the project has been started and do not have large amounts to give away.

One example of jumping through hoops is Sport England who require evidence of matched funding and therefore asked for the Memorial Hall to be put on the market to show the village's commitment to the project. This does not mean we have to sell the Memorial Hall, as we can match funding in other ways (i.e. by getting a loan).

If the current plan goes ahead it is reasonable to assume that grants will be available therefore reducing the amount the villagers will have to contribute, but they may not always be available so timing is important.

If grants of £300 000 are awarded (very probably based on existing plan) then this would reduce the cost to a Band D property to:

Time of Loan (Years)	Cost for Band D property per year
50	£25
25	£34

Financial Conclusion.

Like most things these projects often come down to money. All the big and little issues that parishioners are concerned about such as parking and selling the Memorial Hall can be solved at a cost.

It is important to realise that at certain stages of a project of this nature all the costs are estimates and there are no certainties until the project is completed. So focusing on the costs too much may stop the village getting the facilities it needs.

Conclusion

The time this project has been underway has not helped the process. Every delay costs money and over a period of time situations change.

On a project of this size and importance to the village as a whole, it is vital that the majority of the village supports it. I am not sure if this issue has ever been resolved and if it has, no records of the result exist as it was a long time ago.

We do need to build a new Pavilion. The old one will become a drain on the Parish's resources, our youngsters deserve better facilities and grants are available to offset the cost to the village.

Some questions the village need to consider:

- Do we need a new village hall?
- Do we want to grow the facilities in the village?
- Is the village willing to pay for them?
- Do we need separate facilities for the Pre-school so other activities can take place during the day?
 - Stay in the Memorial Hall?
 - Build a new single use space for the pre-school the pavilion?

I have tried very hard to be as unbiased as a person can be when writing this review but there may be evidence out there which I have failed to uncover but it is not for the want of trying. If you feel there are any errors please email me as it is very important that the next decisions are made quickly but based on knowledge and with the input of all the people in Clenchwarton having a chance to have an opinion.

Richard Moate

Jan 2020