

HCCT

Executive Meeting 4 .4 24

Agenda Item 8

Marketing/Fundraising Initiatives

The Future of the Complex: a Forward Plan

Discussion Note

Introduction: The management of the complex on behalf of the community is a relatively major undertaking, and the Treasurer's report clearly sets out the scale of finances involved. It is essential, therefore, that this is run on a sound, commercial, business like basis. In his report on financial delegations the Treasurer states: "*Whilst our financial footing is OK, it is by no means secure.*" We should heed this as a timely reminder not to become complacent.

This Note is designed to stimulate discussion, and to identify further areas for investigation. It, quite deliberately, does not recommend at this stage specific actions: these will flow from further research.

Hall Utilisation: Analysis of usage throughout March, a typical month, reveals the following % of usage against a benchmark of 100%, that being full bookings for three sessions (mornings, afternoons and evenings, 7 days /week):

- GPH - 48 %
- P.R. - 38%
- O.S. - 13% N.B. This also houses the HPC Parish Office but this is only used two mornings a week and on other one off occasions.

Clearly 100% occupancy or anywhere near it would be unrealistic, but this analysis demonstrates the extent of underutilisation particularly of the Old School even though this has been extensively modernised and available for use for the last three months. Keeping this under critical review for, say, the next quarter would help inform our future thinking.

Marketing: The Website is informative and easily accessible although the Old School entry needs to be updated (new photo). The quarter page entry in the Village Link (P 36) is stale and would benefit from more creative and imaginative redrafting.

We have, potentially, three discrete markets: a) Local users both regular, e.g. Community Café, and occasional e.g. parties; b) Corporate Users, e.g. NHS, and c) External occasional users. Each category requires a separate approach to marketing which we need to develop.

We are also in competition, especially for corporate or external users, with other village halls in the locality, namely: Minsterworth, Maisemore, and Hartpury, each of which have excellent facilities, are easily accessible and who market their availability widely. We should undertake discreet market research to ensure our offer is sufficiently attractive; our facilities comparable; and our hiring rates competitive.

What more do we need to do to ensure we maintain comparability and to make potential new users aware of our facilities?

Capex/Future Projects: It is essential that we keep ahead of the game by ensuring the facilities continue to be fit for purpose, attractive to users, and meet future needs and demands. The following identifies a handful of projects we may wish to explore:

- *Modernisation(possible replacement?) of Kitchen and Toilet block flat roof extension to the Parish Room* – Surface mould requires regular treatment; structural cracks to external walls have needed attention in the past ; the kitchen space is cramped; the fixed facilities would benefit from modernisation/replacement ; and the space generally presents an unattractive entrance to the building.
- *Landscaping of Grass Areas either side of the Gambier Parry Hall:* - These provide potentially attractive “overspill “spaces to all three halls for use when weather conditions permit. Whilst a number of wooden tables have been provided, there is scope to undertake judicious landscaping and provision of more modern “pub garden “furniture (Tables; chairs, umbrellas etc.).
- *Reconfiguration of Gambier Parry Hall* – This building was poorly designed: the acoustics are not conducive for musical or dramatic use; the stage is rarely used and presents a wasted space; the kitchen is too small; there is no proper bar facility; and equipment storage is inconvenient.
- *Projection/ screen facilities for Old School:* - These were removed when the building was refurbished.

Doubtless there are other projects we may wish to consider, but each one of the above represents a body of work we may decide to pursue. Perhaps an initial phase 1 feasibility assessment of each of these projects would help us to determine our priorities and those which would be realistic to pursue.

Sources of Funding: - The refurbishment of the Old School demonstrated both the challenges involved, which should not be under estimated, in securing capital funding but also the sheer scale of potential sources on money which is available for exploitation should we decide to be radical, bold, forward thinking , and imaginative in our ambitions. Sound, well prepared business cases are essential to get us ahead of the game as most funding is now only available on a competitive bidding basis and often requires some degree of match funding. The reality, especially for Govt funded schemes, is that there is usually very notice of funding availability which would necessitate us having projects “oven ready “for submission. If we don’t we will miss out. The following briefly summarises by way of example some of the current sources of capital grants. Whilst time constraints may preclude us from taking advantage of some of them , future opportunities will arise from time to time which we need to be alert to. Details of any of these funding programmes can be circulated should we decide to look into them further:

- *Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Improvement Programme* - The previous programme provided a major source of funding for the first phase of work on the Old School. It will be sponsored by DEFRA and administered nationally by the GRCC

(Gloucestershire Rural Community Council). Its launch date has not been announced but should be imminent.

- *TBC Energy Efficiency for Community Buildings Fund* - £300,000 is available across the Borough for suitable projects.
- *UK Shared Prosperity Fund* – Sponsored by the Dept. of levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The Barnwood Trust and the Bernard Sunley Foundation (previous funders for the O.S project) both provide grant aid for community building schemes.

The Future of the Complex/ A Forward Plan – A new Board armed with fresh ideas and enthusiasm provides an ideal opportunity to creatively think outside the box and plan for the medium to long term future of the complex. The following briefly summarises some of the factors which may influence our thinking:

- The Parish Council will soon decide whether to prepare a new Neighbourhood Development Plan. In any event it would be instructive to undertake a review of that whole quarter of the village incorporating the Church and Churchyard, Cricket ground, adjoining woodland area, and car parking areas, together with the Community Complex itself. **With common chairmanship of both bodies, it would be an ideal chance to work collaboratively in partnership on this.**
- Since the GPH was opened a further 88 houses have been built in Lassington Reach, plus an additional 95 which will be built in the next two years. This will increase the population of the village by @ 600 taking it up to @2,500. There is a possibility over the next 10 years that more development will take place. Can the existing facilities cope with this, and how do we promote the availability of the halls to new residents?
- Costs, especially energy, will increase. Can we become more energy efficient?
- The lease of the Parish Room from the Fenton Estate expires in 2050. Will we wish to extend this? Will the Estate be willing to do so? Now would be none too soon to open a dialogue on this.
- The Church have previously intimated an interest in using the building for more arts and culturally based functions. Does this open up opportunities to use the halls for ancillary purposes (catering etc.)?
- It is probable that financial pressures will increasingly cause corporate users to review their use of external spaces for events. How do we plan for the possible fall in income this would create?
- HPC are increasingly concerned about speed and road safety generally on the B4215 through the village and have set up a working group to look into ways in which this can be best addressed. Foot access, especially for unaccompanied children, to the complex is dangerous. Does this impede usage of the facilities?
- Car parking, particularly when all three halls plus the church and cricket ground are in use, is problematic.
- If usage of the Old School continues to be very low does this provide an opportunity to think about using it in different ways, e.g. Drop in facility for business use for home workers; managed space for corporate bodies etc. commercial lettings (The

Doctors' Surgery was previously accommodated here before the new Surgery was built in Lassington Lane); catering facilities?

Charlie Coats Chair: HCCT