



**Farrington  
Village Hall**

## **Report From the Second General Meeting** **Sun 25<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

Held at all Saints Church, Upper Farrington 14.30 -15.30

Hosted by the trustees. **Andy Clegg** (Chair), **John Hustler** (Treas), **John Cavendish**, **Penny Cushing**, **Sally Ravenhill**, **John Constable** (Sec). Apologies from **Sonia Ranger**.

The Trustees were very encouraged by the good turnout despite the foul weather. 35 members attended which was an excellent number. Twelve others gave apologies and would have attended if circumstances had permitted. This means a third of the membership were both aware of the meeting and interested enough in the project to be there or to make contact.

**Andy Clegg** Welcomed everyone who attended and introduced the six trustees present.

### **Key Messages from the trustees:**

#### **1. Update on Progress – Andy Clegg.**

***Purchase of Land.*** At the inaugural General Meeting in March 24 a show of hands endorsed the Trustees' intent to exercise the option to buy the Marelands site for £100,000 before it expired. This was completed in May 24.

***Planning Application.*** The trustees had been frustrated by the approach and delay on the part of EHDC/ SDNP after it had taken over two and half years to obtain planning permission. The trust had been obliged to undertake dormouse and slowworm surveys, and was forced to repeat the dormouse survey at the trust's expense. Furthermore EHDC/SDNP required us to reduce the size of the main hall to accommodate 120 people seated. Planning permission was finally granted in Nov 24 for a smaller but still usable VH. We now have three years to start work and have agreed the initial work to ensure the planning permission does not lapse.

#### ***Treasurer's report: the Trust's financial position – John Hustler***

The Treasurer explained that the Trust started with £300k of which approx. £100k has been spent on the option, legal costs to set up a Charitable Incorp Org and to undertake the conveyancing and registration of title. The Trust has £200k remaining which we believe will be sufficient to pay for the planning and work required by the conditions attached to planning permission, e.g. surface water run off survey, highway access permission and construction.

The Trust's money is now held with the Charities Aid Foundation Bank, in an account paying approx. 4% interest.

## **2. Planning application: approval with conditions, and build cost estimates (Sally Ravenhill)**

Sally was a surveyor and a planning officer in her working life, she gave an update on the grant of planning permission with conditions attached. She explained that some of the conditions were non-contentious and normally attached to any new build. Others were unrealistically restrictive of what the village would want from its VH, particularly relating to the time at which the events would need to finish of an evening and the hall would need to be closed by: unreasonably early compared to the pub and neighbouring hall. It would even preclude the hall being used for Parish Council meetings. With our architects, More Webb, we have prepared and will submit a section 73 request to amend the “closing time” condition.

The trustees engaged a firm of quantity surveyors to advise on the build cost for the hall itself, landscaping and access road construction. The total figure was £1.5m. Of this approx. £800k would be needed for building the hall itself.

The site is not currently within the settlement boundary – although still bounded on three sides by land which is. This has implications for its use as development land and its value.

## **3. Potential funding routes (Penny Cushing)**

Fundraising: the Trustees have already identified a number of possible trusts and donors which have in the past funded charities with similar objectives to our own or have local connections. The National Council on Voluntary Organisations Directory for Social Change is being used in the search.

The message for members is that we would need to generate significantly sized grants and donations; small fundraising activities would not be able to generate the sums required. We hope to work with Farringdon residents who have relevant abilities or experience to strengthen our skill base.

## **4. External interest (John Cavendish/John Constable)**

John Constable and John Cavendish informed the meeting that the trustees have received approaches from potential developers who might be interested in a small housing development on that part of the Marelands site not required for the VH. Discussions are at a very early stage but there could be potential for financial contribution and access to expertise during the VH build process. We are mindful of the impact on the village of any additional housing and would only consider working with a developer who planned a small number of units which would bring community benefit. This needs to be viewed in the context of the current national debate surrounding government building targets. Being outside the settlement boundary makes it less easy to get planning approval for housing, but the targets for new housing numbers given to East Hampshire District Council are much higher than previously anticipated so EHDC will be looking for development potential to make a contribution to the numbers of units they are required to provide.

## **5. Request for expertise and help (John Constable)**

The Trust secretary reiterated the immediate and ongoing need for a webmaster/member communications manager, perhaps a recent retiree who has web design and social media interest and some expertise.

We are also looking for volunteers to inform fund raising and business planning. Now the trust has planning permission we need to develop our fundraising strategy, and then start raising money.

## 6. Open Forum and Q and A

- ***What is the impact of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) ?*** (Andy Partridge).

As a community resource, there is a nil CIL charge on the village hall. We are investigating what grants are available. Some years ago there was a grant of approx. £39,000 to the Parish Council, then the Trustee of the original village hall Charity. This was to fit out the kitchen, and might still be available in the future. It might also be possible to get some money from the new solar farm, but probably not until 2027

- ***Questions and observations regarding fundraising:*** *Mike Law said it seemed no work had been done on funding he expressed concern on what seemed to him a lack of activity, were there any ideas on fundraising? David Telford said that fundraising would be better than funding via development as this would be more complex and slow the project down. Would we consider crowdfunding? (Lorraine Law). Could we approach local farmers for donations? (Hopper Cavendish). "Buy a brick" raising money within the village (David Horton). Some fund/grant applications can be made successfully and quickly in weeks rather than months (Chris Maughan).*

**In response to the funding questions,** the trustees explained:

- Whilst fund raising had not started the trustees have been exploring all possible funding strategies, and this now includes considering the possibility of funding from a developer/partner. If the Charity decides to adopt development on the site, this should not be either/or: there is nothing to prevent us fundraising to complete the project as soon as possible.
- Andy Clegg said that now the original business model is 4 years old and needs to be revised. Penny Cushing said it is likely we will need to use a professional fundraiser but work has already started to identify sources of funding.
- We do believe that there could well be merit in utilising crowdfunding and indeed "buy a brick" type fundraising, or seeking sponsorship for specific items like a projector or crowdfunding as part of the fundraising strategy. It is unlikely to be a major source of funds for the build itself because this is a small village (650 residents).
- In relation to faster grants/donation some trust funds work on a funding round or time limited applications system which could be to our advantage.
- A group of trustees and member volunteers who have aptitudes in this field will be drawn together to develop a fund-raising strategy and begin work on it. The fundraising ideas put forward above will all be considered as part of the strategy.
- ***Village Hall opening times (the planning conditions).***  
*What will be the impact of having housing on the hall opening times (Grace Clegg).  
What are Chawton's opening hours (Annabel Partridge). Might we consider some*

*form of reciprocal arrangement with Chawton? (Lorraine Law). Would it help to know the opening hours of the old village hall? (David Horton).*

**In response**

- Most likely that any housing would come after or at the same time as the hall so would not prejudice more reasonable opening hours.
- Penny Cushing has researched the opening hours of all VHs in the surrounding area including Chawton, and these have been include in the s.73 application to amend prepared by Sally Ravenhill. When the hall is constructed there will be a degree of competition with Chawton VH, so a reciprocal arrangement with Chawton would seem unlikely.
- John Constable now holds all the archive material on Massey’s Folly so will look for information on the village hall opening hours when it was located within the Folly.
- ***Is the hall going to be big enough for future village needs?*** (Jane Edwards). Morse Webbs’s original plan (now reduced in size to meet the objections of the planning authority) had an additional part which in future could be revisited. Ramsdell Village is a similar hall, designed by the same architect. An end wall of that VH is built in a way which would allow it to be removed so the main hall to be extended. The initial build for that hall included laying the foundations for a future extension, which were then covered until such time as needed. John Cavendish stressed that future-proofing would come at a cost. Photos of Ramsdell village Hall were available to be examined, and the Trustees will be organising a visit.
- ***Questions submitted prior to the meeting.*** *When the building work for the Village Hall commences what will be the times of day and days of the week the builders will work e.g. noise pollution? What will be the Village Hall working/opening hours and the cut off be for events? Will you need a licence for such events? Will the Village Hall be hired out for events every weekend? Will there be security lights on all night, will there access to the village hall 24/7 or will gates locked and access denied when not in use?* (Sarah and Charles Farquhar).

**In response**

- As we are some way off starting to build, many of these points regarding the build process have yet to be considered but will certainly be addressed with contractors before any building work starts. We are mindful of the concerns of those who will be neighbours of the village hall. If our application to vary the times of opening of the village hall is successful and once the hall is operational, we will set hours of opening in accordance with the planning permission that we are granted. We have looked at the online booking systems of neighbouring village halls from which we can see that it is extremely unlikely there would be extended hours every weekend or anything like it. A little further down the line we will ask the architects to consider the question of security lighting, gates and access.

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We thank our members for their participation and contribution, and encourage continued questions, ideas and - hopefully -practical support. Since the meeting we have received

offers from volunteers to help with IT, advice on planning and help with fundraising and an overall business plan.

**Please come forward if you have time and the expertise to help.**

**Thank you**