

LOWER HEYFORD PARISH COUNCIL

VILLAGE HALL RELOCATION COMMITTEE

The Inaugural Meeting of the Village Hall Relocation Committee of Lower Heyford Parish Council was held on Thursday 8th June 2006 starting at 7.00pm in the Village Hall.

Present:

Mr Alan Humberstone	(Chairman of the Council)	(see Min 1. below)
Mrs Robin Hepworth	(Chairman of the Committee)	(see Min 2. below)
Mrs Denise Ball	(LHPC/VHMC)	
Mr Anthony Alder	(PFMC/S&S Club)	
Mr Jim Cheesman	(Independent)	
Mr Laurie Fray	(VHMC)	
Mr David Nesbitt	(Mill Lane Residents)	
Mr John Varney	(PFMC/S&S Club)	
Ms Susan White	(Independent)	
Mr Roger Bowen	(Clerk)	

3 members of the public

The Clerk explained that only Members of the Council had a vote and that it would be not be legally possible to hold a meeting with less than 2 Members of the Council present.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE The Chairman of the Council took the Chair and the Clerk advised of apologies received from Councillors Dick Makepeace (CDC) and Tim Hallchurch (OCC) and RH advised of an apology from the Rev Heather Parbury, who had been intending to attend as a member of the public.
2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN DB nominated RH who agreed to accept the position and took the Chair, after which AH left the table but remained in attendance for the rest of the meeting. The Clerk advised that it was not legally necessary to appoint a Vice-Chairman and that in this case it was clear that DB would fulfil the function
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST The Clerk explained that this was applicable to Council Members only and DB declared a personal interest as required by her registered interest of being the Council's representative on the VHMC. It was agreed to note this interest would pertain throughout the life of the Committee so long as the VHMC continued to exist.
4. MANDATE It was noted that the Council had given the Committee executive powers to take all necessary decisions in connection with the provision of a replacement village hall as a consequence of the sale of the existing.
5. SALE OF EXISTING VILLAGE HALL It was noted for information that at this late stage it had been realised the original conveyance of the land by Corpus Christi College had contained a covenant restricting use to that of the purpose of a village hall only and the Clerk advised that he had been unable to ascertain any progress from the VHMC's solicitor in the matter of seeking release from this covenant. There was some discussion about this unexpected state of affairs and whilst it was seen that CCC clearly could prevent the sale by refusing to provide a deed of release, this was considered unlikely and the principal concern was that a financial consideration in this respect would eat into the proceeds of sale and weaken the financial basis of the project.

6. PROJECT The Committee received the Clerk's report and there followed a wide-ranging discussion on all aspects of the project as a whole, coming into the following categories which are interrelated to a certain extent:
- a) Viability – It was seen that whilst there had been no apparent support at the Annual Parish Meeting (20Apr06) for a proposal that there was no need for a replacement hall, a speaker from the floor had contended that the viability of any replacement plan should first be established. This sparked the question of public mandate for the project and the broad feeling was that the Beneficiaries Meeting of 21Dec04 (see also (d)(ii) below) had effectively established this.
 - b) Finance
 - i) Committee's role - It was noted that the Committee's executive power (see Min 4. above) extended to financial commitments and that the Clerk will give guidance in this respect
 - ii) Financial position – It was noted that the proceeds of the sale would be £136,250 (less any consideration to CCC for deed of release-see Min 5. above) with an estimated £3,500 from VHMC funds (dependant on eventual legal costs)
 - iii) Grant Aid – It was seen that this would almost certainly be needed to supplement the available funds (see (ii) above) and also that there are innumerable possibilities in this respect. The Clerk's advice that the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (landfill tax credit charity) had been identified as representing a prime opportunity in this respect was noted.
 - c) King George's Field (agreed location)
 - i) Corpus Christi College covenants – It was noted that the land had been originally purchased (in 3 separate parcels) from CCC by the Council and that with the exception of a small area on the Freehold Street side, east of the Memorial Gates (sold by CCC in 1950 specifically for the purpose of a village hall) there were conditions of sale that the College's consent in writing must be obtained prior to the erection of any building. It was seen that supporting plans would be required by CCC in this respect, though the Clerk considered that an indication of likely approval might be sought prior to that stage and that consent could conceivably be a problem in view of the fact that the originally envisaged site (where specific CCC approval not needed) would be likely to be unpopular, as it is just across the road from housing. It was also noted that a complication in this respect was the fact that such approval had certainly not been obtained for the S&S Club building or its extensions or the storage shed behind and probably not either for the wooden shed (original pavilion)
 - ii) National Playing Field Association – It was noted that the NPFA is the Trustee of the King George's Field Foundation and their consent to the erection of a village hall must be obtained, though as the 1953 Registered Plan for the Field includes a village hall, albeit in the aforementioned location (see (i) above), this should be a mere formality.
 - d) Development within King George's Field – It was noted that the following issues need to be resolved:
 - i) Location – It was seen that the Council favours the present site of the Sports and Social Club with demolition of the existing building, though it was noted that the S&S Club Committee had not formally agreed to this course
 - ii) Access and parking – It was noted that at the meeting held on 21Dec04 when the Beneficiaries (residents of the Parish), approved the sale of the premises (land and buildings) the Trustees had also agreed that access to the proposed new facility on King George's Field would not be via Mill Lane, as was the Clerk's advice that, whether or not this commitment was seen as binding upon the Committee, planning consent for access via Mill Lane would be unlikely

iii) Size, design, facilities etc (see also (e) below) – It was seen that facilities to cater for the Field's sporting activities would need to be incorporated as well as a bar room, and that this would be let to the S&S Club in order to regularise the sale of alcohol on charity land.

e) Public approval of plans – It was noted that at the 21Dec04 meeting, it was also agreed that the Beneficiaries should give their approval to the plans prior to implementation.

f) Planning permission – (see also (d)(ii) above) – It was seen that it must be decided whether this stage should follow or precede the establishment of public approval (see (e) above) and noted that, the Council had approached the Local Planning Authority (CDC) about the prospects of obtaining planning permission and that their reply, couched in very broad terms, had been:

'As you are only too well aware, the whole of Lower Heyford village lies within the Conservation Area and any new development must ensure that the character and appearance of the Area is preserved or (corrected from 'and') enhanced. King George's Field is an attractive open space in the heart of the village. Clearly a sizeable building will alter the appearance of such an area. It will be important therefore that design and siting are given careful consideration. Parking associated with such use can be intrusive and will need to be landscaped and sited carefully. Other issues will be the impact upon residential amenities (ie the need to minimise disturbance to adjacent residents from late evening activities and the coming and going of cars) and access safety'

g) Management

i) Charity issues – It was noted that whilst King George's Field and the Village Hall Foundation are both registered charities and it might be feasible to retain these charities and apportion management responsibilities between their committees, the Council feels that the better option would be to approach the Charity Commission to devise a scheme for a new unified charity with wider objects to include the provision of village hall facilities

ii) Sports & Social Club – It was noted that, irrespective of (i) above, the S&S Club will manage the bar room (see also (d)(iii) above)

iii) Parish Council

A) Lease – It was noted that the Council is the owner of KGF which is currently leased to the Trustees and managed for them by the Playing Field Management Committee and that the lease expired in 2003, but had been legally held until such time as a new constitution (see (B) below) can be introduced

B) New Constitution – It was noted that in 2000 a new constitution had been drawn up by the National Playing Fields Association and agreed by all parties concerned; that this was to establish the Parish Council as Custodian Trustee and the PFMC as Managing Trustee and that since then the NPFA had maintained it has not been possible to implement that constitution because of a legal wrangle about the charitable status of King George's Fields, despite the fact that in 1998 the Charity Commission made a specific ruling that KGF, Lower Heyford was subject to charitable trust. It was seen that consequently, once the new charity (see (i) above) had been created, there should be no difficulty with either the substitution of the new name for the PFMC or the adoption of the constitution.

h) **Conclusions** – The Committee agreed that public consultation by way of a questionnaire seeking the residents' views on the critical aspects of the project would usefully approach the issues of viability (see (a) above), establishing public approval (see (e) above) beforehand and that without directly asking the question, it might also produce views on the question of the Committee's mandate to proceed (also see (a) above). It was agreed that the Chairman and Clerk should liaise in the production of an appropriate questionnaire.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING It was agreed that the Clerk would be delegated to call the next meeting as and when appropriate.

The Committee having no further business, the Chairman closed the formal meeting and asked the members of the public whether they had any questions or comments:

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- a) Public mandate – see Min 6a above – The Chairman of the Council wished to support the Committee’s feeling that this had been given, and
- b) Questionnaire – see Min 6h above - wished to suggest that this would produce a small and unrepresentative view unless the forms were collected from each household.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.35pm.

..... Chairman