

Chairman's Report for AGM 9th March 2020

For five years we tried in vain to obtain extra parking for the Hall, we never wanted a shiny new Hall, as has been suggested; we all love the Hall but needed those extra safe parking spaces. Every option was investigated and was either turned down or was not feasible but then, in 2018, I ascertained from Cllr Hitchcock, and also from Cllr Gibson, that they were looking at the Haven Sports Field Car Park as a Community Housing Scheme. There were only two pieces of land owned by MSDC in the Village, the other being the allotments. I arranged a meeting with MSDC who agreed in principal that the Village Hall could have a 250 year lease on the Haven Sports Field Car Park site, subject to planning being approved.

It was not an easy decision to make but after much discussion the future of the Village Hall, we felt, was dependant on being in a location with safe parking and so plans were drawn up. Despite strong objection by Worth Parish Council and others, we were granted planning consent. We thought that was the hardest part done but having been informed that we would need demolition consent, which we duly applied for, we then attend a WPC meeting to listen to Cllr Gibson wanting the Village Hall listed as an Asset of Community Value. So, a Community building, nominated as a Community Asset so that the Community could bid on the Community Building, sounds great eh? MSDC thought otherwise and the nomination has been refused with one of the three reasons being:

“The requirements of the building have changed since its initial use due to the identified lack of parking impacting upon its accessibility.”

We know what an asset the Village Hall is, but not this one on this site.

Whilst waiting for a decision by Mid Sussex 'The Crawley Down Village Magazine', formerly 'The Church and Village', published an anonymous article which included a survey with an option for the Village Hall to be sold with the proceeds going to the Haven Centre. Result – no Village Hall.

The aforementioned parties have all done their very best to thwart any plan. It is hard to understand the insistence of keeping a building, 50% of which is unusable, with two parking spaces which are dangerous. Parking presents a daily significant hazard for all our service users and we, as Trustees, have a

duty of care for the safety of the site. There is also a significant accessibility problem for children, the elderly, and those who have no desire to play “chicken” with the traffic.

I quote “I took my children to nursery in the Village Hall 40-50 years ago”, great memories, so why should the children of today not have those same memories tomorrow? There has been a Village Hall in this Village since 1906, why should there not be one in 2106.

We are volunteers; we are, as Trustees, responsible for the debts of the Hall. We are all frequent users of the Hall, we all love this Hall but we need to look to the future. We have never suggested that the Hall be demolished before a replacement was available, why on earth would we leave the users, 200 of them, without the use of facilities? Have a look at the busy, booking schedules for other centres within the Village; they would not be able to provide for our groups.

What do we have: Planning consent to build a replacement Hall with a 250 year lease, consent to demolish the current Hall and consent from the Charity Commission. We have not finalised any plans nor have we agreed any sale and anyone that says differently is not telling you the truth. Any inference that this is the last time you can ask a question is also mischievous; the Committee are available and want to hear your comments and suggestions.

May I finally thank each and every one of the Committee, you have been diligent and honest in everything you have done. You have all been made angry and have had sleepless nights over very derisive comments and “confidential assurances” that proved to be false. You have remained positive and supportive throughout this process and I, sincerely, thank each and every one of you. It has been my pleasure to spend time with you all.

I am breaking with tradition this year. This report will be available in hard copy and will be posted on the Village Hall web page.

Marion Welchman