

Hadlow Down Community Centre AGM February 2024

Chair's Report

I am delighted to report that the past twelve months have been very productive in contrast to the previous year. Joining me are fellow trustees and volunteers – Sarah Prall, Mandy Chapman, Janet Tourell, John Thompson, Fiona Shafer, Rob Prall, Pete Strevens and Glenys Lake – as you are about to hear, they have worked tirelessly to enable us to achieve what we have.

At the last AGM the following priorities were shared and in addition to these, we organised a public meeting in July at which was stated our intention to produce a Business Plan by December 2023. Also we have supported the Parish Council in the setting up of the HDCC Advisory Committee (more of that later).

Our priorities for 2023 were to:-

- 1) carry out a new survey of parishioners in order to demonstrate a continuing need for a new hall. It will be crucial when applying for funding to show a demonstrable need and support within our community as well as currency with regard to when it was conducted.
- 2) secure 'extant' planning permission. Put simply this will require us to undertake some limited construction works on site to secure lifelong planning consent – deadline being the beginning of May.
- 4) organise and carry out a minimum of several local fund-raising events.

Our progress and achievements from March 2023 – February 2024:-

1) Survey

It seems sensible to ask Sarah (Prall) to report on this as she was the lead person on this working in partnership with Mandy (Chapman) and Fiona (Shafer).

Hi, I'm Sarah and I led on the Village Survey that HDCC conducted in June 2023

Context

- *The previous survey was in 2011. A door-to-door survey was conducted to hear the views of parishioners.*
- *The survey attracted a 70% response rate.*
over 60% opted for the relocation of the village hall to the playing field site.
- *2023 Survey Aims - To establish whether residents still support the building of a New Hall, also include the views of new residents.*
 - *Identify what facilities would be needed in the improved facility.*
 - *Explore which activities people would like to see offered in future at the Village Hall and measure the level of interest in hiring facilities.*
 - *Establish which activities and groups parishioners currently attend both within and outside the parish*
 - *and the barriers to taking part in these in the parish*
- *Methodology, residents along with Village Hall and Pavilion users, were invited to complete an anonymous on-line survey. The survey questions were peer reviewed by various interested groups.*
- *Newsletter was produced and delivered by hand to all residences. Notices were placed online and in Parish Magazine.*

Results

- *137 Responses from 331 households, we believe a quarter of adults residing in the village responded.*
- *83% of respondents agree that Hadlow Down needs a new high quality Village Hall and Sports Pavilion for use by the whole community.*
- *Part of the survey asked for more detailed comments and suggestions, 132 verbatim responses were received to Questions 2 and 3 alone which will help inform future decisions. All verbatim comments are available to view on our website.*
- *17% against the proposal was comprised of 22 respondents. 72% of these respondents currently use the village hall only once or twice a year or never at all, and 82% rarely or never use the Pavilion. So, these opinions, whilst important do not represent the major users of our community's facilities. By comparison to the respondents that agree or*

strongly agree with the new proposal, 88% have used the hall quarterly or more in the last year.

- *Majority of respondents are over 45. 55-64 year (24%) 45-54 year olds (23%), 65-74yrs (19%)*

Conclusions

We believe we have had a representative response to our community survey. A clear majority of our respondents are in favour of the project. Respondents feel that the current buildings no longer offer adequate facilities for our community.

There is plenty of support in the verbatim comments for a new improved environment and many feel that the new activities would strengthen community spirit and involvement. The survey data tells us that usage would increase in the future with better facilities and a broader range of activities.

We are mindful though that there are still a small number of villagers with strong views against the project. Whilst we recognise, we may not change their views, we are committed to further consultation and communication for the whole community as we progress.

We are encouraged by members of the community offering both support and practical assistance, we have recruited new members for our local fundraising sub-committee and business plan sub-committee. In all, 74 respondents offered to help.

As we move into our fundraising phase, the survey will be vital in demonstrating community insight, and for applications to external trusts and investors.

I think you'll agree that this was such huge undertaking and such an impressive piece of work – thank you all. Also to Elizabeth Thomson and others for their input as 'critical friends'.

2) Extant planning approval

HDCC was given a five year planning consent in June 2019 and as reported at last year's AGM, prompted by the impact of the Covid pandemic and spiralling costs of construction materials, we recognised

that we could not raise the required amount of capital funding in time to begin construction of the new hall before 28 June 2024 - the planning consent expiry date. We sought opinions from several professional people and were advised to consider Extant planning as a solution to our problem. On the face of it, this appeared to be a relatively straightforward process. How wrong were. Rob Prall and I are still wrestling with this issue but we are confident that the last of the sixteen planning conditions will be approved and the modest drainage construction to be carried out in time for it to be approved Wealden DC planners.

3) Local fund-raising

During the past year HDCC has staged four very successful local fund-raising events – a Spring Market (£534.37), a Vintage Tea Party (£1060), a Quiz (£1333) and a Christmas Market (£831.21) – a combined total of £3758.58, an amount not to be sniffed at! But, it's not just about money, is it? Since Covid, we have had very few social events in the parish and as the numbers of those who came along show, such gatherings provide important opportunities for our community to come together and enjoy each other's company. Our current Fund-Raising Team should be known as the 'Magnificent Seven'. They are – Janet Tourell, Jane Hissey, Sarah Allen, Ann Zenka, Dee Hogg, Gill Terry and Glenys Lake. But that's not say that they wouldn't like more to become involved. Isn't it uplifting to note that more people have come forward as volunteers? Thank you all.

4) Business Plan

In a very similar fashion to the Survey, this represents a significant undertaking and again, I feel it more appropriate that Mandy takes you through this.

Hi I'm Mandy Chapman and I am part of the Business Plan sub-committee for HDCC. The business plan was first written in 2014 and again in 2017 and lots has changed since then.

We've made good progress on writing an updated business plan but it has taken a bit longer than expected to pull it all together. We will be posting a draft on the HDCC website tonight for anyone to have a look at and share any thoughts and comments (still a bit of tidying up and prettying up to be if I'm honest - but we would like to get it out there for review)

It brings together all of the different elements of the plan including:

- *The history of how we got here*
- *The project proposal - floor plan, planning consent, elevations etc*
- *The latest proposal to stage the implementation*
- *Key financial assumptions about the ongoing financial viability of the community centre*
- *The capital project details - building costs, specifications etc from the architects and surveyors*
- *How we will organise ourselves to deliver the project and run the hall afterwards*
- *There will be a more detailed Capital Plan and Fundraising Strategy which will be shared in due course*
- *We have looked at many business plans from other similar villages who have managed to build a new community centre on their playing field and have used both their plans and their cost and expenditure numbers to help guide us in this exercise*
- *The Business Plan needs to be a living document that we will republish periodically - highlighting any changes. It will be available for anyone to read and will most importantly be part of our conversations with funders as we move on to the fundraising stage*
- *Finally and not for today's AGM, but if there are people interested in a more detailed discussion on the 59 page plan - I am very happy to organise a follow up session*

Again, thank you to Mandy, Sarah, Fiona, Sandra Richards, Elizabeth Thomson and Geoff Gregory who have acted as 'critical friends' with their advice and input.

5) HDCC Advisory Committee

The issue of Extant demonstrated the need to set up this group. The fact that the Parish Council is the owner of the playing field and also the signatory to the Planning Application submitted to Wealden in 2018 means that it has a responsibility to ensure that it acts with transparency and applies due diligence in certain matters.

The planning consent granted in June 2019 came with sixteen pre-commencement conditions that the Parish Council felt needed to be addressed and approved by Wealden Planners before we could proceed with Extant. Also, it should be pointed out that the Playing Field Committee is the lessee and that no similar, formal legal arrangement exists between the Parish Council and HDCC.

To date, the Committee has met on four occasions and is comprised of three Parish Councillors (one of whom is the PC chair), the chairs of both the Playing Field and HDCC, two independent members of the community and the Parish Council clerk. Its purpose is to inform the Parish Council of

- the financing of the project and the funding routes available both to the Parish Council and CIO;
- the 'Business Plan' for the new Community Centre in order to ensure long term viability;
- lease agreements to meet all legal, probity and legislative responsibilities placed upon the Parish Council;
- impact on village amenities during the construction phase of the project and thereafter;
- all aspects of planning approval;
- communication with the pariah community.

It reports to the full Parish Council and makes recommendations for the Council to consider at its regular, monthly meetings.

6) Our priorities for 2024

To:

- 1) Completion of the Business Plan within which will feature a comprehensive Fund Raising Plan that will focus on the many aspects

of fund-raising – donations from individuals, raising money from companies and online, raising money from central government, the National Lottery, grant making charities, events and fund-raising activities.

All these potential funding sources will require a continuation of the necessary research to determine the eligibility of our project in terms of potential support, the application process in terms of submission dates and decision announcement and many more details. We are confident that the gathering of such information can and will be completed relatively quickly.

We intend to be guided by the advice and oversight of a professional fund-raising consultant who will assist HDCC as a voluntary, community organisation to access major donor and other income opportunities as well as enabling us to develop appropriate approach strategies. Of course, such advice will come at a cost and therefore, it is imperative that our local fund-raising activity continues.

2) With the Parish Council and the Playing Field Committee, we will explore together a resolution of the current lease situation. Currently, a number of possible funding sources will remain closed to us because we don't have a lease. We know that there are many similar voluntary organisations that have had to wrestle with the same problem and we will consult with them as we will with AIRS (Action in Rural Sussex).

This ends my report - thank you. Now over to our Treasurer John Thompson for this annual report.

Hadlow Down Community Centre – Accounts 2024

31 December 2024

Figures are given for the period 01/01/24 to 31/12/24

Assets/Liabilities (year to date):-

	Date	Current a/c CAF Bank	Cash in Hand	Total
Balances at:-	01/01/24	17,530.23	410.00	17,940.23
Balances at:-	31/12/24	11,721.69	445.10	12,166.79
Gain/(loss) for the period		(5808.54)	35.10	(5773.44)

Income:-	2024	2023
Just Giving	255.02	
Other Donations	585.54	311.08
Grants	0.00	0.00
Lottery	1,510.00	2,004.00
Quiz night Name that Tune	1,963.96	723.72
Village Markets	1,930.62	1,453.37
Jumble Sales	2,310.97	
Other Fund Raising	330.00	1,060.00
Gift Aid	0.00	0.00
Bank Interest	31.35	29.83
Transfers in	1,220.00	
Other	373.73	
Total Income	10,511.19	5582.00

Expenditure:-	2024	2023
Surveys	0.00	0.00
Building Construction	6,000.00	
Quiz night Name That Tune	250.00	0.00
Fees	7,271.00	484.00
Publicity	50.90	604.31
Lottery	1,110.00	1146.00
Bank Charges	60.00	63.00
Gifts	0.00	0.00
Office Expenses	0.00	0.00
Sales Expenses	22.00	0.00
Transfers out	1,220.00	0.00
Other	300.73	0.00
Total Expenditure	16,284.63	2297.31

Income – Expenditure gain/(loss)	(5773.44)	3,284.69
Assets gain/(loss)	(5773.44)	

Notes:

J. D. Thompson (Treasurer)
31 December 2024