

# OTTERTON PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting of the Committees of the Village Hall and the Community Village Shop.

Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2014  
in the Committee Room of the Village Hall.

All were present, so the meeting started at 7.24 p.m.

**The meeting was chaired by Cllr Mrs Jane Smith.**

The Village Hall Committee (VHC) was represented by Jim Pyne, Clive Parnell and Mrs Joan Cullen; the Community Village Shop Committee (CVS) was represented by John Edmonds, Malcolm Crabtree, Mrs Vivienne Price and Mrs Jill Gladstone.

Also in attendance were:

East Devon District Councillor Ray Bloxham, The Parish Clerk and one member of the public.

1) Introduction by the Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Mrs Jane Smith.

This meeting was requested by the CVS committee in order to revisit the possible location of a community shop on the Village Hall site for the following reasons:

- CVS having tried all locations in the Village were finally offered part of the Church. That has now been put on hold for the foreseeable future as money has to be raised for the church roof repairs to be completed before any restructuring can take place.
- The CVS have spoken to Lord Clinton and he has no problem with the Village Hall being used for a shop.
- John Varley, Clinton Devon Estates, has said he would like to see terms of any sub lease and has no objection to a shop being on the Village Hall site. Furthermore, he has no other site to offer.
- There is a lot of support in the Village for a shop and enough money has been raised for the project to start. A business plan was put in place and there is a list of volunteers. So the CVS are ready to open a shop but nowhere to put it.
- Both committees are serving the whole community for the future of Otterton and it is therefore important to work together to find a reasonable resolution.
- From this position, I would like to think we can all go forward positively and amicably.

2) **The Community Village Shop committee make their Request.**

John Edmonds put the case for the CVS.

- Monies have been raised, by attracting shareholders and outside agencies offering grants, in preparation for starting the shop.
- Church not now available for at least 2 to 3 years. All other options have been explored.
- Only other option is the Village Hall site which would bring it to the centre of the Village.
- If nothing can be found, the money will be returned to shareholders and grants will come to an end.
- We discounted the **Snooker Room** because of its historical connections.
- The **Committee Room** would make an ideal temporary shop. It is not financially viable as it is currently used, but a not-for-profit shop would be able to make it so and produce sufficient income to donate it to other Village organisations.
- The idea of placing the shop on the site of the **storage sheds** behind the hall would be very expensive as a secure building would cost in the region of £15 - £20K and it would not be visible to passing trade.
- By using the **Committee Room**, any meetings that may have taken place there could be accommodated in the **Snooker Room**.

The other representatives made points:

- In the survey 32% were against the shop moving into the church but there was none against the **Village Hall**.
- The Plunkett Foundation, which supports community projects, has indicated that putting a shop where the **Sheds** are would place it in a bad location.
- There are 55 offers of help to staff the shop, 67 shareholders and grants from various sources are available.
- The Village must not be frightened of change. Many changes are taking place and this could be one that will be good for the whole Village community if it is given a chance.

3) The Village Hall committee make their Response.

James Pyne led the response on behalf of the VHC, with interjections from the other representatives.

- **Snooker Room** used by a small number of players and they play in the local league. By the law of the league, the Otterton table is made available to other clubs whose tables are not available. Replacing the baize cost £500. It will not be used as a meeting room.
- **Committee Room** by contrast is well used and is the only impartial meeting room in the Village. It has 40 bookings already: 12 by OVA, 12 by the Parish Council and 8 by the Garden Club. When there are Fashion Shows, Concerts and children's parties it is used for changing and food tables. No sense having an access from a shop in the **Committee Room** straight on to Fore Street. The users of the shop and its customers would not be allowed to use the toilets or the kitchen.
- **Hall** has 20 bookings: lectures etc. and the school use it 4 times per week. The Art Classes demand absolute silence so would not tolerate the noise from the **Committee Room** if there were a shop there. These two rooms are often used in conjunction. A successful shop in the **Committee Room** would expect to expand: that could only mean on to the stage.
- The space occupied by the **Storage Sheds** was offered but rejected. This site is offered again. An estimate has been obtained for a building and it is not expensive. There would be a safe entrance from Ropers Lane
- The VHC likes the idea of a shop but it must be a separate entity and not within the confines of the Village Hall buildings. They are not prepared to be liable financially or legally if the shop were within the building.
- If the CVS is prepared to use the site of the **Storage Sheds** the cost of their removal and the contents could be discussed and arrangements made.

4) **Questions Arising.**

- If **Committee Room** is used as shop how when shop finishes will it be re-instated? CVS would foot bill.
- Many bookings: surely the objectives of the VHC should be to ensure that it is used for the majority of Parishioners not outsiders.
- It is a very important room: but at £10 per booking and 40 bookings you are not talking large sums. The CVS would easily take more than that.
- £20K has been raised by the VHC and the income last year was £4200.
- CVS is expecting a community shop, where people can meet and chat; something thriving communities take for granted. Help us to resolve this impasse.
- The shop will not expand on to stage; the exit on to Fore Street is not insurmountable. Why could the toilets not be used? Because they are used by groups that have booked the **Hall**.
- If the CVS offers tea and coffee you would need the kitchen and toilets. **Committee Room** was built separately and added to the Village Hall.
- The CVS is a separate financial entity and so has its own liability insurance. The **Committee Room** is not much smaller than containers which have shops in them. Coffee and tea can be brought to the shop by helpers. The money the VHC raise is not enough to cover their running costs. The shop would support the VHC and others within the Village. The Villagers favour having a shop. Why go to East Budleigh or Colaton Raleigh for basic shopping?

- Can those in the VSC take a step back and consider the bigger picture?

**The Chairman asked District Cllr Ray Bloxham for his thoughts.**

- Much sense spoken on both sides.
- Building outside has two areas to be considered: the costings, what they will be and by whom and by whom will they be paid; the planning application needed for change of use.
- Much resistance to any use of the **Committee Room** so that should be ruled out.
- The CVS must think about the desirability of the shop, the position which could be behind the Hall and the costs involved.
- I have experienced villages, where two, apparently opposing views, have worked together and solved their differences. If you could do that, you would find it very satisfying.

Although the **Committee Room** is small it is perfectly adequate for a shop and we have already said, "No." to the space behind the Hall.

**5) Chairman's Conclusion.**

We are lucky to have a thriving school in the Village. The Church is in difficulties and in danger of closing, but, with change and reorganisation, could help accommodate the school and a shop.

Society is changing and no matter how we wished it did not we have to move, too.

The current problem that we have listened to tonight is caused by this.

Everyone at this meeting cares about our Village and wants to live in a vibrant and caring community.

I do not expect a decision tonight but I would ask that you separate and discuss what you have heard here.

With a little bit of understanding of each side's views we may have come closer together.

**Plenary.**

Both spokesmen expressed their gratitude for the civilised and constructive ways in which the discussions took place.

- **Committee Room** will not be considered by CVS.
- **Storage Sheds** will be considered as the shop site. Both committees to be involved in the removal and financial involvement. Storage of contents (much no longer needed) responsibility of VHC.
- Timing and the outcome will depend on final costs.
- Although retail managers say a hidden site is a "no-go" perhaps the site where the old oil tank stood could be considered. That would then provide a direct line of sight to the shop.
- Providing both committees work together everything will be possible.
- Glad to hear there is agreement to take this forward together.

The Clerk.

19/01/14