

PEOVER SUPERIOR AND SNELSON PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk – Shareen Worthington
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Chairman – Phil Welch
Vice Chairman – Cliff Walsingham

Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting held at 5pm on
Thursday 17th August 2023 at Over Peover Village Hall

Agenda

Snelson Methodist Church - possible purchase as a Parish and Community Hall. This is the only item for discussion.

Attendance: Phil Welch - Chair, Cliff Walsingham - Vice Chair, Cllrs Janet Winrow, Cathryn Ruddock, Vicki Irlam and Hazel Ardern.

Apologies for absence - Cllr Stephanie Benson.

Introduction

Cllr Welch reported on the meeting on Monday 14th August with Mr P. Bland of the local Methodist community to have a look in the church and to ask for information about the proposed auction of the building, car park and land and the timescale. Mr Bland would not provide any information but indicated that the details should be available at the end of this month and the auction date likely to be in November.

Item 1

Formation of a Charitable Trust to purchase this building, car park and land and to seek grant funding.

Cllr Winrow gave an explanation about the formation of a Charitable Trust and the benefits for the Parish Council. The timescale for the formation of a trust would be 6-12 months. Cllr Winrow to lead this task with the initial set up costs estimated to be circa £2K. There are funds available in the existing budget.

Motion to proceed with formation of charitable trust.

Proposed by Cllr Welch, seconded by Cllr Walsingham and motion carried unanimously.

Item 2

To apply to Cheshire East Council for this building and land to be recognised as an Asset of Community Value.

There was a discussion on the timescale and purpose of this process in relation to the auction process for the Church. Cllr Walsingham to start the process and to consult with other Councillors as there is a need for this application to be made asap.

Motion to proceed with an application to Cheshire East for an Asset of Community Value.

Proposed by Cllr Winrow, seconded by Cllr Ardern and carried unanimously.

Item 3

Publicity within our community and fund raising, both locally and through any potential source, e.g. National Lottery Fund.

Cllr Welch proposed the PC should send a letter to every household asking for donations towards the purchase of the Chapel, carpark and land at the rear. We would explain the background and reasons why the PC wished to acquire the building as a long term community asset.

Also, in the letter we would ask for any club, group or local organisation who would be interested in using this building on a regular basis to let the Clerk know what use and how often this could happen.

After some discussion it was agreed that the letter would be held for the outcome of the ACV application.

There was some discussion about the possibility of funds coming from the joint freeholders of the existing village hall, who are the Women's Institute, (WI) and the Church Diocese. While certain sums from both parties had been mentioned locally and expressed as a percentage of the sale proceeds of this site, there is no formal agreement to this proposal.

It was agreed a meeting should be sought with the W.I. and with the Church regarding these funds and confirmation that they would still be made available.

The possibility of the existing site being redeveloped was discussed and any new building would be smaller and have to take into account the residential neighbours. A new build, smaller size hall would attract some uses but would not have the flexibility of the church and the wider range of users here.

Cllr Winrow as Chair of the Village Hall Management Committee indicated that the Covid funds which have supported the continued use of this building would run out in less than two years and it is doubtful if any income would then cover the running costs including insurance due to its age and condition. The possibility of this hall having to close is a realistic outcome.

It was suggested that the PC should ask for a meeting with the W.I and with the Church about the previous offer of funds towards a new building that had been discussed and to seek confirmation that these would still be forthcoming.

It was also agreed to start some fundraising on a confidential basis with certain people in the village who had already shown a willingness to donate to the development of a new site for a village hall.

Cllr Welch to approach Barclays Bank as the Parish Council's bank and with their presence at Radbroke Hall. It is understood the bank may have a charitable fund.

Motion to begin fund raising by letter to every household but deferred until the outcome of the ACV application.

Proposed by Cllr Irlam, seconded by Cllr Walsingham and carried unanimously.

At this time Cllrs Ardern and Ruddock left the meeting.

Item 4

Timescale for the purchase and for refurbishment.

As the Church intends to sell this building by auction, it was agreed that the Parish Council would not be in any position to bid. The designation of the church and its land as an ACV would give some 6 months to negotiate with the Methodist Church or their agents. We would know the reserve price in the coming weeks and so have an immediate target sum to raise.

If the Church are willing vendors, there is the likelihood that the Parish Council could become the owners within 9-12 months to allow for all the legals to go through. The formation of the Charitable Trust would need to be completed as it would become the owner of the whole property.

No timescale could be set out for the refurbishment as a detailed condition survey would be required that would show the priority of works to be done. It may be by then the Parish Council would know if the owners of the present hall site, which would be sold, do offer some %age of the sale proceeds. These funds would go towards the refurbishment costs.

Motion to proceed with the purchase but do nothing more.

Proposed by Cllr Walsingham, seconded by Cllr Irlam and carried unanimously.

Item 5

Alternative options for a new village hall.

Cllr Welch spoke of the attempts that had been made over the past 4 years to find a new village hall site and several sites had been identified. However, all had been rejected either by the landowners or by Cheshire East Planners as the whole of the Parish is within the designated Green Belt and a large part is also covered by the Jodrell Bank restrictions.

To acquire this building represents a unique opportunity for the whole parish and for the future benefit of its residents for years to come.

There was some discussion about alternative sites but all are in the Green Belt, which is the major constraint to any new building and the carparking that would be required.

Motion to not to proceed with alternative sites due to the past attempts which had met resistance from the land owners and the Council as planning authority.

Item 6

To produce a business plan for the future.

It was agreed to defer any such plan until the Parish Council had some certainty with the purchase.

The meeting closed at 18.10.

Signed by

Cllr Welch as Chair.