

Review of Community Facilities

Request to Willington Parish Council to undertake a REVIEW OF COMMUNITY FACILITIES

As you will no doubt have read in the latest edition of the Willington newsletter the Village Hall is celebrating its 70th year this year, having officially opened on August 3 1952.

Whilst with continuing care and maintenance, it should continue to provide facilities for the community for some years to come, it needs to be realised that the “temporary hut” built to the specification (and parts supplied) by the then Ministry of Works has already outlived its expectations and we need to be looking to replace it within a short number of years.

As you may be aware the plan agreed in 2012, which also gained planning consent, was for a sequential development of the hall. Phase 1 was the realigning of the facilities, bringing the entrance to face Twyford Road and adding disabled toilets, upgrading the kitchen and generally improving the internal infrastructure. Phase 2 was the addition of the new room (to the front). Phase 3 was planned to be the building of a new, larger main hall at the western end of the building, utilizing the Aubrey Room as the new entrance foyer and allowing the old hall to be divided into meeting rooms. Now is clearly the time to start contemplating the fulfillment of the plan.

Whilst under previous conditions, financial climate, covid etc. this seemed a far off dream the announcement of the Platinum Jubilee Fund (some £3 million pounds over 3 years) provides an opportunity to promote the needs of the community and seek support for a funding bid.

Any bid will require a number of elements; a ready to go plan, proof of need and community impact and community support.

I believe that we can show that the 2012 plan is relevant and achievable, that the condition of the building underlines the need, as does the 26,000 annual footfall (estimate) along with the number of groups and private bookings that we cannot accommodate through lack of space, and the community support for the scheme through the comments and encouragement of the community. However, in the past this has not proved sufficient.

The missing factor has always been the lack of a Parish Council statement on the needs for community facilities and a long-term view on the provision of facilities to meet that growing demand, including a broad strategy for meeting that need and hence providing strong policy preferences for S106 support.

It is even more important now for the PC to review the needs and provision of community facilities within the village to demonstrate a logical strategic approach to the provision of community facilities over the coming years. This would show consideration of existing provision, needs and deficiencies in community facilities, a commitment to provision of targeted facilities for sports and youth activities, as well as a long-term commitment to support the improvement and upgrading of existing facilities to meet the increasing needs of the community. A statement prioritising, sequencing need and emphasising the complementary nature of the community provision would help articulate the need and strategy for current and future community provision, assisting all parties involved in seeking project funding.

Whilst it is important for the Parish to have a plan for the ongoing provision of community facilities it is equally important that the council demonstrate to outside bodies the need and importance of community facilities in the village and the commitment to their development.

The Parish Council are requested therefore, in partnership with all interested parties and facility providers, to undertake an in depth review of community facilities, their current situation and their potential for development together with the growing needs of the community leading to the development of a strategy for the long term provision of community facilities within the village.